

THE WHITE HOUSE INTERIORS OF  
CAROLINE HARRISON AND EDGAR YERGASON 1890 – 1892

Keith D. MacKay

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in the History of Decorative Arts

Masters Program in the History of Decorative Arts  
The Smithsonian Associates and Corcoran College of Art + Design  
2009

© 2009  
Keith Daniel MacKay  
All Rights Reserved

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .....	ii
List of Illustrations .....	iii
Introduction .....	1
The President General and the Upholsterer .....	3
The Blue Room: Ladies Frequently Faint Here .....	19
The Green Room: A Dream of Beauty .....	28
The Vestibule: An American Renaissance .....	36
The State Dining Room: Like a Glorious Sunset .....	40
Conclusion .....	46
Bibliography .....	50
Illustrations .....	54

## **Acknowledgments**

I am indebted to Betty C. Monkman for her generous guidance and support. To William Seale I owe special thanks for his constant encouragement. For assistance in various ways I would like to thank William Allman and Hayley Bower, Office of the Curator, the White House; Marcia Anderson, William Bushong, Neil Horstman, and John Riley, the White House Historical Association; Jeanne Solensky, the Winterthur Library; Barbara Austen and Susan Schoelwer, the Connecticut Historical Society; Ulysses G. Dietz, the Newark Museum; and M. Jeff Hardwick, the Smithsonian Institution. And for continuing to appear interested in my thesis while providing support and insight I thank Carmie Jones McDonald and Randall McLean.

## **List of Illustrations**

Figure 1. President Benjamin Harrison and Family . . . . .	54
Figure 2. Caroline Scott Harrison . . . . .	54
Figure 3. Centerpiece, Franklin Pierce Administration . . . . .	54
Figure 4. Proposal for the Extension of the Executive Mansion . . . . .	54
Figure 5. Edgar Yergason. . . . .	55
Figure 6. Letter Head for Talcott & Post . . . . .	55
Figure 7. Letter Head for William H. Post & Company . . . . .	55
Figure 8. Edgar Yergason’s Patent Drapery Chain . . . . .	56
Figure 9. Governor Theodore Roosevelt’s Chamber in the State Capitol . . . . .	56
Figure 10. The Blue Room, Harrison Administration . . . . .	57
Figure 11. Blue Room Window Treatment . . . . .	57
Figure 12. Sketch for Blue Room Window Treatments . . . . .	57
Figure 13. Design for Irregular Drapery . . . . .	58
Figure 14. Blue Room Textile . . . . .	58
Figure 15. Design Proposed for Blue Room Gate . . . . .	58
Figure 16. The Green Room, Harrison Administration . . . . .	59
Figure 17. Design for Green Room Ceiling . . . . .	59
Figure 18. Design for Green Room Ceiling . . . . .	60
Figure 19. Design for Green Room Window Treatments . . . . .	60
Figure 20. Vestibule, Harrison Administration . . . . .	61
Figure 21. Newspaper Illustration of Vestibule Relief Panel . . . . .	61
Figure 22. Edgar Yergason at the North Entrance of the White House . . . . .	61

Figure 23. The State Dining Room, Harrison Administration . . . . .	62
Figure 24. White House Orchids . . . . .	62
Figure 25. Four Generations . . . . .	62
Figure 26. Design for State Dining Room Wall Decoration . . . . .	63
Figure 27. Monroe Mantel, State Dining Room. . . . .	63
Figure 28. Side Table. . . . .	63
Figure 29. Russian-Pattern Glass Service, Harrison Administration . . . . .	64
Figure 30. Dinner Plate, Harrison Administration . . . . .	64
Figure 31. Sketch for State Dining Room Window Treatment . . . . .	64
Figure 32. Design for State Dining Room Window Treatment . . . . .	64
Figure 33. The Raven . . . . .	65
Figure 34. Lowell Manufacturing Co. Royal Wilton Carpet Tag. . . . .	65
Figure 35. A Lover of Old China . . . . .	65
Figure 36. The West Sitting Hall, Harrison Administration . . . . .	65
Figure 37. The Red Room, Reagan Administration . . . . .	65

## Introduction

First Lady Caroline Harrison (1832-1892) and upholsterer Edgar Yergason (1840-1920) were participants in a complex cultural reassessment of American taste at the end of the nineteenth century. Their collaborative redecoration of the White House from 1890 – 1892 was the earliest decorative expression of the Colonial Revival in the President's House. The resulting interior challenges our conception of the Colonial Revival and perception of upholsterer created interiors. Together Harrison and Yergason created a picturesque re-imagining of the colonial that embraced modern technological advances such as electricity and the luxuriant abundance typical of the late nineteenth century. Caroline Harrison's romantic view of history and artistic temperament were adroitly translated by Yergason, setting the precedent for historicist interiors as the setting for the presidency, and in so doing inspiring the beginning of a White House collection of historical artifacts.

