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The Lockwood-Mathews Mansion: Seasonal Dress as an Interpretive Tool

Stephanie Phillips
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THE LOCKWOOD-MATHEWS MANSION: SEASONAL DRESS AS AN
INTERPRETATIVE TOOL.

Stephanie Phillips

A THESIS

in

Historic Preservation

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

1997

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to define seasonal dress in American interiors, study evidence of its historic use at the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum, and make recommendations for implementing seasonal dress in the interpretation of that site.

Seasonal dress was a traditional housekeeping practice that entailed changing window treatments, floor coverings, and upholstery to match the weather changes between summer and winter. In addition, lighting fixtures, decorative window cornices, and picture frames were often covered in netting during the summer. The purpose of such changes was to protect expensive fabrics from heat, dust, light, and insects. Also, the lighter fabrics favored during the summer increased air circulation and lighter textiles made interiors seem cooler.

Seasonal dress is a useful interpretation and conservation tool for house museums because it allows valuable fabrics to be protected from light and heat for part of the year, thus increasing longevity. Additionally, seasonal dress allows the public to see historic houses as functional entities that responded to exterior conditions with a fair degree of sophistication. Lastly, seasonal dress may be a less expensive initial interpretive option for those house museums with budgetary constraints. Textiles used for the summer are lighter, cheaper, and designs are simpler.

Several house museums in America are currently using seasonal dress in their site interpretation. Three of those museums, Clayton in Pittsburgh, the Gallier House New Orleans, and the Manship House Jackson, Mississippi, will be studied to determine how seasonal dress affects site interpretation and potentially aids in materials conservation.

The Lockwood-Mathews Mansion in Norwalk, Connecticut, is a good case study of seasonal dress. Photographic evidence of seasonal dress exists from the 1870s and 1880s. Some original historic fabric still exists in the form of window screens. Additionally, the mansion is a document in itself. The Mathews family owned the building for over sixty years, but left it virtually unchanged from the days of LeGrand Lockwood of the interior architectural designs and decorative finishes are still intact.

The Lockwood-Mathews Mansion, originally called Elm Park, was built as a country house for LeGrand Lockwood between 1868 and 1870. Detlef Lienau, a European-trained architect based in New York, designed the building. Because of its scale and connection with prominent designers, namely the workshops of the Herter Brothers, George Platt, and Leon Marcotte, the mansion attracted a great deal of attention from the nineteenth-century press. An article in *The New York Times*, of August, 1867, noted the house construction "...will cost with the grounds, nearly two millions of dollars, and when completed, will stand with scarcely a rival in the United States. The designs were furnished by an eminent European architect...."¹

Elm Park the ideals and attitudes of the Post-Civil War era which, in the North, was characterized by industrialization, excessive material consumption, and an aesthetic based upon eclecticism summed up in the term "Gilded Age." These factors may be observed in the Mansion, which combines large scale with a vast array of decorative materials, and whose construction represents the work of European laborers, thus typifying the diverse social fabric of the Victorian era.

¹ *The New York Times*, August 5, 1867, Quoted in Anne M. Bolin and Karen Donnelly's *Nineteenth-Century Architects: Building a Profession*, Exhibit Catalogue, (Norwalk, CT: Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum, April 1-29, 1990) p. 12.

One of America's first millionaires, LeGrand Lockwood (1820-1872) owned a banking firm and was involved in both the railroad and steamship industries in addition to being elected Treasurer of the New York Stock Exchange in 1863. The family moved into Elm Park in 1869 when it was almost complete. Later that year, on September 24th, the price of gold dropped suddenly. On that day, called "Black Friday," many brokerage houses were ruined. Lockwood and Company did not escape damage and Lockwood forced to mortgage his Mansion to pay debtors. He died of pneumonia in 1872 after living at Elm Park only four years. Ann Louisa Lockwood, his widow, was unable to pay the balance owed on the mortgage and was forced to sell the Mansion in 1873.

Elm Park, which had cost over two million dollars to build, was sold to Charles D. Mathews in 1876 for ninety thousand dollars. The Mathews family occupied the Mansion until 1938. Remarkably, they made no structural modifications of the building and changed very little of the interior architectural design. The original paint finishes created for the Lockwood family are still present throughout, making the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion a rare and valuable historic document.

In 1941 the City of Norwalk bought the estate to house heavy equipment, city offices, and records. Twenty years later plans were made to demolish the building for the erection of a new City Hall. A local interest group petitioned the courts and in 1965 the Junior League of Stamford-Norwalk was granted a lease for the purpose of adapting the Mansion into a museum. The original lease was for ten years with opportunities for renewal up to thirty years. A corporation, the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum of Norwalk, Inc., was formed in 1966. The Board of Trustees for that corporation was comprised of interested citizens from the surrounding area.

In 1967 restoration work began on the mansion, which was open to the public in June of that year. Subsequent moneys raised from membership drives, fund-raising events, and grants from the Connecticut Historical Commission and the Junior League of Stamford-Norwalk made possible the necessary improvements of the building. The Lockwood-Mathews Mansion was designated a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1971.²

Presently the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum has received funding from the J. Paul Getty Foundation to implement a conservation training program that will work with the Department of Historic Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania. The program has been designed to provide advanced training opportunities for conservation students. This thesis is a result of the program.

Evidence of seasonal dress exists at the Lockwood appears in both physical and photographic documents. The physical evidence includes three stenciled wire screens, samples of grass matting, tack holes used to attach the matting to the wood floors, and original awnings. Photographic evidence of seasonal dress, such as slipcovers and matting, exists from both the Lockwood and Mathews tenure.

²*The Lockwood-Mathews Mansion*, ed. Mimi Findlay and Doris E. Friend, (Norwalk, CT: Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum, 1969, Revised edition, 1981) p. 7-13.

Seasonal Dress And House Cleaning

Seasonal dress was common among those who could afford it in America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The practice fell out of fashion as factory-made textiles, houses equipped with screens at windows and doors, and small electric motors, making possible ceiling and free-standing fans and vacuum cleaners, became the norm. Edith Wharton wrote of it disparagingly in *The House of Mirth* as early as 1905. However, less sophisticated households still continued the practice until as late as the 1940's or 1950's.³

Seasonal dress also reflected the drastic climate changes typical of America. Foreign visitors were dismayed by the weather. Winter seemed colder and the summer heat was unbearable. It should be mentioned that Chicago is on the same latitude as Italy and shares much of its Mediterranean climate. Frederika Bremer, noted Swedish author (1801-1865), continuously commented on the weather during her visit to America from late 1849 to 1851. She remarked in August, 1851, "This American climate leaps continually from one extreme to another."⁴ A winter in Boston made her lament in February, 1850, "I, who have such a

³ Several older relatives I have spoken with remember seasonal dress from their childhood. William Marshall, an uncle remembers visiting his grandmother's house in the summer as a child in the early 1940s, when a porch was enclosed with screens made of muslin stapled around a wooden frame. This porch became the summer kitchen, and the big project was moving the stove from inside the house to its place on the porch. His grandmother's house was in Beaver, PA, a rural area between Erie and Pittsburgh. Beaver did not get electricity until the 1930's.

Mary Mullen, an elderly friend of the family from Philadelphia remembers that, during the 1930s, the wooden frame that protected the marble steps from discoloration from ashes and coal clinkers during the winter was stored in the cellar during the summer, "so that steps could be scrubbed using a soft soap stone on the marble and plenty of water to keep said steps shining to match the white marble on the front of many homes."

The practice of seasonal dress generally lasted longer in rural areas. My grandmother's generation, those born in the 1920's, gradually weeded out the practice as they came into their own. Although Virginia Strick, my grandmother, grew up with certain aspects of summer dress (she remembers having grass matting in her Jenkintown, Pennsylvania home) she did not continue the practice when she had her own family. When asked why, she said she didn't know, but that it seemed unnecessary. I assume she meant that technological innovations and mass-production of household products and appliances that facilitated cleanliness eliminated the need for summer dress.

⁴ Frederika Bremer *Homes of the New World; Impressions of America*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1853) p. 567.



Fig. 1. The Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum. Norwalk, Connecticut. Photograph by author. 1996.

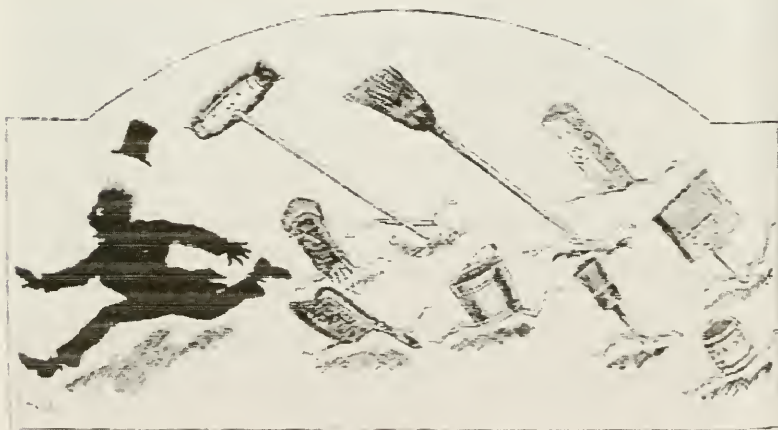


Fig. 2. *The Householder's Annual Misery*. From *Harper's Bazaar*, 1879. This cartoon suggests seasonal cleaning was dreaded by housekeepers, as well as other household occupants, with its comment "THE HOUSEHOLDER'S ANNUAL MISERY. The spring house-cleaning days have come. The saddest of the year..".

love of the Swedish winter, and who breathe easily in our severest weather, have really difficulty in breathing here when the atmosphere is as cold as it is just now—it feels so keen and severe.”⁵ In June of that year, she complained that Charleston, South Carolina, was too hot, stating “I arrived here the day before yesterday half suffocated by the heat of the atmosphere, sunshine, smoke, and steam....”⁶

Preparing the house for different seasons included seasonal dress changes coupled with vigorous house cleaning. Removing or replacing textiles provided the perfect opportunity to clean the areas newly exposed. Additionally, the mechanical systems of the house were checked, in preparation of weather changes ahead. Usually, the house was cleaned from attic to cellar, a project which took the housekeeper weeks of exhausting labor.

According to one historian:

Like the soot and smoke from wood and coal fires, and the dust created by laying in winter fuel supplies, [lamp soot] found its way onto every surface in every home. The accumulated grime was so staggering, and keeping up with it on a daily basis so impossible, that even writers who relentlessly repeated that ‘it is better to keep clean than to make clean’ admitted the necessity of spring- and sometimes fall- cleaning.⁷

Mid-nineteenth century household manuals stressed the importance of seasonal house cleaning. A popular British author, Mrs. Beeton remarked “Spring cleaning is a most necessary work; in this season insects ‘most do congregate’, and endeavor to establish themselves amongst us.”⁸ In fact, much of the cleaning revolved around the removal of insects from textiles. The work in fall, while heavy, did not compare to spring. Mrs. Beeton

⁵Bremer, *Homes of the New World*, p. 199.

⁶Bremer, *Homes of the New World*, p. 378.

⁷Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982) p. 61-62.

⁸Mrs. [Isabella Marie] Beeton, *Beeton's Housewife's Treasury of Domestic Information*, (New York: Ward, Lock & Co., 1865) p. 387.

stated “there is autumn cleaning, but this never approaches, we think, in magnitude to its earlier fellow-turning out.”⁹

Spring cleaning occurred between April and June, and entailed cleaning everything stored in the attic and cellar, whitewashing the walls and buying the coal for the year. In the living areas, carpets were taken up, cleaned, and removed for the summer. Furniture and papered walls were dusted. Floors and painted walls were scrubbed. Mrs. H. W. Beecher recommended starting from the cellar and working up room by room. She also suggested hiring four helpers to finish the work more quickly.¹⁰ Mrs. Beeton’s list of duties was even more strenuous. In addition to dusting and scrubbing, hangings and curtains were taken down and cleaned, Venetian blinds were repainted, and bedsteads were dismantled, cleaned, and sponged with paraffin to kill bedbugs. She recommended ceilings be whitewashed every three years and the woodwork painted every five years.¹¹

In early October, Mrs. H.W. Beecher suggested that the house be prepared for winter. Chimney’s were swept, while the furnace and grate flues were cleaned and repaired. Again, whitewashing and painting were recommended as needed. Woolens were taken out of storage and rehung. Those carpets that remained down during the summer were taken up, beaten, and cleaned again. Thorough dusting and cleaning windows completed the project.¹²

While paragons like Beecher and Beeton praised the virtues of semi-annual cleaning, literature suggests the occupants of the house, particularly the male members, dreaded the

⁹Beeton, *Housewife’s Treasury*, p. 387.

¹⁰ Mrs. H[enry] W[ard] Beecher, *Motherly Talks with Young Housekeepers: Embracing Eighty-seven Brief Articles on Topics of Home Interest and About Five Hundred Choice Receipts for Cooking, Etc.*, (New York: J.B. Ford & Co., 1873) p. 17-20.

¹¹ Beeton, *Housewife’s Treasury*, p. 387.

¹² Beecher, *Motherly Talks with Young Housekeepers*, p. 117.

upheaval in their lives. Mrs. Beeton recognized the problems, noting "Spring-cleaning is an ominous, fertile word in many households, and unless there be much forethought and method, it means dismay and discomfort to everybody in the house except the energetic mistress or housekeeper."¹³ It should be noted, however, that she still believed the process necessary. Robert Tomes lamented that spring cleaning was "...one of the most familiar means by which people are periodically made uncomfortable. What necessity can there be for making, by this process, a whole house uninhabitable at one and the same time? Is it not practicable to satisfy the requirements of cleanliness without creating universal disorder?"¹⁴

Edith Wharton wrote about seasonal changes as they were nearing the end of their fashionability within urban areas in *The House of Mirth* when the modern heroine arrived at her elderly aunt's house, she felt "The house, in its state of unnatural immaculateness and order, was a dreary as a tomb, and as Lily...wandered into the newly-uncovered glare of the drawing-room she felt as though she were buried alive in the stifling limits of Mrs. Peniston's existence."¹⁵ Wharton was attacking the zealotry of housekeepers in their pursuit of cleanliness, as well as the narrowness of Mrs. Peniston's mind, when she wrote:

The first two weeks after her return represented to Mrs. Peniston the domestic equivalent of a religious retreat. She 'went through' the linen and blankets in the precise spirit of the penitent exploring the inner folds of conscience; she sought for moths as the stricken souls seeks for lurking infirmities. The topmost shelf of every closet was made to yield up its secret, cellar and coalbin were probed to their darkest depths and, as a final stage in the lustral rites, the entire house was swathed in penitential white and deluged with expiatory soapsuds.¹⁶

While the household manuals recommended this type of cleaning, it should be noted that reality was different. Housewives without domestic help attempted to keep up

¹³ Beeton, *Housewife's Treasury*, p. 387.