The centennial of George Washington's presidency animated the style of the Harrison White House. Benjamin Harrison was inaugurated in March of 1889 on the one hundredth anniversary of the first presidential inauguration. Benjamin and Caroline Harrison even took part in a vast pageant recreating Washington's 1789 inauguration in New York City including a ferry boat ride into the city, parades, and an elegant ball where young ladies descended from Revolutionary War heroes performed a cotillion.<sup>1</sup> The Harrison family emphasized their lineage from colonial ancestors and the Revolutionary War heroes. Press articles, drawings, and photographs made frequent

---

<sup>1</sup> Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), 106-120.

comparison of Benjamin Harrison with George Washington or his grandfather William Henry Harrison. (Figure 1) The arrival of the Harrisons in Washington was heralded as their return to an ancestral home.

The birth-date of the Colonial Revival is traditionally given as the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. While the Centennial Exhibition played an important role in defining and expanding the Colonial Revival, recent scholarship has extended the movement beyond traditional stylistic date ranges. As historian Alan Axelrod writes “The colonial revival is more than an isolated aesthetic or even cultural phenomenon”<sup>2</sup> Historians from diverse disciplines have found evidence of the Colonial Revival as a pervasive and on going dialog with the colonial past, almost as soon as that day after the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. By the 1876 centennial a discordant nation transformed by Civil War, immigration, and industrialization experienced a heightened intensity in the search for an authentic American style.

Edgar Yergason proudly referred to his exuberant interiors of velvet festoons, gilt detailing, and etageres crowded with collectables “colonial renaissance style.”<sup>3</sup> Not only do such rooms appear nothing like the rooms colonists lived in, they do not resemble our contemporary idea of the Colonial Revival. Today our concept of the movement is influenced by the minimalist interiors furnished with rag rugs and wingchairs, conjured up by Wallace Nutting (1861 - 1941). In creating an interior inspired by America’s colonial past the intention was seldom to create a historically accurate interior. The colonial past was continuously mined for motifs to be incorporated within the modern home. As ideas of the modern, the colonial, and the home changed, so did the resulting

---

<sup>2</sup> Alan Axelrod, *Colonial Revival in America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co Inc, 1985), 5

<sup>3</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187 6



interiors. Changes in room use, ideas of privacy, and evolving notions of comfort were evolving factors in the outcome of a Colonial Revival interior. Historian Alan Axelrod explains “we find shifting understandings of ways to express colonial qualities within changing patterns of preferences and even changing definition of the term colonial itself.”<sup>4</sup> Yergason and Harrison’s colonial re-imagining of the White House interior, created on a national stage, is an important expression in the evolution of the Colonial Revival style.

### The President General and the Upholsterer: Caroline Harrison and Edgar Yergason

On a cold February day in 1894 four thousand descendents of Revolutionary War heroes assembled at the Church of Our Father in Washington, DC for the third continental congress of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.). The centerpiece of the congress was the unveiling ceremony of the posthumous portrait (Figure 2) of Caroline Scott Harrison, first lady and president general of the D.A.R. After a spirited welcoming address, Mrs. Adlai Stevenson unveiled the life size portrait of Mrs. Harrison as the Marine band stationed in the gallery struck up the “Star Spangled Banner”, and all assembled rose with a great rustling of silk to sing along. The D.A.R. had successfully campaigned to raise enough money to commission fashionable portrait painter Daniel Huntington (1816 – 1906), to paint the portrait. Motivated by their admiration for Caroline Harrison the D.A.R. then donated the painting to the White House.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Alan Axelrod, *Colonial Revival in America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co Inc, 1985), 6

<sup>5</sup> Washington Post “Daughters in Council.” (February 23, 1894) 24

Huntington depicted his subject standing in all her raiment before an autumnal landscape, pensively facing the setting sun. Huntington, like all successful portraitists, idealized his sitter by making her appear much taller than she in fact was. Working from photographs, the artist captured a pleasant likeness of Mrs. Harrison. The body, however, was stiff and flat. Perhaps Huntington was influenced by Gilbert Stuart's portrait of George Washington, as the pose of Mrs. Harrison closely resembles that of the first president. Mrs. Harrison is depicted standing before a most remarkable chair with roaring lion head hand rests. The chair bares a striking resemblance to the ceremonial armchair of the colonial royal governor of Virginia, now in the collection of Colonial Williamsburg, then in the state capitol in Richmond. Perhaps Huntington had seen the chair in Richmond or the illustration of it that appeared in *Frank Leslie's Magazine* in 1866.<sup>6</sup> By including this chair Huntington symbolically places Caroline Harrison on a colonial American throne.