¹⁴ Robert Tomes, *The Bazar Book of the Household*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1875) p. 163.

¹⁵ Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905) p. 100.

with the dirt, but the heavy duties were done less frequently than suggested. According to Caroline Davidson “the majority of other cleaning jobs, such as furniture polishing, curtain washing, and carpet cleaning were done much less frequently [than suggested by household manuals] and in any case only applied to households with relatively high living standards.”¹⁷

Regardless of the complaints, cleanliness was expected of the housekeeper because in the nineteenth-century “cleaning, unlike any other household task, was widely considered to be a moral duty.”¹⁸ Clean houses were admired not only by Americans but also by foreign visitors. Frederika Bremer congratulated Americans on cleanliness in 1850 commenting, “Our very best homes in Sweden are, in this respect, seldom so admirable as is usually the case here; for all here is kept neat and clean, from the bedrooms to the kitchen....”¹⁹ As Susan Strasser notes, “...housecleaning, the annual ritual of cleansing of the filthy by-products of nineteenth century lighting and heating, signaled the onset of spring as much as the first robin or crocus and represented renewed life as directly as budding trees.”²⁰

¹⁶ Wharton, *House of Mirth*, p. 98.

¹⁷ Caroline Davidson, *A Woman's Work is Never Done: A History of Housework in the British Isles, 1650-1950*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1982) p. 121.

¹⁸ Davidson, *Woman's Work*, p. 117.

¹⁹ Bremer *Homes of the New World*, p. 336.

²⁰ Strasser, *Never Done*, p. 63.

CHAPTER II
Historic Use of Seasonal Dress

The arduous process of changing seasonal dress was an attempt to protect furnishings from nature. In an age before air-conditioning and electric household appliances, insects, dirt, and light were constant dangers. Authors of household manuals wrote extensively on the danger and detailed the steps needed to protect interiors.

Although household manuals advised housekeepers to rigorously follow their dictates, it is reasonable to assume housekeepers practiced seasonal dress as inclination and money would allow. This is true of the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion where evidence exists of some, but not all, seasonal dress practices. This chapter describes common practices advised by nineteenth-century household manuals and which of those practices were conformed to by the inhabitants of the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion.

Light

Preservation of their furnishings motivated the housewives to perform the arduous tasks involved in spring cleaning and seasonal dress. Dust and insects were reduced by those projects but sunlight was another problem. “Light, which is so favourable to the life and health of living beings, is very prejudicial to furniture, by destroying its colors,” declared Thomas Webster and Mrs. Parkes in the *Encyclopaedia of Domestic Economy* (1849).²¹ Sunlight faded not only furniture and wallpaper, but also upholstery, curtains, and rugs.

²¹ T[homas] Webster and Mrs. Parkes, *An Encyclopaedia of Domestic Economy: Comprising Subjects connected with the Interests of every individual; such as the construction of domestic edifices; furniture; carriages, and instruments of domestic use*, ed. by D.M. Reese, AM, MD. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1849) p.249.

Consequently, housekeepers regulated the amount of light allowed into their houses. Windows had several layers of protection against sun and heat. Parlors were often closed to the family and sunlight, opened only for visitors and formal occasions. This practice had its critics. "Why, man, there are three distinct sets of fortifications against the sunshine in those windows: first, outside blinds; then, solid, folding, inside shutters; and, lastly, heavy, thick, lined damask curtains, which loop quite down to the floor" wrote Harriet Beecher Stowe *House and Home Papers*.²² Another critic sarcastically remarked "How we long to...give admittance to the full glory of the free, glad sunbeams. But no! Health and comfort must be sacrificed rather than expose the costly carpet and rich curtains."²³ Frederika Bremer observed "...how they exclude the daylight from the rooms....But they say that the heat of the sun is too powerful here for the greater part of the year, and that they are obliged as much as possible to exclude its light from the rooms."²⁴ Frank and Marian Stockton commented:

In the summer you will wish to keep the room partially darkened during the glare and heat of the day, and when flies and dust are waiting for admittance. But use discretion, and do not make it so dark that your eyes are injured by straining them over your work, and your visitors announce their entrance by running up against your sofa, or falling over a footstool. In the winter let in the sunlight freely. You will all thrive on it. Of course this will, in time, fade the most durably colored carpet, but seasons will pass before this becomes noticeable, and an old carpet that is faded is not half as suggestive of poverty of purse, and narrowness of living, as an old one that is 'as bright as new.'²⁵

Some of the practices to exclude light were extreme even by nineteenth century standards. The Stocktons pleaded with their public "...not to tie the [curtain] tassels up in

²² Harriet Beecher Stowe [Christopher Crowfield, pseud.], *House and Home Papers*, (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1865) p.40.

²³ Beecher, *Motherly Talks with Young Housekeepers*, p. 14.

²⁴ Bremer, *Homes of the New World*, p. 35.

little muslin or knitted bags in order to preserve the color.”²⁶ There was an eternal battle between those who wished to preserve their furnishings and those who wished to enjoy the comfort and beauty those furnishings provided. Household manuals were generally against the idea of a shut-off parlor, and suggested what made a room pleasant was its use by the family. Moderate preservation techniques were recommended but not at the cost of comfort and function by the inhabitants of the house.

Window shades, shutters, awnings, and blinds were also used to combat the debilitating effects of sunlight on furnishings.²⁷ Some types of window treatments were seasonal; awnings and screens appeared on houses during the summer months. Other treatments were useful year round, such as shutters and blinds.

Insects

As mentioned earlier, insects were of primary concern to the nineteenth-century housekeeper. According to one historian, “bugs contrived to hide themselves not only in bedding and upholstery, but behind wallpaper, picture rails, and skirting boards, in cracks of wood and plaster work, under floor boards, and even inside nail holes and knobs.”²⁸ Recipes abounded for poisons and remedies against insects, particularly flies, bedbugs, and moths. Moth larvae ingested expensive woolens, bedbugs made uncomfortable sleeping companions, and flies not only made food unappetizing but left specks on prized gilt and ormolu finishes.

²⁵ Frank R. Stockton and Marian Stockton, *The Home: Where It Should Be and What to Put in It*, (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1873) p. 50.

²⁶ Stockton and Stockton, *The Home*, p. 38.

²⁷ In the nineteenth-century, a “blind” was a blanket term that covered window shades, louvered shutter, Venetian blinds, screens, and awnings. In this paper, the term will denote Venetian blinds.

²⁸ Davidson, *Woman's Work*, p. 130.

Common remedies against moths included brushing woolens briskly, wrapping them in linen, and packing them away for the summer in a dark place. "Pepper, red-cedar chips, tobacco,--indeed, almost any strong spicy smell," were moth repellents advised by Lydia Maria Child.²⁹ *Godey's Lady's Book* in April, 1859, stated "blankets, in summer time, should be laid under feather beds; this preserves them from moths."³⁰ Another household manual suggested that woolens and blankets "should be properly washed in a lather of soap and water, and well dried, then pepper must be sprinkled over them before they are folded up and put away. It is a good plan to keep them in brown bags."³¹

Bedbugs were another persistent complaint.³² Ridding the bed of insects was a difficult if not impossible task. In the nineteenth century, beds consisted of a support, a mattress, a feather bed, bed sheets, blankets, a bolster (or large pillow), and feather pillows. Although it was discouraged by writers of household manuals beginning about mid-century, some beds still used heavy curtains that surrounded the frame. Insects had great opportunity to burrow and live in the variety of the bed furnishings. Household manuals recognized this problem and suggested cleaning the linens regularly and dismantling the bedstead twice a year for washing. The recommended substance with which to wash the bedstead varied, but its primary purpose was to poison the insects. Tar-wash, potash, scotch snuff and soft soap, and turpentine were advised by Webster and Parkes in *The Encyclopaedia of Domestic Economy*³³ Another recipe suggested that the housekeeper

²⁹ Lydia Maria Child, *The American Frugal Housewife. Dedicated to Those Who Are Not Ashamed of Economy*, 12th ed. 1832, Reprint, (Worthington, Ohio: Worthington Historical Society, 1980) p. 13.

³⁰ *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, ed. Mrs. Sarah J. Hale and Louis A. Godey, (April, 1859) p. 310.

³¹ [Lady], *The Workwoman's Guide, Containing Instructions to the inexperienced in cutting out and completing those articles of wearing apparel, &c.*, (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1838) p. 225.

³² Davidson, *Woman's Work*. p. 115.

³³ Webster and Parkes, *Encyclopaedia of Domestic Economy*, p. 376.

“wash the bedstead or floor with water saturated with glauber salts,³⁴ once or twice a year, and bugs will shortly be effectually destroyed.”³⁵ Despite all these recipes, hard work remained the only way to eliminate the insects. In February, 1864, *Godey's Lady's Book* advised “constant and unremitting cleanliness is the best means of getting rid of these pests.”³⁶

Another common household enemy was the fly. Housekeepers often kept rooms closed when not in use to discourage the entry of insects. As one writer sarcastically commented, “...fresh air is unwelcome, because the open windows usher in the flies; and a fly buzzing about that immaculate room would inspire as much horror as the advent of a chattering girl of seventeen into a La Trappe monastery.”³⁷ One nineteenth-century author lamented: “One of the housewife’s chief trials is the universal depravity in the summer time of cockroaches, ants and mosquitos...Jimmy and Jenny are forever flying in and out the wire doors and a whole army of pests are watching to make a raid into the fort whenever occurs a chance.”³⁸

Where screens were not used, flies were kept from disturbing the inhabitants of a house by hand-held fans and feathers. When Bremer visited the South in the spring of 1850 she noted “during the meal-time one of the black boys or girls stands with a besom of peacocks’ feathers to drive away the flies.”³⁹ Booker T. Washington remembered that one of his duties as a child on a plantation before the Civil War was “...to go to the ‘big house’ at

³⁴ Glauber salts are a “white crystalline sodium sulfate...used medicinally as a cathartic.” They are named after Johann Rudolf Glauber (1604-1668), a German physician and alchemist who discovered them and muriatic acid. From *Funk & Wagnalls New Practical Standard Dictionary of the English Language*, ed. Charles Earle Funk, Litt.D., (New York: J.G. Ferguson & Assoc., 1950) p. 564.

³⁵ [Lady], *The Workwoman's Guide*, p. 228.

³⁶ *Godey's Lady's Book*, (February, 1864) p. 195

³⁷ Stockton and Stockton, *The Home*, p. 27.

³⁸ *Household News*, July, 1895, Vol. III, No. 7, p. 296-297.

³⁹ Bremer, *Homes of the New World*, p. 280-281.

meal-times to fan the flies from the table by means of a large set of paper fans operated by a pulley.”⁴⁰ Simpler methods were used as necessary. Agnes Lee, daughter of General Robert F. Lee, wrote in July, 1855, that she “was in a delightful doze covered with paper to keep off the flies” in July, 1855 when staying at Arlington House.⁴¹

Besides fans, hanging strips of paper, the equivalent of fly strips, were recommended to distract flies from food. In 1871, F.A. Walker advertised several remedies against the pests, including a “Patent Fly Trap,” the “Patent Rotary Clock-work Fly Trap,” and “Wire Dish Covers, White & Blued”⁴² When those remedies did not work, poison was often used. “Quassia and sugar, with a little water, set about a kitchen in saucers, is a poison for flies...” was recommended by Webster and Parkes.⁴³ These methods had mixed results; while they occupied or killed flies, they were often unsightly.

Mosquitoes were also a problem. Like flies, they made warm weather uncomfortable. Frederika Bremer wrote that she “suffered through the night from cockroaches and [mosquitoes]; and by day from the hot sun and suffocating fumes from the engine fire” during a steam boat trip through Florida in 1851.⁴⁴ By the mid-nineteenth century, people were aware that warm, still climates near water bred sickness and malaria, although the connection between it and mosquitoes remained unknown. According to Bremer “early in May the heat becomes great in the South, and then all planters remove from their plantations to avoid the dangerous fevers which then prevail. During the

⁴⁰ Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*, (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1901, Reprinted in Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1995) p. 5.

⁴¹ Agnes Lee, *Growing Up in the 1850s: The Journal of Agnes Lee*, ed. Mary Custis Lee deButts. (Chapel Hill, NC and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984) p. 70.

⁴² F.A. Walker & Company, *Illustrated Supplement to Our Catalogue of 1871*, (Boston, 1871, Trade catalogue in The Athenaeum of Philadelphia collection) p. 74, p. 90, and p. 78.

⁴³ Webster and Parkes, *Encyclopaedia of Domestic Economy*, p. 377

⁴⁴ Bremer, *Homes of the New World*, p. 483.



Fig. 3. From left to right: "Patent Fly Trap," "Patent Rotary Clock-work Fly Trap," and "Wire Dish Covers." From F.A. Walker & Company, *Illustrated Supplement to Our Catalogue of 1871*. Trade catalogue in The Athenaeum of Philadelphia collection. Flies were a persistent problem in America before the advent of screens. Traps and covers were advertised as remedies that distracted insects from food and food preparation areas.



Fig. 4. Fabric window screen with lace applique from Henry T. Williams and Mrs. C.S. Jones, *Beautiful Homes* (1878). Fabric screens were popular remedies against insects and also provided shelter from the prying eyes of passers-by.

summer months, it is said that a night spent on one of those rice-plantations would be certain death...."⁴⁵

Screens

Wire and fabric screens were effective barriers against insects. As wire screens would rust, they were painted, frequently decoratively. "Woven wire makes an excellent blind, being desirable, and admitting of being ornamented by painting in oil upon it," declared Webster Woven wire, wire gauze, or fabrics such as muslin or gauze were stretched across wooden frames, and placed in windows. The screens could cover the entire window, but short blinds that covered only half the window were preferred in urban areas for the sake of privacy. Mrs. H.W. Beecher suggested "to secure the air and baffle the flies, we have found mosquito netting a great help. A simple frame of pine, about an inch and a half wide, fitted closely inside the lower sash, with mosquito lace or net nailed across it (galvanized nails or tacks should be used, to avoid rust), is the most effectual safeguard we have ever tried."⁴⁶

Henry T. Williams and Mrs. C.S. Jones agreed with this assessment, suggesting "especially useful and appropriate to the dining-room are the elegant screens now so much used to place in windows....The materials required are coarse curtain-net, crochet thread no. 40, and black sewing cotton."⁴⁷ Williams and Jones instructed their public to make another screen by basting Swiss muslin upon netting, declaring "such screens are exceeding elegant,

⁴⁵ Bremer, *Homes of the New World*, p. 283.

⁴⁶ Beecher, *Motherly Talks*, p. 44.

⁴⁷ Mrs. C.S. Jones and Henry T. Williams, *Beautiful Homes or, Hints in House Furnishing*, (New York: Henry T. Williams, 1873) p. 171

and give a beautiful finish to a window, besides frequently shutting out unpleasant views."⁴⁸

Screens could be made to fit the entire window, but it was preferable for them to fit into half the window. That way, a window could be open to admit air circulation, but shades could still be drawn to exclude light for the upper half of the window. Short blinds could be made of fabric or wire netting over a frame, or they could be fabric hung from a string placed halfway down the window.

It is difficult to ascertain when wire screens were manufactured in America although advertisements began to appear in trade catalogues in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.⁴⁹ Wealthy Americans could import screens from England and Scotland mid-century, and one trade catalogue from Scotland advertised "WIRE GAUZE WINDOW BLINDS, with Mahogany Frames and Brass Mountings, painted landscape and borders" in 1849.⁵⁰ In 1891, an American company was selling "Adjustable Knock Down Screen Frames For Doors, Patented Jan. 11th, 1887. To Keep Out Flies and Mosquitos."⁵¹

Screens were not as popular as one might guess because they were thought to impede air circulation. Fabric screens seem to have been preferred over wire screens as well. Although wire screens were admittedly more durable than netting and fabric screens,

⁴⁸ Williams and Jones, *Beautiful Homes*, p. 173.

⁴⁹ Gail Winkler and Roger Moss, *Victorian Interior Decoration: American Interiors, 1830-1900*, (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1986) p.43. The technology to make wire gauze in America was introduced in 1847 when Robert Buchanan (a Scottish immigrant) started a wire mill in New Jersey. However, the wire net from that company was produced solely to assist paper manufacture. Benjamin Filene from the Outagamie Historical Society in Wisconsin stated the connection between window screens and the screens produced by Robert Buchanan's company is tenuous at best. Information gathered during a telephone interview conducted April 8, 1997.

⁵⁰ Charles D. Young & Company, *Illustrated and Descriptive Catalogue of Ornamental Cast and Wrought Iron and Wire Work*, (Edinburgh, Scotland, 1849, Trade catalogue in The Athenaeum of Philadelphia collection) p. 85.

⁵¹ J.W. Boughton Company, (Philadelphia, 1891, Trade Catalogue from The Athenaeum of Philadelphia collection) Back cover.

they were “much more expensive, and make the room darker than net.”⁵² Expense was an important issue in screens’ popularity as well. Most Americans rented their dwellings in the nineteenth-century, and it was impractical to invest in custom-made screens that could not be taken elsewhere. Trade magazines responded to this problem and began advertising adjustable screens that could be expanded to fit the bottom portions of windows in the late nineteenth century.

Two decorative French door screens and one window screen have been found in the basement of the Lockwood with an organic motif painted in a *grisaille* fashion. While the painted designs, wooden frames, and brass mountings are similar to those advertised by Charles D. Young & Co. in 1849, the frames are constructed of American black walnut. According to one expert, American black walnut may have been used because it was durable and may have been readily available.⁵³ It is uncertain for which room the screens were intended.⁵⁴

⁵²Mrs. H[enry]W[ard], *All Around the House; or, How to Make Homes Happy*, (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1878) p. 352.

⁵³Wood sample of window screen identified on March 17, 1997, by the Center for Wood Anatomy Research, U.S. Forest Products Laboratory, Madison, Wisconsin. The Center suggested that a softer wood like spruce or ponderosa pine would have been preferable as it can be easily worked into window moldings. However, much of the woodwork in the mansion is made of American black walnut and scraps may have been used as window screens. This information implies the screens were made locally, if not on the mansion’s grounds. If the screens were manufactured elsewhere, American black walnut may have been chosen because it weathers better than pine.

⁵⁴Little physical evidence of screens, such as nail holes and indentations from hardware, was found at the windows and doorways of the mansion. One window, located in what is now the kitchen (but used to be the pantry) had markings indicative of having a screen, but the window opening was too large for the screen in discussion. The screens were found in the mansion’s basement in 1973.

It is possible the screens were intended for an outbuilding. A 1960 Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) reports “near the lodge [gatehouse] is a building, 13 feet by 20 feet, built of granite rubble and fitted up as a summer kitchen for lodge.” Screens would have been appropriate for such a space, but it is impossible to determine if they were intended for the building as it has been demolished. From Historic American Buildings Surveys, “Lockwood-Mathews Mansion, Elm Park,” prepared by Robert Koch and Osmund. R. Overby, (Norwalk, CT: 1960) Photocopy in The Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum collection, p. 2.

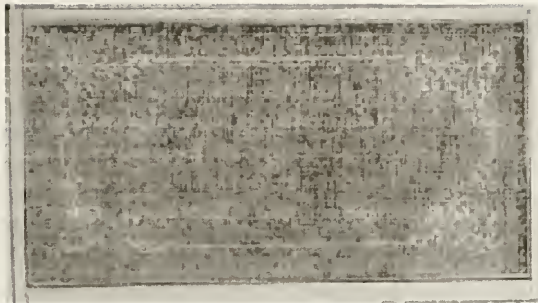


Fig. 5. "Window Gauze Blinds." Tylor and Pace's Price List of Inside and Outside Window Blinds. (London, 1849.) Trade catalogue from The Athenaeum of Philadelphia collection. This is one of the earliest advertisements for wire gauze screens. The frames were made of mahogany as that wood weathers well, and the wire was painted to prevent rust.



Fig. 6. Decoratively painted wire screen in the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum collection. The frame is made of American black walnut.

Curtains

Window curtains were also a useful defense in the battle against insects. Webster and Parkes wrote “their use is either to add warmth to the apartments by excluding the draughts of cold air; or to exclude the rays of the sun, which, in summer, are injurious to furniture; to keep out insects....”⁵⁵ The authors commented further that curtains were used “in warm climates...to moderate the sun’s rays, or to prevent the intrusion of flies, and this is their principle use with us [in Britain], independent of their ornamental appearance....”⁵⁶

Winter curtains were removed for the summer to protect the heavy fabrics from dust and light and to improve ventilation. Light-weight curtains or shades remained. It was advised that curtains “should often be dusted, and in hot summers, bed-room and even sitting-room curtains might be taken down and put by till wanted for winter, as the sun fades and makes them look shabby.”⁵⁷ According to Webster and Parkes:

Curtains of moreen or cloth, when taken from the windows for the summer season, should be well cleansed (by brushing and shaking in the open air) from every particle of dust, and then folded and enclosed in strong unfractured linen, or brown holland wrappers, and laid away in some dry airy room or closet.⁵⁸

This was often an enormous project, as the fabrics and hardware were heavy and elaborate. The winter curtains could require two people to shake and brush due to their length, a vigorous exercise that could take a great deal of time. Because of this effort, “very many housekeepers use only shades [year round]; some because they think curtains must necessarily be costly; some because of the trouble of packing away woolen curtains in the

⁵⁵ Webster and Parkes, *Encyclopaedia of Domestic Economy*, p.249.

⁵⁶ Webster and Parkes, *Encyclopaedia of Domestic Economy*, p. 249.

⁵⁷ [Lady], *The Workwoman’s Guide*, p. 203.

⁵⁸ Webster and Parkes, *Encyclopaedia of Domestic Economy*, p. 377. Moreen was a “worsted cloth which generally was given a waved or stamped finish.” From Florence M. Montgomery, *Textiles in America, 1650-1870*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1984) p. 300.

summer.”⁵⁹ Alexander Jackson Downing suggested in *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850) that curtains were unnecessary in the summer “...as all country houses are furnished with shutter-blinds, either fixed to the outside or the inside of the windows, and as coolness and airiness are the most desirable things from May to November, curtains are little used or to be desired in summer.”⁶⁰

If summer curtains were used, the preferred fabrics were muslin or lace. This type of curtain could remain hanging all year; in winter it was an inner curtain that allowed light into the house while protecting privacy. Dimity, Victoria-lawn, and Tarlatan fabrics were also acceptable summer fabrics, and the curtains could subsequently be “...trimmed with fern-fronds, Autumn or ivy-leaves” for decoration.⁶¹ For summer cottages, denim made “pretty draperies looped back from point d’esprit or Swiss [muslin] curtains.”⁶²

When discussing muslin curtains, Webster and Parkes remarked they were

...almost always used in the best rooms in addition to the usual thick curtains. They serve to shade and protect the colours of the others from the dust and sun, and have a clean and rich appearance. The muslin is richly flowered in large patterns, and many persons in summer take down principal curtains, leaving only those of muslin: these are useful to keep out the flies when the windows are open. Curtains for this purpose are sometimes made of an open netting, which is very durable.⁶³

⁵⁹ Stockton and Stockton *Home*, p. 37.

⁶⁰ A[lexander] J[ackson] Downing *Architecture of Country Houses*, [New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1850, Reprint, (New York: Dover Publications, 1969)] p. 374.

⁶¹ Williams and Jones, *Beautiful Homes*, p. 88. Dimity “refers to any of a number of harness-loom patterned fabrics...varieties of dimity patterns included flowered and striped (most common.)” Lawn “closely resembles cambric, only thinner and finer. There are many various cloths called Lawns, which are really muslins made of cotton...and Victoria Lawn, which is a thick make of book muslin, in black and white, used for dress linings.” From Montgomery, *Textiles in America*, p.218-219, 275. Tarlatan is defined as “a thin, open-mesh transparent muslin, slightly stiffened and often rather coarse.” From *Funk & Wagnalls*. p. 1333.

⁶² “Portieres,” *The Old House Journal*, Vol. V, No. 9., (September, 1977) p. 109.

⁶³ *Godey’s Lady’s Book*. (June, 1896) p. 668.

⁶³ Webster and Parkes, *Encyclopaedia of Domestic Economy*, p. 253.

Muslin also had the advantage of being durable and inexpensive. *The Ladies' Friend* reported that fashionable housekeepers might do well to imitate a French bedroom the editors had seen during the summer of 1868, and declared "...the room would have been nothing without the muslin draperies, which are inexpensive enough. Yet, upon inquiry, we found these hangings were only renewed once in five years, though of course they...were replaced by warmer curtains in the winter."⁶⁴

Lace was equally acceptable, and was described in *The Workwoman's Guide* as "the most beautiful, graceful, airy, and light of all curtain material, and looks equally well with the matting, and chintz covered furniture of summer, and with warm colored carpets, and heavy furnishing of winter."⁶⁵ Critics further recommended Nottingham lace or Swiss muslin as the preferred curtain fabrics. Charles Eastlake wrote in *Hints on Household Taste* (1878) "Swiss lace...in design it is infinitely superior to the ordinary muslin..."⁶⁶ Mrs. Beeton believed either Swiss muslin or leoline would be suitable.⁶⁷ Critics wrote the disadvantage of lace was its expense, although much depended upon whether it was expensive handmade lace or more moderately priced machine woven. Helen Ekin Starret derided young housekeepers for not practicing frugality by having "lace curtains all over the house, but not enough bed comforts to furnish the bed for winter."⁶⁸

Winter curtains were heavier fabrics and more expensive. Webster and Parkes considered high-glazed calicos and chintzes too stiff while silk was often too expensive. In

⁶⁴ *The Ladies' Friend*, ed. Mrs. Henry Peterson, (June, 1868) p.427.

⁶⁵ Stockton and Stockton, *The Home*, p. 39. Chintz is "derived from *chitta*, meaning 'spotted cloth.' In seventeenth-century India, the word referred to a specially designed painted or printed cotton that was sometimes glazed." From Montgomery, *Textiles in America*, p. 200.

⁶⁶ Charles Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery and Other Details*, 4th ed, [London: Longmans, Green, 1878, Reprint, (New York: Dover Publications, 1969)] p. 102.

⁶⁷ Beeton, *Housewife's Treasury*, p. 254.

drawing-rooms they recommended plain colored satins and figured damasks. Those with smaller incomes could choose between lutestring and tabarets, while those with even tighter budgets might try salibury flannel or cassimer. For dining rooms and libraries they recommended moreen curtains having more substance and weight.⁶⁹

The Stocktons noted "the orthodox style for dining-room curtains, according to the laws of upholsterers, is rep in the winter, and lace in the summer. Fall curtains of woolen rep help very much in giving the dining-room the appearance of being fully and elegantly furnished when there is really not very much in it, and they impart to the room a coziness and warmth, and richness of coloring...."⁷⁰ The authors warned, however, that woolen rep curtains "...also help to darken the room, and to make a short winter day seem still shorter," and they should never be used in bedrooms.⁷¹ Mrs. Beeton mentioned that the winter curtains, regardless of fabric, should correspond in tone with the carpet.⁷²

Winter curtains were usually hung during Fall cleaning. It was a difficult task, and often hazardous. "Your Grand Ma...has been an Invalid for a week or two back caused by standing on a table to put up a curtain the table tipt up with her & brought her down to the floor table Croc[k]ery & all" wrote Christopher Vail of Norwich, Connecticut, in September,

⁶⁸ Helen Ekin Starret, *Letters to Elder Daughters: Married and Unmarried*, (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1888) p. 57.

⁶⁹ Webster and Parkes, *Encyclopaedia of Domestic Economy*, p. 251. Lutestring (or lustering) was "a light, crisp, plain silk with a high luster," and tabaret (Taboratt, tabouret) were "shaded and striped worsteds" in the late eighteenth century and "stout satin-striped silk [with] broad alternate stripes of satin and watered material, differing from each other...in colour; blue, crimson, or green satin stripes are often successively divided by cream-coloured...." in late nineteenth century. While no reference to salibury was found, flannel was "made of woolen yarn slightly twisted in the spinning and of open texture, the object in view being to have the cloth soft and spongy, without regard to strength." Cassimer (cassimere) was a "medium-weight twilled woolen cloth of soft texture." From Montgomery, *Textiles in America*, p. 283, 357-358, 238, & 192..

⁷⁰ Stockton and Stockton, *The Home*, p. 68. Rep was a "cloth of plain weave with a ribbed affect achieved by means of heavier weft yarns covered with finer, more numerous warp yarns. Repts were made of silk, wool, or silk and wool." From Montgomery, *Textiles in America*, p.172.

⁷¹ Stockton and Stockton, *The Home*, p. 39, p. 55

⁷² Beeton, *Housewife's Treasury*, p. 254.