Huntington furthers his colonial allusions by recalling the White House portrait of Martha Washington by Eliphelet F. Andrews in his portrait of Caroline Harrison. A bit of Colonial Revival pastiche itself, Andrews painted the work in 1879 as a companion piece to the Stuart portrait of Washington. Andrews placed Mrs. Washington before a neoclassical style chair that recalled the early republic to Gilded Age viewers. Eliphelet Andrews's chair symbolized the elegance and domesticity associated with Martha Washington and the colonial era. In following this recently established pattern for first lady portraits, Huntington further associated Caroline Harrison with her colonial predecessor and her qualities.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ronald Hurst and Jonathan Prown. *Southern Furniture 1680-1830: The Colonial Williamsburg Collection*. (Williamsburg, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. 1997), 185

Caroline Harrison was an influential proponent of the Colonial Revival. While chatelaine of the most photographed and written about house in the country she was in a position to yield great influence. The White House was surprisingly open to the public who could visit and fantasize about life on a grand scale, criticize and critique what they saw, and take home ideas about how the powerful lived. Mrs. Harrison believed the setting for the pageantry of the American presidency should reflect an authentically American style while evoking the history of the house and the century long presidency. She embarked on “linking her name to the only thorough restoration, for it is nothing else, that the mansion has received in twenty years. She has made a study of its historical lore and of its artistic possibilities.”<sup>7</sup> It was reported that the President’s House “has never had such a renovation as under the present one. This is partly owing to the more liberal appropriations of Congress, and partly to the good taste of Mrs. Harrison.”<sup>8</sup> Early chronicler of White House decorative arts, Abby Gunn Baker, explained: “Mrs. Harrison probably did more to awaken a sentiment to save the historic furnishings of White House than any of her predecessors.”<sup>9</sup>

Caroline Scott, or “Carrie” as she was known to her family, was born in Oxford, Ohio to a middle-class family who valued education and music. She was the second daughter of Mary Neal Scott and the Reverend Dr. John W. Scott, a Presbyterian minister and founder of the Oxford Female Institute. Caroline enjoyed an especially close relationship with her father who encouraged her studies and appreciated her artistic

---

<sup>7</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. “White House Improvements.” (Dec. 19 1891). Page 5 Winterthur, Delaware

<sup>8</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. Page 8 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>9</sup> Abby G. Baker “The White House Collection of Presidential Ware” *The Century Magazine* (October 1908): 830

sensibility. A friend, Harriet McIntire Foster, later described Caroline Harrison's personality as a strong co-mingling of the serious and frivolous.<sup>10</sup>

She met Benjamin Harrison (1833 – 1901) when he was a student attending nearby Miami University. It was a classic case of opposites attracting one another. Where Caroline was vivacious and quick to laugh, Harrison was dour and reserved, with a refined manner. Some called him arrogant. While the Harrison family was no longer wealthy, they were proud of their lineage. Benjamin Harrison was the grandson of a president, and the great-grandson and name-sake of one of Virginia's signers of the Declaration of Independence. The Harrison family's ancestral home was the grand Georgian plantation, Berkeley, on the James River in Virginia. The couple married in 1853 and moved to Indianapolis where Benjamin Harrison practiced law until he enlisted to fight as an officer with the Union Army during the Civil War. After the war he returned to his successful law practice. His refined manner resulted in his detractors' calling him "Kid Gloves" Harrison, a damaging nickname that may have helped Harrison lose his campaign for Governor of Indiana in 1876. Harrison won election to the senate where he served one term from 1881 to 1887.

While busy rearing a family in Indianapolis, Caroline Harrison remained active in literary and artistic clubs and was known for her active volunteer efforts with the First Presbyterian Church. Serving on the board of the Indianapolis Orphan Asylum sharpened her organizational and diplomatic skills. Caroline Harrison demonstrated an artistic aptitude through watercolor, china painting, orchid cultivating, amateur theatricals, and piano playing. Her comical turns in home theatricals as a member of the Impromptu Club

---

<sup>10</sup> Harriet McIntire Foster. (*Mrs. Benjamin Harrison: The First President General of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution*. D.A.R. 1908), 11

were long remembered.<sup>11</sup> She enjoyed studying history and her family's genealogy and reading sentimental and humorous poetry such as the works of James Whitcomb Riley (1849 -1916). Her interests may not have been exceptional for a woman of her class, but her prominent position as first lady would be extraordinary. In this position she could wield great influence within diplomatic circles and the American public. As the wife of the president, her interests and projects would take on public significance.

In 1888 Benjamin Harrison ran for president on a conservative Republican Party ticket in which his primary campaign promise was to keep "America first" by imposing high tariffs on imports and governmental support of homegrown industries. The Republicans were most anxious to return one of their own to the White House. With the exception of Grover Cleveland's term from 1884-1888, the Republican Party had enjoyed an uninterrupted succession of Republican presidents since Abraham Lincoln. Though he lost the popular vote to the incumbent president, Harrison won the electoral vote. Harrison served one term, being defeated for reelection by the returning Grover Cleveland, the only president to serve two non-consecutive terms.

Moving into the White House in the spring of 1889, Mrs. Harrison openly expressed disappointment to the press that there was so little evidence of the house's history or of the lives of its past residents. In a newspaper article titled *Vanished Historical Treasures* Mrs. Harrison was lauded for wanting to return a sense of the Executive Mansion's history. "Mrs. Harrison . . . by her recent statement to the effect that it is distressing to go through this mansion of nearly a century . . . to find not even a piece of furniture or china or anything else of value associated with the home, habits or

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

comforts of the domestic circle of the early executives.”<sup>12</sup> In a scene often repeated by succeeding first ladies, Caroline Harrison went in search of buried treasure.