1836.⁷³ Edith Wharton's Mrs. Peniston took umbrage at an attempt at coddling, and as proof of her soundness noted "for forty years she had been thought competent to see to the hanging of her own curtains."⁷⁴ *The Workwoman's Guide* advised the housekeeper to hire a professional upholsterer to put up draperies and bed hangings, as the project "requires much correctness of eye, added to taste and knowledge of the prevailing fashion."⁷⁵

Because the Lockwoods were extremely wealthy, their window treatments were elaborate. Winter window curtains were listed in the 1873 estate auction catalogue, held after Ann Louisa Lockwood forced to foreclose on the mortgage of Elm Park.⁷⁶ The ornate curtains in the music room were described as "Five long Lavender SATIN CURTAINS, interlined; lined with white Marcelline [lace], trimmed with rich heavy silk and gold thread, gimp and fringe. With rich hangers and large heavy centre tassels. Embroidered musical trophies of purple velvet; with draperies, pins, etc., etc."⁷⁷ Admittedly, the music room was a more public space than the bedrooms on the second floor, and more attention and expense would have been given to furnishings. The Lockwoods, however, could afford expensive fabrics even in their bedrooms. The sale catalogue mentioned "...Satin Draperies, with lace curtains," "...Draperies, Green and striped silk," and "Two Pair Black Lace Curtains, richly embroidered in colors" for various bed chambers.⁷⁸

An 1870 photograph of the dining room shows the "...red reps and velvet draperies" described in the sale catalogue were removed for the summer, leaving only lace curtains

⁷³ Christopher Vail to Reverend Thomas H. Vail, 15 September 1836, WL-JD. Quoted in Elizabeth Donaghy Garret's *At Home: The American Family, 1750-1870*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1990) p. 194.

⁷⁴ Wharton *House of Mirth*, p. 100.

⁷⁵ [Lady], *The Workwoman's Guide*, p. 194.

⁷⁶ *Unique and Artistic Furniture from the House at Norwalk, Conn., of the Late LeGrand Lockwood, Esq.*, Sale Catalogue, (New York: Leavitt Art Rooms, October 30 & 31st, 1873)

⁷⁷ *Unique and Artistic Furniture*, p. 19.

⁷⁸ *Unique and Artistic Furniture*, p. 4, p. 3, & p. 6.

and the cornice hanging.⁷⁹ The lace curtains were tied back, but the cornice helped block sunlight while reminding one of the Lockwood wealth.⁸⁰

A photograph of Mrs. Lockwood's former bedroom taken in 1880 (during the Mathews' era) shows it in summer dress, but without curtains.⁸¹ It is uncertain why no curtains were present, because the amount of chairs and sofas in the room imply that it was used to receive visitors. Perhaps the interior louvered shutters that regulated sunlight while allowing air to circulate were considered sufficient.

Shutters, Shutter Blinds, And Venetian Blinds

Venetian blinds had adorned American windows since the eighteenth century and they remained popular in the nineteenth century. The louvers of Venetian blinds, which allowed different degrees of light into the house, were the main reason for their popularity.⁸² Gradually, however, interior shutters that folded into recesses at the sides of the window replaced Venetian blinds. According to one decorative arts historian, "Philadelphia inventories taken in mid-century generally give low appraisals for Venetian blinds...confirming they were no longer stylish or salable."⁸³

Shutters often had louvered panels, similar to Venetian blinds, to regulate air circulation and light. (Hence, they were often identified as "Venetian shutter blinds.")

⁷⁹ *Unique and Artistic Furniture*, p. 7.

⁸⁰ *Lockwood-Mathews Mansion*, ed. Mimi Findlay and Doris E. Friend, p.27.

⁸¹ Although it is named "Bedroom A" on the plans of the mansion, the room is commonly called "Mrs. Lockwood's Bedroom" by the staff and in *Lockwood-Mathews Mansion*, ed. Mimi Findlay and Doris E. Friend, p.33. It will be referred as Mrs. Lockwood's Bedroom in this paper.

⁸² "...the newest invented Venetian sun blinds for windows, on the best principles, stain'd to any colour, moves to any position, so as to give different lights, screens from the scorching rays of the sun, draws cool air in hot weather, draws up as a curtain, and prevents from being overlooked, and is the greatest preserver of furniture of any thing of the kind ever invented." John Webster, Philadelphia upholsterer advertisement. From the August 20, 1767 issue of the *Pennsylvania Journal*.

⁸³Winkler and Moss, *Victorian Interior Decoration*, p. 95.



Fig. 7. Second floor interior shutters at the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion folded into recesses when opened. Louvred panels provide ventilation.



Fig. 8. Exterior of Lockwood-Mathews Mansion, c. 1880. Photo courtesy of The Norwalk Museum, Norwalk, Connecticut. Light roller blinds were used in addition to interior shutter blinds to regulate light and heat.



A concern for security delegated these louvered panels to the second-story and above; solid paneled shutters were placed on the basement and first-story windows.

Venetian blinds, shutter blinds, and shutters were hung either on the interior or exterior of a house for the first half of the eighteenth century. By 1850, however, placing shutters inside was considered more practical. Exterior shutters could be awkward to manipulate and not visually appealing. Gervase Wheeler believed outside shutter blinds never went well on thick, rough, stone walls of the Gothic style, and recommended interior shutter blinds.⁸⁴

Traditionally Venetian blinds, shutter blinds, and shutters were painted green. "Very dark green is quite unobjectionable as a color for the Venetian Blinds," wrote Downing in 1850, "as it is quite unobtrusive. Bright green is offensive to the eye, and vulgar and flashy in effect."⁸⁵ Frederika Bremer remarked "...all is kept cool by the green Venetian shutters" while staying in Washington DC on February 14, 1850.⁸⁶ By 1870, however, exterior shutters and blinds were sometimes painted a contrasting color from the rest of the house. Interior shutters were stained or painted to coordinate with the scheme of the room and were designed to fold into recesses at the sides of windows when not in use.⁸⁷

In accordance with popular practice, the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion was designed for interior shutters. The first floor shutters have solid panels, while the upper story windows are equipped with louvered Venetian shutters. All the shutters fold into compartments at the side of the window and they appear to always have been stained.

⁸⁴ Gervase Wheeler, *Rural Homes; or Sketches of Houses Suited to American Country Life, with Original Plans, Designs, &c.*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1851) p. 39.

⁸⁵ Downing *Architecture of Country Houses*, p. 205.

⁸⁶ Bremer, *Homes of the New World*, p. 470.

⁸⁷ Winkler and Moss, *Victorian Interior Decoration*, p. 157-158.

Shades

Window shades, commonly known as “roller shades,” were used a great deal on windows of the nineteenth century, especially those without interior louvered shutters. “Inside roller-blinds are useful in many situations,” wrote Downing, “to soften the light in apartments, when the windows are much exposed to the sun.”⁸⁸ The shades were often made of linen (usually Holland or cambric) or sized muslin.⁸⁹

Buff Holland was recommended by Williams and Jones it allowed a mellow glow into a room. For those who could not afford linen, “transparent shades” made of architect’s tracing cloth and decoratively painted with landscapes or in imitation of stained glass were desirable, as the cloth imparted a “rich, bright glow in cheerless rooms” when light would shine through the painted colors.⁹⁰

Opaque window shades were made from oilcloth or fabric. The oilcloth was usually painted, marbled or grained, although Williams and Jones believed those types of shades were “better fitted for a saloon than a private dwelling, and should never be admitted into the tasteful homes.”⁹¹ In 1871, *Godey’s Lady’s Book* instructed housekeepers how to make a “Window Blind in Mosaic,” which was composed of “silk, glazed calico in various colors, card-board, wooden tassel heads, filoselie.”⁹²

Designs, either professionally done or hand painted, were popular. Landscapes and rural scenes were common during the early part of the nineteenth century, but motifs

⁸⁸ Downing *Architecture of Country Houses*, p. 375.

⁸⁹ Holland is described as a linen cloth “once specifying the country of manufacture for a wide variety of linen goods.” The fabric “later became the generic name for linen clothe, often of fine quality....” From Montgomery, *Textiles in America*, p. 258.

⁹⁰ Williams and Jones, *Beautiful Homes*, p. 50.

⁹¹ Williams and Jones, *Beautiful Homes*, p. 51.

⁹² *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, (April, 1871) p. 371-372. Filoselie (or Filoselle) was “the trade name for a spun silk thread suitable for use with needles and formed of very lightly united strands.” From Montgomery, *Textiles in America*, p. 238.

with stenciled borders in fashion as the century drew to a close.⁹³ “Where taste and artistic skill,” declared Williams and Jones “combined with neatness in execution are brought into requisition in designing and executing the painting on these shades, they may be made as beautiful a covering for a window as can be conceived.”⁹⁴

Painted shades had critics, however. Downing described them as vulgar and wrote, “...if they are badly painted, as is generally the case, they are...an offense to cultivated taste; if they are well painted...they only hide...a more interesting view of the real landscape without.”⁹⁵ Despite criticism, painted shades were common throughout the nineteenth century.

Roller blind hardware remains on some windows at the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion. Nineteenth-century photographs show that all three stories of the house used undecorated white blinds for protection against sunlight.

Awnings

Awnings hung on windows during summer months, especially at those windows that received the most direct sunlight. Generally, only the southern and western sides of the house had awnings. Iron frames projecting from either side of the window held the cloth or wooden laths steady, and when not in use the blinds retracted.⁹⁶ Nineteenth-century critics suggested colors such as blue and green for awnings, and stripes were popular.⁹⁷

The early, and possibly original, green and white awnings used by the Mathews survive in the mansion’s collection. Photographs from the nineteenth century depict a large

⁹³ “Painted Window Shades,” *The Old House Journal*, Vol. VI, No. 9, (September, 1978) p. 11.

⁹⁴ Williams and Jones, *Household Elegancies: Suggestions in Household Art and Tasteful Home Decorations*, (New York: Henry T. Williams, 1875) p. 266.

⁹⁵ Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses*, p. 375-376.

⁹⁶ Winkler and Moss, *Victorian Interior Decoration*, p. 41.

⁹⁷ Winkler and Moss, *Victorian Interior Decoration*, p. 41.

awning that opened like a tent over the *porte cochere* located on the mansion's west elevation. According to one photograph, wood flooring was nailed onto the roof of the *porte cochere* and, complete with folding chairs, it made a comfortable and cool sitting room. Patched holes in the stone that surrounds the windows at the entrance of the *porte cochere* give evidence of the awning's iron frame. Additional window awnings are in the mansion's collection, but no physical or photographic evidence was found to pinpoint the location of their installation.

Portieres

Like window curtains, portieres changed during different seasons. Most popular in America from 1870-1920, portieres were long curtains that hung at doors to protect interiors from light, drafts, and dust. They were also decorative and fitted a late nineteenth-century aesthetic that abhorred empty spaces and somber woodwork.

Winter portieres could be made of many different fabrics and textiles, including ingrain carpets and velvet. Often two sets of hangings were placed in the same doorway, each set reflecting the decorative tone of its corresponding room. When two sets could not be afforded, hangings were made with a different color on each side. Many color schemes rose and fell in popularity during the fifty years that portieres were common.⁹⁸

When seasons changed, "the heavy portieres were generally taken down...and lighter silk [and cotton or linen] drapes were hung for strictly decorative effect."⁹⁹ Florence Caddy remarked that "Draught more often enters from doorways than by windows, and in

⁹⁸ "Portieres," *The Old House Journal*, (September, 1977) p. 109.

⁹⁹ "Portieres," *The Old House Journal*, (September, 1977) p. 109.



Fig. 9. Exterior of Lockwood-Mathews Mansion, c. 1890. Photo courtesy of the Norwalk Museum, Norwalk, Connecticut. An awning was placed on the roof of the *porte cochere* during the summers. It regulated interior light and heat while providing a shaded area in which to sit.



Fig. 10. Florence C. Mathews at leisure beneath porte cochere awning c. 1890. Photo courtesy of the Norwalk Museum, Norwalk, Connecticut. Wood flooring and rattan furniture made it into a comfortable, shady sitting area.

summer doors are often unhung for the sake of coolness and additional space, and the portieres are comfortable to use on chilly days.”¹⁰⁰

Houses used by the wealthy only during the warm months, or summer cottages, were designed and decorated specifically for warm weather. Summer cottages, generally less formal than winter residences, used different fabrics and colors for portieres. *Godey's Lady's Book* described a room in a summer house during June, 1896, as having portieres of “...burlaps or denim; sea-green denim braided in white is exceedingly effective....”¹⁰¹

Portieres were taken down at the same time, and in the same manner, as curtains and bed hangings. As mentioned earlier, the fabrics were cleaned, and placed in unbleached muslin fastened shut with safety pins. Mary Elizabeth Carter advised those closing a house for summer to have “...a special closet for curtains, portieres, etc., and always employing the same men for such work....A very large house can then be dismantled or reclothed with remarkable rapidity.”¹⁰²

The Lockwoods' sale catalogue lists “One Door Cornice...with draperies, curtains, tassels, etc.”¹⁰³ Additionally, portieres are pictured in an 1870 photograph of the music room in winter dress; and they appear to match the window draperies, previously described as lavender satin trimmed with gold thread and fringe.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Caddy, Florence. *Household Organization*. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1877.) p. 149.

¹⁰¹ *Godey's Lady's Book*, (June, 1896) p. 668.

¹⁰² Mary Elizabeth Carter, *Millionaire Households and Their Domestic Economy: With Hints Upon Fine Living*, (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1903) p. 59.

¹⁰³ *Unique and Artistic Furniture*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ *Lockwood-Mathews Mansion*, ed. Mimi Findlay and Doris E. Friend, p. 23.



Fig. 11. Music room of the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion c. 1870. Photo courtesy of the Norwalk Museum, Norwalk, Connecticut. Portieres provided decoration while reducing drafts and dust. They were often removed during the summer for improved air circulation.



Fig. 12. "Mrs. Lockwood's Bedroom" c. 1880. Photo courtesy of the Norwalk Museum, Norwalk, Connecticut. This photo, taken during the Mathews' tenure, shows the bedroom in summer dress. Grass matting with area rugs covers the floor and the curtains have been taken down.

Bed Hangings

Although bed curtains were shunned by those who believed disease was a result of improper air circulation, they were still commonly used and were an integral part of the changes incurred by seasonal dress. In 1878, Williams and Jones acknowledged “bedsteads are again furnished with curtains and valances (physicians to the contrary notwithstanding)...”¹⁰⁵ The authors went on to suggest that curtains “give a bed an air of cozy comfort during the Winter, when gay Oriental-looking stuffs hang about and protect the head of the bed; and when draped with soft fleecy-looking Swiss [muslin], lace or gauze in Summer they add such an air of breezy, dainty coolness....”¹⁰⁶ In 1878, the fashion was to make summer hangings of a light fabric, usually Swiss muslin, “with fluted ruffles as a finish, curtains and hangings to correspond, as also a bed-spread and pillow covers, which must be lined with color to match or contrast with furniture....”¹⁰⁷

Heavy winter bed hangings, frequently of wool or damask, were removed for the summer to increase air circulation. Feather mattresses were also considered too warm, and Joseph Lyman suggested:

The objections urged against feather beds, except in midwinter, are doubtless valid....A very perfect and delightful resting-place is made by placing upon a good set of steel or copper springs a shuck mattress, over which, at least in cool weather, a thinner bed of wool, hair, or feathers is laid.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Williams and Jones, *Beautiful Homes*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁶ Williams and Jones, *Beautiful Homes*, p. 87.

¹⁰⁷ Williams and Jones, *Beautiful Homes*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁸ Joseph B. Lyman and Laura E. Lyman, *The Philosophy of Housekeeping: A Scientific and Practical Manual for Ascertaining the Analysis and Comparative Value of all Kinds of Food, Its Preparation for the Table, The Best Mode of Preserving Articles of Diet, the Proper Care of Health, Remedies in Sickness, and the Intelligent and Skillful Performance of Every Household Office, with an Appendix of Recipes*, Revised ed., (Hartford, CT: S.M. Betts & Co., 1869) p. 354-355.

Beecher and Stowe advised “the best beds are thick hair mattresses, which for persons in health are good for winter as well as summer use” and “unbleached cotton [sheeting] is good for winter.”¹⁰⁹ Certain fabrics for sheets and blankets were also more appropriate for different seasons. *Godley’s Lady’s Book* gave directions for sewing summer quilts, declaring they were “more easily washed, and kept of a snowy whiteness than heavier counterpanes.”¹¹⁰ According to Mrs. Beeton:

Sheets are of linen or calico, the latter being warmer to the touch than the former, which are desirable for summer use. In winter, strong cotton sheets with a sort of nap on the surface, generally called Bolton sheets, will be found warm, comfortable, and useful.¹¹¹

Rehanging the bed curtains in Fall was as much a trial as hanging window curtains. Emily Barnes recalled hanging a bedstead in the 1840s, and having trouble with “dimity curtains, trimmed with broad, netted fringe, while we found it still more difficult to arrange the blue silk canopy overhead.”¹¹²

Six of the ten bedrooms listed on the Lockwood sale catalogue had bedsteads covered with canopies. Four of those bedsteads specifically mention draperies with the canopy.

The bedstead attributed to Mrs. Lockwood was described as being “...canopied with lavender satin and blue velvet, gilt rods, etc., with cluny lace curtains [very expensive handmade lace].” Another bedroom, believed to be that of Mr. Lockwood had “One Rich and Elegant ROSEWOOD BEDSTEAD, Inlaid and Gilt; round corners, with female head in

¹⁰⁹ Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman’s Home: or Principles of Domestic Science; Being a Guide to the Formation and Maintenance of Economical Healthful, Beautiful, and Christian Homes*, (New York: J.B. Ford & Company, 1869) p. 359.

¹¹⁰ *Godley’s Lady’s Book*, (July, 1864) p. 79

¹¹¹ Beeton, *Housewife’s Treasury*, p. 173.

¹¹² Emily Barnes, *Narratives, Traditions, and Personal Reminiscences*, (Boston, 1888) p. 268. Quoted from Elisabeth Donaghy Garret’s *At Home*, p. 194

centre; green satin canopy and draperies.”¹¹³ One assumes these blue velvet and green satin sets of hangings would have been cleaned and put away in May, and rehung in October.

The Mathews family, on the other hand, had at least one bed without hangings. The bedstead depicted in the 1880 photograph of Mrs. Lockwood’s bedroom have hangings removed because of summer, but it does not appear to be designed to include hangings at all.

Netting

Where window screens were not in use, the most common barrier against flying insects was netting. An integral part of seasonal dress, netting involved wrapping or draping light fabric over interior furniture and decorations. Netting not only kept insects from disturbing humans, but also protected expensive decorative finishes like gilt. Typically netting was made of muslin or gauze, and it was often draped over beds to protect sleepers.¹¹⁴ “Close nets around a bed are the only sure protection at night against these insects [mosquitoes]” wrote Beecher and Stowe the *American Woman’s Home*.¹¹⁵ Although Frederika Bremer complained bitterly about the summer heat, she found some relief as she wrote “when in the mornings early I wake and feel the balmy wind of Florida

¹¹³ *Unique and Artistic Furniture*, p. 2 - 6.

¹¹⁴ In London, bedsteads were made specifically with netting in mind. A trade catalogue from William Smee and Son illustrates a bedstead “intended for mosquito curtains.” One difference between that particular bedstead and another designed for normal bed hangings is the one made for netting has a footboard identical to the headboard; another is that all four posts are carved and turned. The bedstead designed for normal bedhangings has plain and square posts at the headboard. Perhaps the high footboard eliminated the headaches of getting feet tangled in the netting at night, and also accelerated making the bed, reducing the worry of accidentally tucking in the netting with the sheets. All four posts are carved and turned in the bedstead designed for netting because netting is transparent. The plain posts near the headboard would usually be covered with drapery, and it wasn’t necessary to spend time and money making decorative posts that would always be hidden. From William Smee and Son’s *Designs of Furniture*, Trade catalogue in the Athenaeum of Philadelphia collection (London, 1850) illus. 3 & 4.

¹¹⁵ Beecher and Stowe, *American Womans Home*, p.377.’

play through the white curtains round my bed...then I do exalt the home of summer...."¹¹⁶ Even soldiers used netting on their campaigns to protect themselves against insects. At Fort Pickens, Alabama, during May, 1861, it was noted that "Everything seemed well arranged. Those men who were in their beds had mosquito curtains drawn, and were reading or sleeping at their ease."¹¹⁷

To protect decorative finishes, netting was used as a barrier against "fly specks." Chandeliers, frames for mirrors and paintings, lamps, and other gilded items were covered for protection. Otherwise, the waste of flies reacted with the gold and deteriorated the finish. The resulting area would be permanently discolored. This was worrisome to most housekeepers, even in wealthy households. When houses were closed for the summer, the furniture was "all swathed in its summer wrappings, lamps, chandeliers, brackets, and statuary draped in soft white material."¹¹⁸ Even brass andirons took care; they were rubbed with mutton suet, sprinkled with unslaked lime, and encased in muslin or tissue paper.¹¹⁹ Less prosperous households, who had greater investment in maintaining their few fine furnishings, lived with netting during the summer months. Although there were recipes that supposedly discouraged flies from landing upon gilt, many housekeepers were apparently unwilling to take the risk.¹²⁰ *Godey's Lady's Book* declared in June, 1859: "It is

¹¹⁶ Bremer *Homes of the New World*, p. 486.

¹¹⁷ Sir William Howard Russell, *Pictures of Southern Life, Social, Political, and Military*, Written for the London Press, (New York: James G. Gregory, 1861) p. 57

¹¹⁸ Carter, *Millionaire Households*, p. 62.

¹¹⁹ Garret, *At Home*, p. 212.

¹²⁰ "Boil three or four onions in a pint of water, then with a clean paint brush wash over your frames, and the flies will not alight on them. No injury will result to the frames. This renders unnecessary the unsightly drapings of gauze." From Stockton and Stockton, *The Home*, p. 150. The same recipe was given by Mrs. E. A. Howland during 1847 in *The New England Economical Housekeeper and Family Receipt Book*. (Worcester: S.A. Howland, 1847) p. 100.

not possible to prevent flies from staining the gilding without covering it...."¹²¹ Webster and Parkes advised:

On account of the impossibility of washing water gilding without injury, it is necessary to take great care to protect it from flies, or other causes of soiling it, particularly in the summer season, by covering it over with some fabric of threads woven like a very fine net, as it is observed that flies instinctively avoid anything in the shape of a net.¹²²

Netting was considered unsightly by critics, however. "They're afraid of flies, and yet, dear knows, they keep every looking glass and picture-frame muffled to its throat from March to December" declared Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1865.¹²³ Lydia Maria Child attempted a compromise when she recommended:

Instead of covering your glasses and pictures with muslin, cover the frames only with cheap, yellow cambric, neatly put on, and as near the color of the gilt as you can procure it. This looks better; leaves the glasses open for use, and the pictures for ornament, and is an effectual barrier to dust as well as flies.¹²⁴

In this way, the decorative finishes could be protected with a cover that, while not attractive, was at least less noticeable. It also allowed pictures to be admired and glasses to retain their reflective qualities so important in the evening.

If window screens were used by the Mathews, as is supposed, netting would have been unnecessary. As mentioned earlier, a photograph of Mrs. Lockwood's bedroom summer showed a bed, as well as light fixtures, mirrors, and picture frames without netting.

¹²¹ *Godey's Lady's Book*, (June, 1859) p.175.

¹²² Webster and Parkes, *Encyclopaedia of Domestic Economy*, p. 240

¹²³ Stowe, *House and Home Papers*, p. 37.

¹²⁴ Child *American Frugal Housewife*, p. 17-18.



Fig. 13. *Parlor, Gulf Coast, 1880-1885.* From Williams Seales, *The Tasteful Interlude: American Interiors Through the Camera's Eye, 1860-1917* (1981.) Netting was often draped over mirrors or pictures with gilt frames to prevent fly specks.



Fig. 14. Dining room at the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion c. 1870. Photo courtesy of the Norwalk Museum, Norwalk, Connecticut. Loose, striped slipcovers were placed on chairs to protect the upholstery from dust and light. Slipcovers were used year-round for informal occasions, but the fact that the heavy curtains have been removed, while lace curtains and the cornice remain at the windows indicates the room was in summer dress.

Slipcovers

Furniture was draped with loosely fitting covers of lightweight fabric in the summer. Covers not only protected furniture and textiles from intense sunlight and dust, but also provided more comfort from the heat than the heavy upholstery fabrics such as horsehair or wool. Williams and Jones declared "country houses, during Summer, appear best with light or white-grounded chintzes or Cretonnes..."¹²⁵ The authors recommended that covers be made with "...a full ruffle from the seat to the floor [which] adds a graceful and dainty appearance, especially in Summer, when light chintz covers may be used to impart that cool delicacy which light materials only can."¹²⁶ While chintz was a favorite summer fabric, cotton, linen, damask, and muslin were acceptable. The fabric could be solid, striped, or patterned. It was preferable to have furniture covered *en suite*, however. It was common for housekeepers to use the same textile pattern for curtains, bed hangings, and slipcovers.¹²⁷

The Lockwoods' dining room, photographed in summer dress during 1870, had striped slipcovers for the chairs. The slipcovers draped over chairs normally upholstered in "red reps and velvet."¹²⁸ The sale catalogue lists more furniture with slipcovers, including "Two SMALL CIRCULAR STUFFED BACK RECEPTION CHAIRS. Covers for above." and "One Rich White and Gold CARVED ARM CHAIR, Covered with rich tapestry, gimp, etc.

¹²⁵ Williams and Jones, *Beautiful Homes*, p. 13. Cretonne was a "white cloth with warp of hemp and weft of linen made in Normandy used for curtains, etc." in the eighteenth century and by the twentieth century they were "usually printed on both sides of the fabric, with a design and colour scheme of a different character on each side, to make them quite reversible." From Montgomery, *Textiles in America*, p. 209.

¹²⁶ Williams and Jones, *Beautiful Homes*, p. 241.

¹²⁷ It should be noted that slipcovers were not used during summer only. Housekeepers would protect furniture from dust and light year round with covers, only taking them off for visitors or formal occasions.

¹²⁸ *Unique and Artistic Furniture*, p. 17.

Linen cover.”¹²⁹ It should be noted that comparatively few of the chairs and sofas were listed with accompanying covers on the catalogue, including the dining room chairs. Because the sale catalogue was compiled in October, it is reasonable to assume the covers were packed away for winter.

Fireplace and Stove Covers

Boards and screens often covered the openings of wood and coal burning fireplaces during the summer months. The purpose of these covers was to deny entrance to the smoky odors or birds and other creatures that might inhabit the chimney. Dampers that eliminated these problems were not made until mid-century, and houses built before then were obliged to resort to fireboards.

Even the most simple fireboards had a decorative as well as functional purpose. In April, 1859, *Godey's Lady's Book* commented that “...in warm summer days, the open fireplace is an unsightly object, and pretty devices used to hide it are very acceptable to the careful housekeeper.”¹³⁰ Fireboards were usually made of pine, with a cotton or baize cover pasted upon it.¹³¹ The fabric was then decorated by painting, or pasting paper flowers upon it. Another method of decoration was to paste scraps of the same wallpaper that covered the walls of the room to the board.

Paper or fabric garlands often were employed to conceal the fireplace opening. Williams and Jones instructed housekeepers on constructing paper garlands, which were folded and placed to cascade from the chimney-place to the hearth. Paper flowers and leaves were then often attached to the garlands. The authors suggested “Green is the best

¹²⁹ *Unique and Artistic Furniture*, p. 16.

¹³⁰ *Godey's Lady's Book*, (April, 1859) p. 358.

color for brightening up a room, and will be the most agreeable to the eye in Summer, especially combined with white."¹³² Fabric was utilized in the same manner and in a variety of colors. F.A. Walker and Company had in stock during 1871 "Satin Fire-Stove Ornaments Supplied in the Following Colors: Green and White, Pink, White, Amber and Black, Black, White."¹³³

Traditionally, plants or flowers had been placed in vases in front of the fireplace during the summer. Besides having a decorative purpose, they were often functional as well. Pots of asparagus fern were used to detract flies.¹³⁴ Williams and Jones thought more than asparagus was needed to cover the openings when they stated:

The old method of our grandmothers of filling the wide fireplaces and open stoves with huge vases of flowers or bunches of asparagus during the summer months, has become an impossible mode of covering the blackened walls, or remembrance of hot fires so oppressive during a sultry summer day. It behooves all good housekeepers therefore to resort to some other expedient for rendering this portion of the home tasteful, a particular spot where the eye will love to wander, and upon which it will delight to linger as a place where peculiar refreshment may be had, because of the loveliness of the ornamentation.¹³⁵

The authors suggested forming "...a fender, surrounding the hearth, of rustic work, made by interlacing grape-vines with gnarled roots and branches introduces, bunches of grapes with vine leaves or leather acorns and oak leaves, upon the corners and center."¹³⁶ This type of decoration was considered far more appealing than any velvet or tapestry which usually hung over the mantel, at least during the summer months.¹³⁷

¹³¹ Baize is "a plain, loosely woven cotton or woolen fabric, napped to imitate felt...." From *Funk & Wagnalls*, p. 106.

¹³² Henry T. Williams and Mrs. C.S. Jones, *Ladies' Fancy Work: Hints and Helps to Home Taste and Recreations*, (New York: Henry T. Williams, 1876) p. 136.

¹³³ Walker and Co., *Illustrated Supplement*, p. 58.

¹³⁴ Garret, *At Home*, p. 216.

¹³⁵ Williams and Jones, *Ladies' Fancy Work*, p. 146.

¹³⁶ Williams and Jones, *Ladies' Fancy Work*, p. 145.

¹³⁷ Williams and Jones, *Ladies' Fancy Work*, p. 145.