Mrs. Harrison determinedly explored the dusty attic, forgotten corners and service areas of the house for historically significant objects. She was delighted to discover silver and gilded bronze objects and a few pieces of historic china. The ceramics especially inspired Mrs. Harrison as she began researching and documenting their provenance. Reflective of a growing appreciation of American antiques, Mrs. Harrison felt historic presidential china should be preserved and displayed. Caroline Harrison’s most remarkable find was a magnificent centerpiece of three bisque porcelain graces, which research revealed was from the Franklin Pierce administration. (Figure 3) First Lady Caroline Harrison’s assembling and studying this collection of presidential ceramic objects was a critical step towards the formation of a White House collection and the establishment of the museum character of the White House not formalized until seventy-five years later, in 1964.

Along with restoring a sense of the historic quality of the President’s House Caroline Harrison wished to expand the White House art collection. A painting by American artist James Henry Moser titled *A Summer Day at Saulsbury Beach* serves as the first example of a landscape painting bought by the government for the White House.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, her effort to persuade the government to purchase paintings lent to the White House by artist Albert Bierstadt was unsuccessful. Caroline Harrison hoped such a collection of American art would be shared with the public. She advocated for the

---

<sup>12</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. “Vanished Historical Treasures,” (No date) Page 8 Winterthur, Delaware

<sup>13</sup> William Kloss, *Art in the White House: A Nations Pride*. (Washington: White House Historical Association, 1992), 37

White House to also serve as a museum of American art, actively seeking funds from Congress to build a wing to house a museum gallery. This forward looking attempt to establish a preeminent collection of American art for the White House would have to wait.

Historic preservationists may shudder at the thought of what would have happened if Mrs. Harrison's 1889 plan to expand the White House had succeeded, as it nearly did. (Figure 4) Two grand Beaux Arts inspired wings were to extend south from the principal structure thus forming a quadrangle. A large conservatory would have connected the two new wings without interfering with the view to the Potomac River, with the historic house remaining as the northernmost centerpiece. The west wing was to serve as the Official Wing, removing the offices of the president from the residence, and thus providing the first family with greater privacy. The east wing was proposed as a Historical Art Wing, including galleries for the display of historical artifacts and American Art while providing the grand spaces required for Gilded Age entertaining. Furthermore, the expansion would triple the number of bathrooms, offices, and service quarters. Finally, it seemed, George Washington and L'Enfant's dream of a Presidential Palace would come true. To Mrs. Harrison's dismay, Congress never approved the necessary funding for such a grandiose project. Personal enmity between President Harrison and the Speaker of the House, Thomas B. Reed of Maine, resulted in the bill being blocked from ever appearing on the floor of the House of Representatives.<sup>14</sup>

Realizing her plan for expanding the White House was not to be, Caroline Harrison embarked on the aforementioned project to refurbish the state floor in a style

---

<sup>14</sup> William Seale *The White House: The History of An American Idea* (Washington DC: White House Historical Association, 2005), 153

that would express America's colonial past and reflect the strength and history of the American presidency while competing favorably with the fashionable residences being built throughout Washington. To accomplish these goals she would need the supportive talents of someone who shared her artistic aesthetic and respect for history. She turned to a decorator by the name of Edgar Yergason, (1840 -1920) a gifted creator of fashionable interiors for the William H. Post & Company of Hartford, Connecticut.

Photographs of Edgar Yergason reveal a dapper aesthete with thinning hair and a sharp profile. (Figure 5) A refined dandyism delighted his clients and the press. Yergason was always immaculately turned out in the latest styles, fashionably dressed in perfectly tailored suits of fine material cut to accentuate his slender frame. His private correspondence reveals he was highly concerned with his clothing and the importance of appearance. In letters to friends and family he reveals an eye for detail and keen memory, most revealingly in his description of what others wore at recent social events. Such concern extended beyond vanity. As a decorator his stylish appearance was the best advertisement for his innate good taste.

Mrs. Harrison's selection of a relatively obscure company to decorate the White House is intriguing. Edgar Yergason was brought to the attention of the first lady by a highly placed individual in her husband's administration, Secretary of the Treasury William Windom. Windom's elegant Washington residence at 1422 Massachusetts Avenue had recently been furnished by William H. Post & Company. Mr. Windom, pleased with the results, recommended the company to the first lady.<sup>15</sup> Her interest piqued, Mrs. Harrison visited the recently decorated apartments of multimillionaire, and owner of the National Tribune newspaper, Capt. George E. Lemon in The Shoreham

---

<sup>15</sup> Papers of E.S. Yergason. Office of the Curator, the White House. File I Washington, D.C.



Hotel in December of 1889. Accompanied by four cabinet wives, Mrs. Harrison toured the apartment and was delighted by Yergason's decorations of cream colored silk portieres lined in pink, plush gold draperies from the Paris Exposition, and absinthe green carpet. The press estimated that Lemon spent \$10,000 decorating his apartment.<sup>16</sup> Mrs. Harrison invited Yergason to meet with her at the White House the next day for a consultation. Walking through the State Floor of the residence, the two began to discuss possible schemes. From this initial meeting was born a collaboration that would last three years and result in Yergason's most significant commission.

Edgar Smith Yergason was born on September 10, 1840 in the town of Windham, Connecticut. From his mother's side he descended from a long line of New England Puritan stock. Yergason proudly traced his decent from Pilgrim elder William Brewster who arrived in America on the Mayflower in 1620. His great-grandfather on his paternal side immigrated to Connecticut from Norway in the late seventeenth century.<sup>17</sup> Edgar took umbrage at insinuations that he wasn't an American, or perhaps even more offensive, that he was a recent immigrant, due to the foreignness of his last name. "I am a thorough Yankee, even if my name is Yergason" he protested.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps to counter these assumptions during a xenophobic age Edgar joined hereditary societies such as the Society of Colonial Wars and the Society of Mayflower Descendants.<sup>19</sup>

Yergason's formal education concluded with his graduation from Pine Grove Seminary, a private boarding school for boys in South Windham. While many of his Pine Grove classmates went on to attend Yale, Edgar moved to Hartford in 1859 at the age of

---

<sup>16</sup> Edgar Yergason Papers Connecticut Historical Society Box 3 File 8 Hartford Connecticut

<sup>17</sup> Edgar Yergason papers. Connecticut Historical Society Box 2 File 1 Hartford Connecticut.

<sup>18</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. "(Illegible) Busy at Work on the Home of the President: Work By American Artists,"(No date) Page 7. Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>19</sup> Edgar Yergason papers. Connecticut Historical Society. Box 3 File 2. Hartford Connecticut.

19 to accept a position as clerk with drygoods firm Talcott & Post (Figure 6). No evidence survives of Yergason ever attending an art or architectural school. His training came with on-the-job-experience. Here his taste and keen eye were sharpened. His talent for harmonizing color and selecting appropriate objects for a client's home soon garnered Yergason a loyal following. Talcott & Post customers, perhaps bewildered by the ever increasing array of new merchandise and contradicting advice on home décor, found a personable and knowledgeable young man happy to assist them.

During the dramatic years leading to Civil War Yergason was a devoted Republican and supporter of Abraham Lincoln. When Lincoln visited Hartford in 1860 during his campaign for president, Yergason formed a Wide Awake Club, a group of young men who served as a volunteer body guard to escort Lincoln while he was in town. When war broke out he enlisted as a private in the Company B., Twenty-Second Connecticut Volunteers where he saw action in various campaigns in Virginia. Like President Harrison, Edgar Yergason revered his time in the army and expressed a sincere patriotic fervor for his country throughout his life.

After the Civil War, Yergason returned to the Talcott & Post Company where he quickly rose to prominence as the company's head decorator. In 1880 Yergason formed a partnership with the junior partner of Talcott & Post, William Post, creating their own firm of William H. Post & Company (Figure 7). While William Post was the businessman, Edgar Yergason was the artist. He was the lead designer responsible for running the entire decorating department including the supervision of in-house and contracted workers. He established important contracts with textile and furniture manufacturing companies such as the Phoenix Furniture Company in Grand Rapids

Michigan.<sup>20</sup> Yergason became well-established as New England's premier creator of "artistic homes" and provider of "smart furnishings."<sup>21</sup> William H. Post & Company business expanded as ever more prominent commissions came in for residences, hotels, and private clubs in New York, Boston, and Washington D.C.

Lasting six decades, Yergason's career would span an impressive array of changing tastes. Following Yergason career we can trace his evolution from a nineteenth century tradition of the upholsterer, towards the twentieth-century's idea of an interior decorator. Yergason's training in a dry-goods store was not uncommon for an upholsterer; one chiefly responsible for the selection of wall coverings, carpets, curtains, and furniture upholstery. With the White House commission Yergason's responsibilities remained firmly within the realm of the upholsterer. His responsibilities ranged from project to project. In some cases he designed new window treatments and portieres; in others he designed the interior architecture by designing architectural details such as dados, mantels, and wainscoting. Ultimately Yergason was charged with creating an atmosphere that satisfied a client's desire for a fashionable interior to their taste.

The historical role of the upholsterer, the ancestor to the decorator and interior designer, has been impugned by design reformers and architects who saw these academically un-credentialed promoters of upholstery as antithetical to architectural purity and historical accuracy. An example of this can be seen in Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman Jr. who, in the introduction of their significant work *The Decoration of Houses*, blame the ignorance of the upholsterer for all the ills, as they saw it, of nineteenth century interior decoration. "The upholsterer cannot be expected to have the

---

<sup>20</sup> Edgar Yergason Papers. Connecticut Historical Society. Box 2 File 3. Hartford Connecticut.