According to a woman's magazine, *The Ladies' Friend*, fenders were made specifically for summer plantings. The editor wrote in June, 1868:

...the new basket fenders are a pretty invention. They are made in white and gold and brown and gold, and replace the steel fender in summer time. They are filled with plants and ferns, placed in a tin tray and, while forming the prettiest possible 'ornament for your fire stoves', are not rusting your steel fender and irons, and ruining your housemaid's temper.¹³⁸

Although the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion was fueled by coal, it was built when new construction included more efficient dampers.¹³⁹ The Lockwoods could afford the most advanced technology, and it is doubtful the architect would have ignored improvements in the primary source of heat of the mansion. In fact, evidence that Detlef Lienau gave attention to the chimney is present in the fireplace between the music room and central rotunda. Over the fireplace mantel is a panel of etched glass that can be seen from both rooms. Lienau diverted the flues to either side of the glass so the panel acts as an interior window. Because of this attention to technology it is doubtful that fire covers were needed during the summer. An 1870 photograph of the drawing room showed a fire screen propped against the fireplace opening that successfully removed the hearth from view when it was not lit. The screen did not seem to perform a practical function, however, or it would have been placed more tightly in the fireplace opening.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ *The Ladies' Friend*, (June, 1868) p. 497.

¹³⁹ "Gold's patent steam radiators provided heat for the building. One of the four boilers would heat the steam radiators, which in turn would heat cold air brought in from outside. The heated air then rose through ducts in the walls and entered the rooms above through registers...one of the boilers...burned a ton of coal a day." from *The Lockwood-Mathews Mansion*, ed. Mimi Findlay and Doris E. Friend, p.31.

¹⁴⁰ *Lockwood-Mathews Mansion*, ed. Mimi Findlay and Doris F. Friend, p. 25.

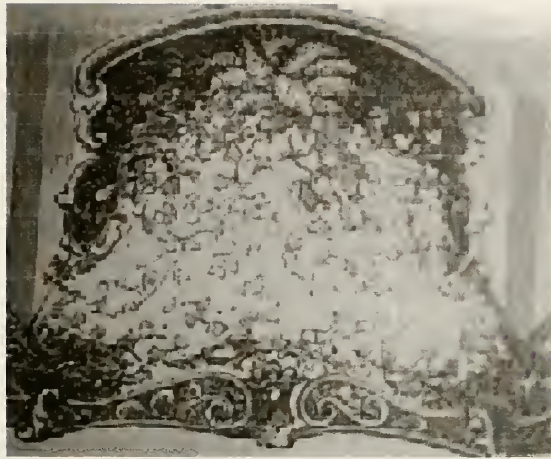


Fig. 15. Illustration of summer fireplace cover from Henry T. Williams and Mrs. C.S. Jones' *Ladies' Fancy Work* (1876). Fireplaces were covered when not in use for the summer. This example shows paper cascades strewn with paper flowers and topped with a paper ferns.



Fig. 16. Drawing room of the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion c. 1870. Photo courtesy of the Norwalk Museum, Norwalk, Connecticut. A decorative cover is propped against the fireplace. Fireplace covers prevented smoky odors and drafts and hid unsightly hearths from view.

Floor Coverings

The introduction of factory-made textiles in the early nineteenth century allowed housewives in America to have carpets, and by 1830 they were in general use. Carpets were not only decorative, but functional because of their insulating properties in drafty houses.¹⁴¹ Additionally, the type of carpet one owned was a reflection of taste and wealth. Household manuals repeatedly discouraged young housewives from spending too much of their presumably tight budget on expensive pile carpets, leaving little money for other furnishings or decorative items. The authors of *The Home: Where It Should be and What to Put in It* suggested:

Ingrain, with pretty window hangings, pictures, and ornaments, will make the room look more attractive than Brussels with accompanying destitution; and your friends, in their admiration of the general tasteful arrangement, will overlook the enormity of an Ingrain carpet.¹⁴²

Because of their great expense, carpets were treated with special care. Cleaning and storing the carpet for summer was expected, not only to make the house cooler, but also to reduce wear. Mrs. Peniston's response to an insult was characterized as "...she was as much aghast as if she had been accused of leaving her carpets down all summer, or of violating any of the other cardinal laws of house-keeping."¹⁴³ The Stocktons believed "it is not desirable to have carpets on the floor in the summer. They get filled with dust, they add much to the warmth of a room, and if there is any taint in the air, the woolen carpet is apt to seize upon and hold it."¹⁴⁴

Some writers contended that carpets should never be used for sanitary reasons.

Robert Tomes wrote "the carpet is a concession to luxury which is by no means favorable to

¹⁴¹ Garret, *At Home*, p. 194.

¹⁴² Stockton and Stockton *Home*, p.44.

¹⁴³ Wharion *House of Mirth*, p. 124.

health...[because it] retains the dirt and dust, to give off, at every sweep of the broom or tread of the foot, flocks of wool saturated with filth, and most irritating to the lungs and dangerous to health."¹⁴⁵ Luckily for carpet manufacturers, this belief was not widespread.

Lining was placed under carpets to protect from wear and insects. The Stocktons suggested wool lining, "laid between layers of paper, stretched or quilted," which might have prevented wear but did not deter insects.¹⁴⁶ Williams and Jones preferred a "sponge carpet lining, chemically prepared to prevent moths" which produced "a delightful elastic softness."¹⁴⁷ Druggets (coarse, durable cloths used as crumb cloths in the dining room) could be placed under or over the carpet, or even used alone.¹⁴⁸ The wealth of lining materials available, and its discussion in household manuals, suggests how important the preservation of carpets was to the American housewife. Also, the novelty of the types of linings described also implies that the popular use of carpeting was a relatively recent event.

Cleaning the carpet required more labor than cleaning draperies. According to *The Workwoman's Guide*, a carpet was taken up by removing the tacks that held it in place, after which it was shaken well, cleaned with a piece of cloth, then soap, and then a mixture of warm water, alum, gall, and fuller's earth. Lastly, it was rubbed dry and laid flat on the grass or hung to dry.¹⁴⁹

Finally, the carpet was to be rolled and wrapped in paper or linen and transported to the attic or cellar for storage, or it could be tacked down again. It was advised by one carpet manufacturer that the best coverings were "...large bags made from heavy wide

¹⁴⁴ Stockton and Stockton *Home*, p. 45.

¹⁴⁵ Tomes, *Bazar Book of the Household*, p.118.

¹⁴⁶ Stockton and Stockton *Home*, p. 44.

¹⁴⁷ Williams and Jones, *Beautiful Homes*, p. 49.

¹⁴⁸ Garret, *At Home*, p. 193.

¹⁴⁹ [Lady], *Workwoman's Guide*, p. 222.

unbleached cotton, with a drawing-string....There is no necessity for the larger outlay for camphor, paper, and burlap made by some each year."¹⁵⁰ The floors were then covered with oil cloths or, more frequently, grass matting.¹⁵¹

Grass matting was closely woven, and made of reeds. Generally, it came in strips no wider than three feet, which were then bordered, and seamed together.¹⁵² It seemed all nineteenth-century critics favored matting. "Matting is the most popular floor covering for summer" declared the Stocktons.¹⁵³ Florence Caddy commented "...Indian mats look cool in summer and preserve the carpet from fading."¹⁵⁴ Webster and Parkes remarked: "Matting is used in some cases instead of carpets. The best are India mats, which are used to lay over carpets, particularly in summer, from their being cool. They are durable."¹⁵⁵ Besides being laid over carpets, or in place of carpets, matting was used with carpets. One manufacturer declared "A very cool summer furnishing is to use some one of the plain mattings as a surround for a central rug."¹⁵⁶

Some households used matting year round, as it was inexpensive and durable. Mrs. H.W. Beecher advised "If one cannot have a floor covered all over with carpeting, a matting is, in our judgment, much to be preferred for warm climates."¹⁵⁷ Beecher and Stowe knew

¹⁵⁰ John H. Pray, Sons & Company, *A Few Facts About Carpets*, Trade catalogue in The Athenaeum of Philadelphia collection, (Boston, 1854) p. 28.

¹⁵¹ Mary Mullen, a friend of the family, writes about grass matting used during her childhood in the 1920s, "Harry [my husband] and I recall the summer rugs and we feel that in the summer months when dust was more prevalent blowing in through the windows and since brooms were the only implement for ridding the house of dust years ago, the Crex straw rugs were easier to keep clean. I recall that long hallways had runners of matting in the summer months. A friend suggested that the straw rugs were substituted for heavy winter carpets - especially in homes with large families for they were cooler for little bare feet to scamper over in summer months."

¹⁵² Winkler and Moss, *Victorian Interior Decoration*, p. 30.

¹⁵³ Stockton and Stockton, *The Home*, p. 45.

¹⁵⁴ Caddy, *Household Organization*, p.150.

¹⁵⁵ Webster and Parkes, *Encyclopaedia of Domestic Economy*, p.258.

¹⁵⁶ John H. Pray, Sons & Company, *A Few Facts About Carpets*, p. 18.

¹⁵⁷ Beecher, *All Around the House*, p. 58

of a house "...where a plain straw matting has done service for seven years," in the parlor.¹⁵⁸ In winter, the same family placed a small carpet in front of the fire which, "...gave an appearance of warmth to the room."¹⁵⁹ Mrs. H.W. Beecher disagreed with her sisters-in-law and stated:

We have seen rooms covered with the strong, handsome Japanese matting, and a border of some rich-colored carpeting fitted all around the room, that equaled in elegance any of the more expensively furnished parlors. A square of velvet or tapestry carpeting can be used, with little danger of tripping, if there is a centre table put upon it, as the carpet will not extend so far as to give any excuse for stumbling. In cold weather this may be desirable, but does not add to the elegance of the room.¹⁶⁰

Matting was inexpensive in comparison to carpets. In 1873, the Stocktons reported that it cost between thirty-five to fifty cents per yard.¹⁶¹ By 1894, the price had risen to between fifty cents and a dollar per yard.¹⁶² In comparison, the Stocktons noted that an American Axminster rug, one of the more moderately expensive types of rugs produced, was between three and five dollars per yard.¹⁶³ This was probably the reason matting was so common, and why certain households used it year round.

For all its advantages, matting was not considered useful for all rooms. Beecher and Stowe determined that it was not appropriate for the dining room or other hard wear areas.¹⁶⁴ *The Household News* concurred, adding that matting was most useful in bedrooms.¹⁶⁵ Gervase Wheeler suggested "For the hall...Indian matting upon the floor."¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁸ Beecher and Stowe *American Woman's Home*, p. 86-87.

¹⁵⁹ Beecher and Stowe, *The American Woman's Home*, p. 93.

¹⁶⁰ Beecher, *All Around the House*, p. 58.

¹⁶¹ Stockton and Stockton, *The Home*, p. 45.

¹⁶² *Household News*, Vol. II, No.2, (February, 1894) p. 331.

¹⁶³ Stockton and Stockton *Home*, p. 44.

¹⁶⁴ Beecher and Stowe, *The American Woman's Home*, p. 85-86.

¹⁶⁵ *Household News*, Vol. II, No.2, (February, 1894) p. 331.

¹⁶⁶ Wheeler, *Rural Homes*, p. 190.

Matting was made more attractive by coloring. Often individual reeds were dyed, then woven together to produce a pattern. Cunningham's Emporium, of Providence, Rhode Island, advertised "Canton matting –White and Red Check" in 1850.¹⁶⁷ Sometimes the entire mat was colored. "For summer matting you can have white or green and white, or red and white" recommended the Stocktons.¹⁶⁸ Williams and Jones thought matting in "...bright crimson, deep brown or white checkered" appealing.¹⁶⁹ When *Godey's Lady's Book* gave hints for furnishing summer cottages, they remarked matting was "...purchasable in all colorings, or in creamy white with quaint figures looking like wood inlay."¹⁷⁰ The *Household News* recommended plain cream colored matting for functional reasons, as it was reversible and easier to clean.¹⁷¹

Matting could also be used at windows. One magazine described a summer cottage with "...rolling blinds of matting painted with gay birds and flowers."¹⁷² In another issue, *Godey's Lady's Book* advised "the suspension of Indian matting, previously damped, at the open window, tends to diminish the heat."¹⁷³

As the weather grew cooler, the woolen carpets were uncovered or brought out of storage. Mrs. H.W. Beecher believed carpets should be brought down in the midst of fall cleaning "while repairs are going on..."¹⁷⁴ The textile added welcome coziness, as Lydia Maria Child stated in November, 1874: "I have a pretty, sunshiny room all to myself, hung

¹⁶⁷ Cunningham's Emporium, Trade catalogue in The Athenaeum of Philadelphia collection, (Providence, RI, 1850) p. 30.

¹⁶⁸ Stockton and Stockton *Home*, p. 55.

¹⁶⁹ Williams and Jones, *Beautiful Homes*, p. 19.

¹⁷⁰ *Godey's Lady's Book*, (June, 1896) p.668.

¹⁷¹ *Household News*, Vol. II, No. 2, (February, 1894) p. 331

¹⁷² *Godey's Lady's Book*, (June, 1896) p.668.

¹⁷³ *Godey's Lady's Book*, (July, 1864) p. 83.

¹⁷⁴ Beecher, *All Around the House*, p. 119.

with pictures, warmly carpeted...."¹⁷⁵ Just as grass matting represented the coming warm weather, replacing the carpet signified the oncoming winter as surely as the first frost.

The Lockwoods' sale catalogue lists twenty-six carpets, all high quality and expensive. There were six of the most costly carpets made, Aubusson, as large as sixty square yards. One is described as a "...rich Aubusson TAPESTRY CARPET, bordered, square, measuring about 61 square yards."¹⁷⁶ Other carpets included in the catalogue were six Axminster carpets, four Moquette, five Wilton, and five Brussels. As mentioned earlier, having one Brussels carpet often stretched the average housekeeper's budget unbearably. The fact that the Lockwoods owned twenty-six large carpets is evidence of their enormous wealth.

The 1870 photograph of the dining room, with its slipcovers and light curtains, implies the room is in seasonal dress. However, the carpet remains on the floor. It is peculiar that the Lockwoods would not wish to protect such an investment as their fine carpets. Perhaps the palatial space would have been considered too informal without the carpet; the Lockwoods were expected to entertain lavishly. Also, as mentioned earlier, some considered matting inappropriate for dining rooms and other areas of hard wear.

Evidence of grass matting exists from the Mathews tenure.¹⁷⁷ Photographic documentation from 1880 shows Mrs. Lockwood's bedroom with grass matting on the floor. The matting is striped and covers the entire floor with small rugs scattered throughout the room.

¹⁷⁵ Lydia Maria Child, *Letters of Lydia Maria Child*, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1883) p.231.

¹⁷⁶ *Unique and Artistic Furniture*, p. 20.

¹⁷⁷ Matting tack holes are present on the pine flooring in Bedroom A and throughout the halls of the servants' quarters. Matting was attached to the floor with tacks that were similar to heavy-duty staples, parallel to the floorboards.

Additionally, scraps of matting exist, and one sample is attributed to Mrs. Lockwood's bedroom. It has been woven of individually dyed strands of at least four colors including red, buff, green, and purple. The matting has what appears to be a cotton weft.¹⁷⁸ When viewed from farther away, a striped design consistent with the black and white 1880 photograph appears. Another sample, located *in situ* in the servants' hallway on the third floor is still another design. The design of this sample is much simpler than the other, composed of a single, undyed color and a straw weft.

The difference in design is reasonable, as areas used by the family for sleeping and entertaining would require more aesthetic value than the strictly functional areas of the servant quarters and nursery. Also, matting may have been the only floor coverings and used year-round in the servant quarters and nursery.

¹⁷⁸ The cross-threads of woven cloth are called weft, while the threads interwoven into the weft the long way are called the warp. In this case, the shorter threads of the sample are the weft, while the individually dyed straw reeds are the warp. From *Funk & Wagnalls*. p. 1483, 1474.



Fig. 17. Bedroom, House of Dr. Henry K. Oliver, 10 Joy Street, Boston, MA 1866. From William Scales' *The Tasteful Interlude* (1981.) Grass matting and the lack of curtains indicate this room is in summer dress.



Fig. 18. Photos courtesy of the Gallier House/Hermann-Grima House, New Orleans, Louisiana (1996.) The photograph on the left shows the interior in winter dress, while the right shows summer dress.

CHAPTER III

Interpretation and Conservation Issues

Historic preservationists working in house museums confront interpretation and conservation issues daily. In addition to maintaining the collections inside the house, the museum professional must preserve the house itself. Steps taken in other types of museums to protect delicate surfaces and textiles, such as removing or covering windows, are often considered too invasive to the historic structure. Furthermore, those types of measures detract from interpretation of the site to visitors. Dilemmas arise not only in conservation, but interpretation as well. Displaying the fragile collection, including original fabrics and finishes, is essential to the complete interpretation of the house. However, light and heat may irreversibly damage the collection.

Both visible and ultraviolet light contribute to fading and internal breakdown in fibers.¹⁷⁹ Sherry Butcher Youngghans, a historian, wrote in *Historic House Museums* (1993) that "light is the primary adversary of organic historic materials and can be difficult to control in historic house interiors. Too much sunlight, as well as artificial lighting, can cause textiles to dry out and fade, wood-paneled walls to lose color, and fabrics and leather to become brittle."¹⁸⁰ John Bero, an architect, commented, "any organic material exposed to light deteriorates. Most obvious is fading of fabric dyes and wood finishes, but more

¹⁷⁹ Molecules activated by light energy undergo chemical changes, which may prompt secondary reactions involving water vapor and oxygen. This occurs especially in the blue and violet spectrum; water and humidity are catalysts. Heat contributes to this breakdown. Besides photochemical degradation, textiles degrade by exposure to oxygen, called "photosensitized air oxidation." From Jeanette M. Cardamone Carter, *Evaluation of Degradation in Museum Textiles Using Infrared Photography and Property Kinetics*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1984) p. 5-8.

¹⁸⁰ Sherry Butcher-Youngghans, *Historic House Museums: A Practical Handbook for Their Care, Preservation, and Management*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) p. 111.

serious is destruction, at the molecular level, of historic materials such as textiles and wood. This deterioration is cumulative and nonreversible."¹⁸¹

Most house museums contend with three kinds of light. The first is sunlight, which is damaging to interiors because it generates heat and also transmits ultraviolet rays. The second is incandescent light (tungsten lighting), which generates heat, but has little or no ultraviolet radiation (although some bulbs, such as tungsten-halogen may produce significant amounts of ultraviolet radiation.) The third type of light is fluorescent bulbs, which function with little heat build-up but transmit ultraviolet light. Additionally, the ballasts used to start the voltage in display cases using fluorescent lights do produce heat.¹⁸²

A common strategy has been to rotate collections. Bero maintains that while the strategy is beneficial for individual objects it is not effective for the whole collection as it does not reduce total damage.¹⁸³ Because light damage is nonreversible rotation only serves the purpose of dispersing deterioration throughout the collection rather than focusing it on one piece. Another approach has been ultraviolet filters at windows and around artificial lights. While this is low cost and full-time, it is uncertain protection. Filters have a ten-year lifespan and gradually lose effectiveness during that time. The instruments needed to test effectiveness are not readily available to most small house museums. Additionally,

¹⁸¹ John F. Bero, "Damn Windows: Protecting the Historic Interior from Sunlight," *Window Rehabilitation Guide for Historic Buildings*, ed. Charles E. Fisher III et. al. (Washington, DC: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, 1997) Sec. IV, p. 55. On the same page, the author states that "exposure to 10 footcandles (measure of light intensity or illuminance - direct sunlight on fresh snow is 6500-7500 footcandles) for one year is equivalent to one footcandle for ten years.

¹⁸² Butcher-Youngmans, *Historic House Museums*, p. 111

¹⁸³ Bero, "Damn Windows," Sec. IV, p.55.

removing filters that have been attached to window glass is difficult. Finally, visible light is not reduced by ultraviolet filters and damage to historic fabric still occurs.¹⁸⁴

According to Bero the ideal light protection would block all UV light and control infrared light full-time. Easy removal, high durability, discreet appearance, inexpensive, and easily acquired are additional criteria. After admitting meeting the above criteria is virtually impossible, Bero suggests a combination of operational practices and the installation of “easily demountable, innocuous, transparent or semi-transparent UV filters” These filters are constructed from traditional storm sash, supplemented with piggy-back, UV filtering acrylic sheets that may be tinted to block visible light. Suggested operational practices include close attention to artificial light levels, closing blinds and shutters, and replacing historically significant blinds and drapes with modern copies.¹⁸⁵

Literature also encourages house museums to employ historical light reducing systems like blinds, shutters, and shades. Karen Finch and Greta Putnam remarked “valuable lessons can be learned from the way that good housekeeping techniques of the past have preserved textiles.”¹⁸⁶ Margaret Fikioris wrote:

Present day museum administrators need to return to the eighteenth and nineteenth century sensitivity to the problem of light and its certain damage to textiles and rugs, wallpaper, prints, and furniture and close their shutters and lower their blinds.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Bero, “Damn Windows,” Sec. IV, p.56. Bero writes further that UV filters are usually applied directly to historic glass. They are difficult to remove, and since they must be replaced occasionally because of degradation, some damage to the glass and/or sash can be expected each time the film is renewed.

¹⁸⁵ Bero, “Damn Windows,” Sec. IV, p. 55, 56, 57, and 56.

¹⁸⁶ Karen Finch, O.B.E. and Greta Putnam, *Caring for Textiles*, (New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 1977) p. 27.

¹⁸⁷ Margaret Fikioris, “Textile Conservation for Period Room Settings in Museum and Historic Houses.” *Preservation of Paper and Textiles of Historic and Artistic Value II*, ed. John C. Williams, Symposium papers from the Cellulose, Paper and Textile Division at the 178th Meeting of the American Chemical Society, Washington, DC, September 10-12, 1979, (Washington, DC: American Chemical Society, 1981) p.255.

Fikioris warned against closing historic window curtains, however, as they are especially damaged by sun.¹⁸⁸ Sherry Butcher-Youngmans added:

Keep in mind that historic curtains and draperies will also be strongly affected by sunlight. Historically, housekeepers closed window coverings during the bright, hot times of the day. Although this kept the sun from objects within the room, as well as lowering temperatures, it speeded the deterioration of the window covering itself. In some museums where curtains have hung for decades with no ultraviolet protection, dry rot has advanced so far that they actually fall apart when touched. Printed or colored fabrics will lose their color almost completely, and white areas will become yellowish in color.¹⁸⁹

Because some protection must be placed at windows to block light, house museums should consider blinds and shades. Those devices have historic precedent and can be considered sacrificial to light deterioration. Shades and blinds with historic value should be stored away, and modern substitutes put in their place.¹⁹⁰ As an example, Colonial Williamsburg hangs Venetian blinds and utilizes interior shutters and curtains to reduce heat against fabrics. The historic precedent of these practices has been researched at the site and one staff member, Tom Taylor, has remarked positively on their helpfulness. He stated that solutions are difficult because of the fine line between interiors conservation and site interpretation.¹⁹¹ Colonial Williamsburg has the luxury of a full-time textile conservator on staff so that proper maintenance and repair occurs. Most house museums do not have such a specialist at hand, however, and preservation measures become the only means of reducing damage to historic textiles.

Practicing seasonal dress helps preserve textiles during the hottest and brightest months of the year. Interpreting the house with historically low light levels not only

¹⁸⁸ Fikioris, "Textile Conservation," p.255.

¹⁸⁹ Butcher-Youngmans, *Historic House Museums*, p. 112.

¹⁹⁰ Bero, "Damn Windows," Sec. IV, p. 55.

¹⁹¹ Tom Taylor, Colonial Williamsburg, telephone interview, March 6, 1997.

protects furnishings but also decorative finishes such as paint and wallpaper. While curtains are removed from heat and light, shutters, blinds, or awnings are used in their place. Further protection from fading and wear is available by removing or covering carpets. Loose slipcovers that prevent dust and light damage are placed over furniture. Finally, the process of cleaning and storing allows regular and close examination of the furnishings for damage. Small problems may be noticed before they cause more deterioration and, consequently, conservation measures are reduced.

Several house museums practice seasonal dress, and questions arise about their installations, including the amount of documentary evidence that contributed to the interpretation and public reaction. The Gallier House of New Orleans, Clayton of Pittsburgh, and the Manship House of Jackson, Mississippi, responded to those questions.

Conservation measures used by the house museums surveyed include textile cards and ultraviolet filters on glass. All of those who were questioned believed that seasonal dress assisted preservation of textiles for the sole reason that they were removed from light for a few months. However, no conservation studies have been conducted by the house museums about the degree to which seasonal dress affects interiors.

Gallier House, New Orleans, Louisiana

Built in 1857 by noted New Orleans architect James Gallier, Jr., the Gallier House Museum was designed to combat summer heat. Thick masonry walls, high ceilings, and loggias helped keep interiors cool. The architect also designed adjustable ceiling vents for increased air circulation.¹⁹²

¹⁹² "Gallier House Museum Gets Dressed for Summer," May 17, 1996, Press Release from the Hermann-Grima/ Gallier Historic Houses.

From the end of May until mid-October, the Gallier House Museum recreates summer dress. White slipcovers protect furniture, matting replaces carpets, winter draperies are removed, and netting is draped over beds and gilt finishes. A glass-domed fly catcher baited with sugar and cobalt poison is set out on the floor to attract bugs.¹⁹³

No documentation for seasonal dress exists at the Gallier House, and the interpretation is based upon primary sources such as magazine advertisements and diaries. The museum remains open during installation, although the majority of work is done on a Monday when the museum is closed to the public.

Public reaction is mixed in response to seasonal changes. Some visitors have been disappointed the elegant trappings of the winter season are covered. Other visitors, however, feel differently. Jan Bradford, Chief Curator of the Hermann-Grima/Gallier Historic Houses, writes "I can also tell you that at the Hermann-Grima House...where we have only talked about summer dress...visitors ask why the house is not appropriately converted in the summer—many times in a disappointed fashion."¹⁹⁴ She adds:

...whether to go through this process or not, seems a decision to be made between the staff-director, programmer, and curator. It does entail a great deal of work, but thematic tours seem a good way to draw local visitors back to the museum and attract the media.¹⁹⁵

Clayton, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The estate of Henry Clay Frick, co-founder of Carnegie Steel Company in Pittsburgh, was built in 1866 and enlarged in 1891. Currently, summer dress is installed from June to September. During this time, carpets and rugs are replaced by matting, winter

¹⁹³ "Gallier House Museum Gets Dressed for Summer."

¹⁹⁴ Jan C. Bradford, Chief Curator of Hermann-Grima/Gallier Historic Houses, letter to author, dated February 26, 1997.

¹⁹⁵ Bradford, letter to author, February 26, 1997.

curtains and portieres are removed, slipcovers in colors and patterns that match room decor protect upholstery, the back porch is screened, and awnings are installed on exterior windows.¹⁹⁶

In addition to style and etiquette books of the nineteenth-century, family archival materials were used to support interpretation of seasonal dress. The archival materials used for interpretation include receipts, memoirs, and photographs of the interiors taken c.1900. An example of the type of documentation used for interpretation includes a memoir of Miss Helen Clay Frick, who wrote "Early in November, the house was transformed by having the winter draperies put up, and it took on such a cozy, warm appearance."¹⁹⁷ The museum, ordinarily closed on Monday, remains closed an additional two days for seasonal dress changes. For most changes, four or five of the staff assist, but Clayton hires professional movers experienced in the moving of antique furnishings to relocate items like pianos, tall clocks, and large bed frames.¹⁹⁸

When asked about public reaction to seasonal dress, a tour guide remarked that visitors were generally positive about it. She admitted some were disappointed to see the furniture covered, but added that seasonal dress was a good incentive for return visits.¹⁹⁹

While Clayton has not conducted conservation studies on light damage to their historic textiles, they are aware of the problem. The museum has written a policy called the "Textile Replacement Program" in which they outline the decision-making process of replacing deteriorated textiles. The policy does not outline preventative measures against deterioration, but describes how replacements are chosen for destroyed textiles. Those

¹⁹⁶ Robin Pfisterer, Registrar of Clayton, letter to author dated November 26, 1996.

¹⁹⁷ Pfisterer, letter dated November 26, 1996, Quote courtesy of The Frick Art & Historical Center.

¹⁹⁸ Pfisterer, letter dated November 26, 1996.

¹⁹⁹ Tour taken February 6, 1997, when Clayton was in winter dress.

replacement decisions are made by the staff and are based upon research in the Frick Art and Historical Center's archives, study of early 1900 photographs of Clayton's interiors, examination of existing furnishings, and discussion with colleagues in the textile field. The purpose for the research is to replace destroyed textiles with the most practical and historically correct fabrics available. Items considered in the program include over-draperies, lace curtains, upholstery, slipcovers, and carpets.²⁰⁰

Manship House, Jackson, Mississippi

Built in 1857 by Charles Manship, an ornamental painter who also sold wallpaper, the Manship House gives proof that seasonal dress was not always practiced by those who were wealthy. Like the Gallier House, the Manship House was built with a warm climate in mind. Sited on a natural slope, the house was able to catch breezes. Traditionally southern building attributes, such as verandahs and high ceilings, maximized air circulation and shade. Green interior shutters reduce sunlight as well.²⁰¹

Every summer, the Manship House puts slipcovers on furniture, replaces rugs with matting, takes down winter curtains, and places netting on gilded surfaces and beds. The staff also uses fire covers, placing paper cascades adorned with paper flowers at the fireplace opening in place of the winter mantelpiece lambrequins. Sources for this practice include household manuals and magazines.²⁰²

There is no physical or archival evidence linking the Manship House to seasonal dress practices. Marilyn Jones, Curator, states that interpretation is based upon knowledge

²⁰⁰ "Introduction," *Textile Replacement Program*. Part of a proposal written by Clayton's staff, which was included in a letter sent to the author dated November 26, 1996.