<sup>21</sup> E.S. Yergason Papers. Office of the Curator of the White House. File I Washington, D.C.

preliminary training necessary . . . and it is inevitable that in his hands form should be sacrificed to color and composition to detail. In his ignorance of the legitimate means of producing certain effects, he is driven to all manner of expedients” resulting in “a piling up of heterogeneous ornament . . .”<sup>22</sup> Such an assessment is based not on the quality of the work but on a difference in taste. Wharton and Codman could confidently dismiss a difference in aesthetics as a difference in education. The fact remains that interiors created by Yergason, and his fellow upholsterers, were widely praised and imitated at every economic level of society.

Yergason worked during the golden age of the upholsterer. Technological innovations made available a seemingly endless supply of affordable and durable fabrics once only available to the very wealthy. A public hungry for variety in all of life’s details also had a rainbow of new colors, made possible by advances in chemical dyes, to choose from. <sup>23</sup> As Frank Moreland, upholsterer and author of *Practical Decorative Upholstery*, a guidebook published in 1889, “The variety of color and design” he wrote “is almost endless; for thanks to a growing taste, the draper is not now, as thirty years ago, confined to a few crude colors, and something can be found suitable for every occasion . . .”<sup>24</sup> The abundance and variety of textiles employed by upholsterers is evident in the following lengthy description of the library curtains created by Edgar Yergason for Mr. and Mrs. John C. McElroy’s Sixteenth Street townhouse in Washington D.C.

“The light from the outside world is softened and tinted, first, by delicately colored silk shades and then passes through short, faintly-colored green silk curtains and finally filtered through beautiful Brussels lace draperies, while over

---

<sup>22</sup> Ogden Codman and Edith Wharton. *The Decoration of Houses*. (New York: Rizzoli, 2007), Introduction.

<sup>23</sup> Katherine C. Grier. *Culture & Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850 -1930*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997), 78

<sup>24</sup> Moreland, Frank A. *The Curtain-Makers Handbook: A Reprint of Practical Decorative Upholstery of 1889*. (New York: E.P. Dulton 1979), 10-12

all falls a rich cascade of brown plush, looped back with great silken ropes terminating in ponderous tassels of the same luxuriant material.”<sup>25</sup>

The weight resulting from such luxuriously upholstered window treatments may have been the inspiration for Yergason’s unique design for holding back curtains.

During this patent happy age, Yergason patented *High Art Drapery Chain* on August 17, 1880. (Figure 8) Solid brass gilt chains “which takes the place of bands, cords, or loops” for holding back the immense weight of velvet curtains and portieres “in an artistic manner”, Yergason proclaims, were “one more useful and durable ornament” in beautifying a home. The aesthetic appeal of gilt chains holding back curtains is debatable, but its temporary popularity may be surmised by the court case brought forth by chain manufacturing companies challenging Yergason’s right to patent the use of chain in this manner.<sup>26</sup>

A description of Yergason at work in the White House illustrates the role of the upholsterer in the creation of a room. A newspaper reporter follows Yergason into the East Room to examine the recently hung window curtains. The reporter thinks the curtains are beautiful, “but they did not suit him [Yergason] . . . Their hard precise lines were not his liking.”<sup>27</sup> This observation reveals that Yergason was responsible for the designing window treatments that were than later installed by his employees. He supervised the work done by a large team of both William H. Post & Company employees as well as contracted workers. By inference, these men worked from drawn plans and measurements provided by the designer, who would later visit the work in progress to ensure the work was being done to his satisfaction. With numerous projects

---

<sup>25</sup> Edgar Yergason Papers. Connecticut Historical Society Box 3 File 8 Hartford Connecticut.

<sup>26</sup> Edgar Yergason Papers. Connecticut Historical Society Box 3 File 7 Hartford Connecticut.

<sup>27</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. “White House Art: Handsome Transformation Brooklyn Citizen,” October 11, 1891. 11 Winterthur, Delaware.

occurring at the same time in numerous cities Yergason could not be present during the course of each refurbishment. Only one with innate taste can perfect the perfunctory work of others. “It requires the skillful touch of Mr. Yergason, who is adept in draping and blending soft colors, to complete the picture.” No doubt enjoying putting on something of a show for the reporter, Yergason “clambered up and down, changing a hook here and a fold there, tightening a cord at this place and loosening another at that, until the rich curtains took the graceful lines which he desired and the picture was complete.”<sup>28</sup>

One of the most significant commissions Yergason received after the White House was to furnish the executive chamber at the Capitol in Albany New York for Governor Theodore Roosevelt (Figure 9). For this Yergason designed a carpet repeating the state coat of arms, reproduced from the letterhead of Governor Roosevelt’s stationary.<sup>29</sup> It is interesting to speculate on the relationship between Roosevelt and Yergason. A story survives of Yergason entering Roosevelt’s office, interrupting him while hard at work at his desk, to ask for his autograph on a sketch of Roosevelt as a Rough Rider, a drawing Yergason later sold to a manufacturer of military goods to use in an advertisement. Such actions probably did little to endear the decorator to the governor. Needless to say, years later when Roosevelt moved in a Yergason decorated White House, he was not asked back to redecorate the executive mansion.<sup>30</sup>

An avid collector of Americana, Yergason amassed a large collection of historical objects at his home in Hartford. His prized possession was the American flag that had draped Lincoln’s box, at Fords Theater the night of his assassination, the same flag that

---

<sup>28</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. “White House Art: Handsome Transformation Brooklyn Citizen,” October 11, 1891. Page 11 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>29</sup> Edgar Yergason Papers Connecticut Historical Society Hartford Box 3 File 2 Hartford Connecticut.