²⁰¹ Jane Brown Gillette, "Summer Dress," *Historic Preservation*, Vol. 47, (July/August, 1995) p. 100.

²⁰² Gillette, "Summer Dress," p.100.

of common practice and primary sources like magazine articles and diaries. Additionally, the Gallier House was used as a model for interpretation.

Public reaction to the installation is mixed but generally positive. Some visitors, like the ones at Clayton and the Gallier House, are disappointed that the furnishings are covered. Jones believes seasonal dress interpretation has been successful, however, and is considering adding to it. In keeping with a thematic tour Jones might implement the untidy appearance of semi-annual housecleaning. By adding elements of traditional housekeeping she hopes to educate visitors on the magnitude of work nineteenth-century housekeepers performed to preserve their furnishings.²⁰³

Seasonal dress interpretation assists conservation efforts by simply removing or covering fragile textiles during the hottest and brightest months of the year. Some house museums consider seasonal dress a successful interpretive tool that tempts visitors to return. Furthermore, the practice was so common in nineteenth-century America that house museum interpretation can be based upon little physical or archival evidence.

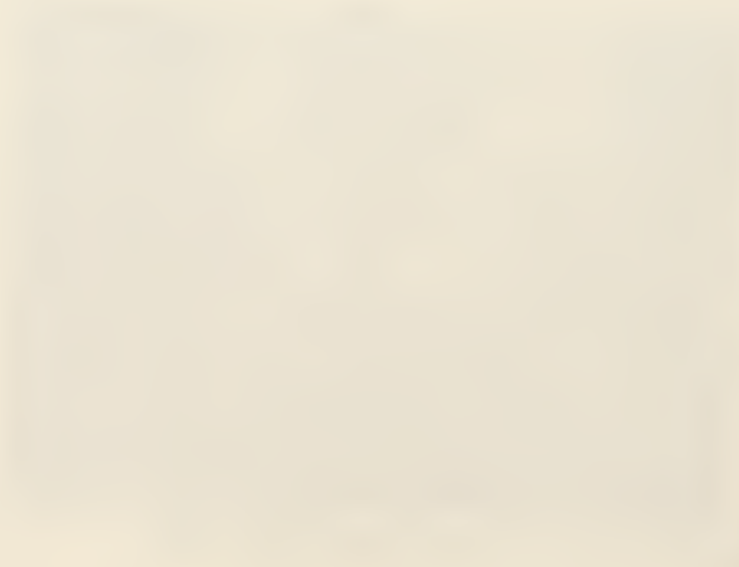
²⁰³ Marilynn Jones, Curator, The Manship House, telephone interview conducted March 5, 1997.



Fig. 19. Interpretation of Clayton interior. Photo courtesy of The Frick Art and Historical Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (1996.) The room is in winter dress.



Fig. 20. Summer dress interpretation with slipcovers, grass matting, roller blinds, and a fireplace cover at the Manship House. Photo courtesy of the Manship House, Jackson, Mississippi.



CHAPTER IV

Recommendations and Conclusion

The Lockwood-Mathews Mansion is currently focused on the conservation of its interior architectural finishes, such as painted walls, wallpaper, and decorative mouldings. For seasonal dress to be implemented, its use would concern those issues. In this light, seasonal dress would again become as practical and functional as it was in the nineteenth century, and not simply an enhancement to interpretation. Recommendations should reflect this practical aspect, which is based upon documentary evidence, current conditions, and the museum's priorities.

In comparison to other seasonal dress installations, the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion has a strong basis for interpretation. Unlike the Gallier or Manship Houses, the mansion has photographic evidence from both the Lockwood and Mathews family. Furthermore, physical evidence such as the window screens, awnings, and matting samples exist.

There are few historic textiles remaining on display in the museum. Grass matting was removed from the floors in the late 1960s.²⁰⁴ If the wooden floors are covered, it is with modern carpets. Interior wooden shutters are the only window treatment present although some curtain cornices still exist over windows. The only textiles on display are furniture upholstery and wallpaper.

In light of this information, seasonal dress interpretation should concentrate upon furniture slipcovers and window treatments. Because conservation is the foremost issue,

²⁰⁴ According to Kathleen Maher, Assistant Director/Curator of the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum, the matting was removed because of fire codes. The museum's facility report states that although the museum has a fire detection and alarm system, fire suppression is limited to water-based portable fire extinguishers (p. 11). Maher notes the museum borrows dry chemical portable fire extinguishers for exhibitions.

simple and inexpensive window treatments such as roller blinds would be appropriate. As mentioned earlier, historic precedent for roller blinds exists in nineteenth-century photographs. Roller blinds would become sacrificial to light damage instead of the historic shutters, many of which have been damaged by prolonged exposure to light.

Installing awnings during the summer months would also help preserve interiors. Awnings placed along the western exposure of the mansion would reduce light and heat to interiors and, in combination with roller blinds, would preserve interior shutters. The mansion has several early, possibly original, awnings in its collection and photographic evidence of their use. Both awnings and roller blinds would prevent the majority of light from reaching decorative paint finishes and architectural woodwork. Temperatures would also be lowered by these measures, which in turn reduce damage.²⁰⁵

Installing roller blinds would be most beneficial to conservation if used throughout the mansion. Other seasonal changes, such as awnings, slipcovers, and floor coverings are area specific. Furnishing the entire house in those changes is undesirable at this time because of museum priorities. Interpretation of the first floor is primarily concerned with the Lockwood family and the interior decorative finishes. There are no curtains or historic carpets to be removed. The partial summer dress the Lockwood family practiced, which included lighter curtains and slipcovers in the dining room, would be impracticable as there

²⁰⁵ “The cause of air temperature change is almost entirely the heating effect of the sun by day through both short- and long-wave radiation and the loss of this heat by long-wave radiation at night. Building materials are heated by solar radiation in three ways: by direct solar gain from external radiation; by indirect internal solar gain through windows—the ‘greenhouse effect’; and by indirect heating via the external air whose ambient temperature is raised by the sun. The shaded part of a building stays relatively cool and immobile, being mainly affected by the seasonal average temperatures.

All building materials expand when heated and contract again when cooled, this expansion and contraction being called thermal movement which is a major cause of decay in buildings. As well as affecting the temperature of the material and internal air volume, solar gain can affect the internal temperature of the building by radiation through windows (unexpectedly, in the months of March and

is little furniture and no curtains in that room. If the museum plans on implementing more textiles such as portieres, curtains, or upholstery on the first floor, then summer changes would become practical from a conservation and economic point of view.

As an economical alternative, it might be worthwhile to keep a room on the second floor in summer dress year-round. The second floor was traditionally a less formal space than the first and interpretation could focus more on social history rather than decoration.²⁰⁶ In particular, Mrs. Lockwood's bedroom would benefit from this installation. No major changes have occurred to that room since the photograph was taken in 1880, and it would take little effort to interpret. In the photograph, the windows have no curtains and there is no netting draped over light fixtures. The room does not have curtains at present and keeping the room in summer dress would explain that lack. The only addition needed to match the photograph would be grass matting, although that might not be possible due to fire codes.²⁰⁷ If it is not possible to install matting, the sample taken from the room and currently in the museum archives may be displayed. Slipcovers, although not in the photograph, would have historic precedent in the rest of the house and would protect fragile upholstery.

In addition to incorporating social history into the interpretation, the introduction of seasonal dress would have the added benefit of representing the Mathews family. The first

September, solar heat gain through windows can be greater in Scotland than in the Sahara.” From Feilden, *Conservation of Historic Buildings*, p. 94 - 95.

²⁰⁶ The museum already interprets the second floor differently than the first floor. Tour guides speak about the separate passage that circumvents the central rotunda. The passage allowed servants to perform their duties while hidden from the more public spaces of the mansion. Additionally, the museum has done research on domestic help for an exhibit in 1996 entitled “Beyond the Velvet Curtain” that may be incorporated into a tour with relative ease.

²⁰⁷ Grass matting is important for the interpretation of this room in seasonal dress. If permission to use it is granted, matting can be recreated by using Japanese “tatami.” Tatami is entirely woven of grass, grass woven with invisible plastic, or grass with cotton warp, and is manufactured in 36” widths just like the original. From Winkler and Moss, *Victorian Interior Decoration*, p. 32.

floor has been chiefly focused on the Lockwood family, which is logical considering most of the unique finishes created for them are intact. The Mathews occupied the mansion over fifty years longer than the Lockwoods and are an integral part of the mansion's history. The Mathews seem to have used the mansion as a "home" rather than a showcase for their wealth. They had more time than the Lockwoods to settle into and understand their dwelling. An ordinary housekeeping practice like seasonal dress could illustrate that part of the mansion's history well.

In short, introducing seasonal dress at the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion would be advantageous to conservation and interpretation. Installing roller blinds and awnings would protect interior finishes, and keeping Mrs. Lockwood's bedroom in summer dress year-round would be inexpensive and add further dimension to the mansion's interpretation.

Conclusion

Aspects of seasonal dress are still implemented by housekeepers today. The Pottery Barn, a furniture and accessories company, advertised in a catalogue of early summer, 1997, "Summer changes the way we live. We spend more time outdoors--by the ocean, by the pool and entertaining. We've updated warm-weather classics, bringing summer and the seaside to year-round living."²⁰⁸ Summer furnishings include window shades that "...reveal the beauty of woven linen when sunlight filters through--white or natural [color]," and curtains in "the fabric of choice for summer...linen-cotton drapes are airy enough to billow in a summer breeze." A lattice fireplace screen that "covers an empty fireplace with plants

²⁰⁸ Pottery Barn catalogue, (San Francisco, early summer, 1997) p. 3.

or flowers...three unglazed terra-cotta pots are included," and grass rugs are advertised for their "...durability, resistance to dirt and a tactile surface that feels good underfoot." Finally, a bed is described as desirable "when slipcovered in white cotton denim [and] has the ideal summer look—crisp, cool and comfortable."²⁰⁹

Seasonal dress survives because, in addition to its preservation qualities, it is a practical method for making interiors cooler in the summer. Seasonal dress must also be considered attractive, otherwise it would not be advertised for year-round use in furniture catalogues today.

Practical and attractive methods for keeping interiors cool are of interest to house museums. Many house museums spend a large portion of their small budgets installing heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems to regulate heat and humidity. These systems are expensive, invasive, and require high maintenance. As Bernard Feilden, noted historic preservationist, remarked in *Conservation of Historic Buildings*, "the problem of large ducts and remote plant rooms required for air conditioning is difficult enough in designing new buildings, but in existing historic buildings it is acute." He commented further "the need for [air conditioning] should be put into perspective, for one should recognize that many [house museums] can use the capital and running costs of air conditioning better elsewhere. Indeed, if the electric supply is spasmodic, an air-conditioning plant could do damage to cultural property."²¹⁰

Eighteenth and nineteenth-century housekeepers dealt with the same issues of preservation as house museum professionals today, including seasonal variations of

²⁰⁹ Pottery Barn catalogue, p. 64, 61, 52, 15, and 16.

²¹⁰ Bernard M. Feilden, *Conservation of Historic Buildings*, (Oxford and Boston: Reed Educational and Professional Publishing, Ltd., 1994. Revised and reprinted, 1996) p. 267, 272.

moisture, dust, heat, and light. Their solutions relied on less mechanics, were not as invasive, and responded to nature's fluctuations more readily than those currently practiced. Instead of automatically adapting twentieth-century technology to a nineteenth-century house with potential harm to historic fabric, it is appropriate to remember and employ less invasive nineteenth-century solutions.

For house museums, seasonal dress is a relatively inexpensive, non-invasive, and practical means of conserving interiors. It has historic precedent in America throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Furthermore, house museums that practice seasonal dress interpretation have remarked upon its success. Seasonal dress in house museums not only contributes to collection conservation, it provides a commentary on work loads, work habits, and technology. It is a reminder that modern appliances and technology taken for granted, such as vacuum cleaners, fans, and heating, had a great impact on the lives of housekeepers. In light of this, seasonal dress cannot be underestimated as a useful tool for interpretation and conservation.

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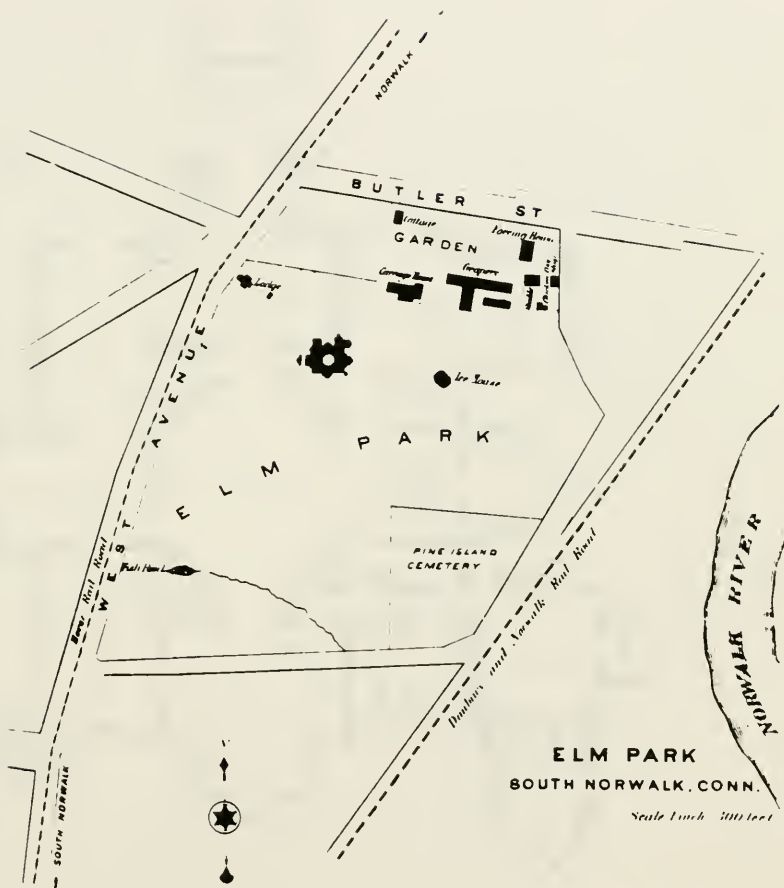
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Appendix

Plans and Map of the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum*

* Map and plans appear courtesy of the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum, Norwalk, Connecticut.



ELM PARK
SOUTH NORWALK, CONN.

Scale 1 inch = 100 feet

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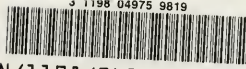
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