<sup>30</sup> Hartford Daily Courant “Edgar S Yergason’s Collection of Relics”(February 27, 1916) Edgar Yergason Papers Connecticut Historical Society. Hartford Connecticut.

John Wilkes Booth's spur got caught in as he tried to flee the scene.<sup>31</sup> His collector's spirit is evident in his interiors, which evoke something of the cabinet of curiosities about them with rare and beautiful objects displayed on mantles or in etageres. An example of this taste is seen in the mantle clock Yergason created out of an eight-inch two hundred pound shell, a souvenir from the Civil War bombardment of Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>32</sup>

Yergason published no design reform writings or guidelines to interior decoration. Yergason did, however, teach a course on "the first principles of interior design" to the female students enrolled in the Mount Vernon Seminary in Washington D.C. Yergason wanted to demystify interior decoration and empower young women so that they were not "at the mercy of the average furnishing house." When they left school "taught to be everything that is accomplished . . . that they may preside over most beautiful nests, but about the nests they are not able to dictate." Yergason discussed principles of color, harmony, and the relation of ceiling, walls and floors "more than three colors should not be introduced into any one room." He provided practical advice on the use and arrangement of curtains and portieres, ornamented drapery must be "pushed back in folds to give only peeps" of the figured fabric. Samples were brought in for the students to examine as Yergason explained the various manufacturing techniques and comparable costs of the different varieties of carpet, fabric and lace. Reviewing the topics covered in the course provides important insight into Yergason's design philosophy and workings as

---

<sup>31</sup> Edgar Yergason Papers Connecticut Historical Society. Box 3 File 2 Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>32</sup> Edgar Yergason Papers Connecticut Historical Society Rare War Relic Newspaper clipping. Box 3 File 8

a decorator. Yergason believed that fine and beautiful textiles were being manufactured for the home, and with a little knowledge anyone could create a tasteful interior.<sup>33</sup>

Upon receiving the prestigious commission to redecorate various rooms of the Executive Mansion, Yergason devoted his talents to satisfying the client of his most important commission to date. Yergason would advise on the selection of new curtains for the East Room as well as provide advice on decorating the private quarters of the first family on the second floor. The fullest expression of Mrs. Harrison's taste and Yergason's talents can be seen in the refurbishment of Blue Room (1890), Green Room, State Dining Room, and Vestibule, today known as the Entrance Hall, (1891) and the Cross Hall (1892).

The most recent refurbishment of the White House had taken place not ten years before during the administration of Chester Arthur (1881-1885). Arthur, a fashionable gentleman from New York City, hired Louis Comfort Tiffany to redecorate the President's House in the most up-to-date fashion. The resulting interior was a poetic expression of aesthetic movement taste. After nine seasons of hard use the rooms began to show wear and tear. Sporadic attempts to refresh the worn paint and fabrics over the years had intruded into the carefully wrought Tiffany interiors that relied so much on color and texture for its effect. Along with the practical necessity of a refurbishment was the change in the fundamental approach to the White House as a stage for the presidency. Arthur and Tiffany approached the White House as the private, though temporary, residence of the president and decorated it in keeping with high style interiors of the day. Harrison and Yergason viewed the White House as a historical shrine, and embarked on a

---

<sup>33</sup> Edgar Yergason Papers Connecticut Historical Society Box 3 File 10



refurbishment that would reflect the history of the house and the stability of the century long presidency.

### The Blue Room: Ladies Frequently Faint Here

It was in the Blue Room that the president received the credentials of each foreign minister in a ceremony which dated back to the presidency of Thomas Jefferson. During receptions President and Mrs. Harrison stood in the center of the room to welcome their guests. Caroline Harrison desired the Blue Room to evoke America's colonial past to the growing numbers of foreign diplomats who were received there. As the literal and symbolic center of diplomatic Washington each element was carefully chosen for this most formal of White House rooms. Positioned across from the main entrance and in the center of an enfilade of five rooms on the State Floor, the bow shaped room opened onto a stone paved portico and an expansive lawn sloping down to the Potomac River.

“It was curious,” wrote photographer and journalist Frances Benjamin Johnston, “that so many of those who write of the White House take it for granted that everybody knows just how the famous Blue Room looks when Mrs. Harrison is holding a reception there.”<sup>34</sup> Such a condition would soon be remedied as the press happily fed the public's appetite for reports of the alterations underway. “Everything will be rich, but not gaudy and thoroughly in keeping with the Colonial and renaissance architecture” explained Yergason. Both President and Mrs. Harrison “would tolerate nothing not in keeping with the simplicity and solidity of the republic.”<sup>35</sup> The scheme for the Blue Room was

---

<sup>34</sup> Frances Benjamin Johnston. “The White House: Part II Inside.” *Demorest's Family Magazine* June 1890:1

<sup>35</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. Newspaper clipping White House Decorations: To be completed by October 1<sup>st</sup> – The work not done by foreigners.” September 17 1891. 5. Winterthur, Delaware.

amalgamation of eighteenth-century neoclassical sources manipulated into a new and dynamic expression bordering on stage-like theatricality.

Yergason's Blue Room is one of the earliest examples of an Adam Style influenced Colonial Revival interior in the United States. (Figure 10) The elliptical shape of the salon probably inspired the use of Adam style elements in an exuberant expression of what he referred to as American colonial renaissance. The Adam brothers John (1721–1792), Robert (1728–1792) and James (1732–1794) carried on a thriving business creating playful neoclassical interiors in England and Scotland. An Adam Revival can be traced back to the 1860's with the work of the London cabinetmaker-upholster company of Wright and Mansfield. A truncated version of the Adams brothers *Works in Architecture* was published in 1880 by B.T. Batsford with photo-lithograph plates of surviving Adam schemes. American publications soon followed.<sup>36</sup> The Adams brothers indirectly influenced Yergason through his familiarity with New England Federal style houses such as the Charles Bulfinch's Harrison Gray Otis House of 1796 in Boston.

A Yergason interior is marked by a whimsical use of color. Here his playful use of neoclassical color scheme of pale blue, lemon yellow, and crepuscular pink, recall Adam Style interiors. When asked about the monotony of maintaining the blue color scheme, Caroline Harrison replied that since the room had been blue from the very beginning, blue it was to remain. She was incorrect; the room had not been blue from the very beginning, but believing that President John Adams selected the shade validated the continued use.<sup>37</sup> A general lightening of interiors is characteristic of the Colonial Revival. Whereas Louis Comfort Tiffany had favored dark woodwork in his White House interiors

---

<sup>36</sup> Eileen Harris, *The Country Houses of Robert Adam*. (London: Aurum Press, 2008), 18 -19

<sup>37</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187 Page 5 Winterthur, Delaware.

of 1882, Caroline Harrison requested white woodwork highlighted with gilding for the Blue Room.

Yergason divided the walls into three parts; a three foot plaster dado along the bottom, a frieze along the top, while silk was used to cover the body of the wall. Mrs. Harrison personally selected the slate blue silk brocatelle, a brocade in which the design is woven in high relief, to line the walls produced by the Lyons Silk and Tapestry Co. from a supply available from the New York mercantile company of W.G. Hitchcock & Co.<sup>38</sup> A high relief pattern of neoclassical arabesques recalled late eighteenth-century Adam style interiors. Yergason claimed the grayed blue was the same tint of blue favored at the court of Louis XVI. Padding placed behind the silk provided support to the delicate fabric while enhancing an upholstered feel to the walls; a concession to the inevitable touching it would be subjected to by visitors.<sup>39</sup>

A dramatic frieze is the salient feature of Yergason's Blue Room. Oversized, it unified the elliptical salon. Bands of garlands, lyres, and wreaths encircled the room in a "wonderfully artistic frieze of colonial times."<sup>40</sup> Swags of floral garlands ran along the top of the frieze above a dense pattern of wreaths, scrolls, and medallions. Ornament within the frieze recalled the delicate woodwork and plaster ornament associated with Adam style interiors. Oversized massing and love of profuse pattern reveal the frieze to be an expression of contemporary late nineteenth-century taste. Surviving black and white photographs do not reveal the brilliant coloring of the frieze painted "three tones of

---

<sup>38</sup> E.S. Yergason Papers. Office of the Curator, the White House. File I Washington, D.C.

<sup>39</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. "Beautified and Artistic," (No date) Page 5 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>40</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187, "Seen and Suggested," May 15 1892. Page 14. Winterthur, Delaware.

subdued blue, the ground stippled to simulate a silk effect” with the raised ornaments painted a “faint cream with touches here and there of gilding.”<sup>41</sup>

The dado was a three foot high plaster relief painted a deeper tone of the blue with high points illuminated with gold. A darker color in the dado provided a base in an otherwise effervescent scheme. Four distinct bands of neoclassical ornament ran parallel to each other in contrast to the vertical arabesque found in the silk tapestry. Such ornament was described as a hand-modeled relief by the press. It is not yet known if W. H. Post Co. may have made moulds for the ornament, or, if not, from which manufacturer the ornament was purchased. A chair rail terminated the dado.

Yergason had the Blue Room ceiling painted with gently billowing white and pink clouds in a pale blue sky worthy of Tiepolo. The ceiling gradually lightened in color from darkest blue around the cornice to lighter blue at the center with the pale pink of the clouds proving a gentle contrast.<sup>42</sup> Such a fanciful touch has seldom been attempted on the State Floor of the President’s House and would not last for long. Written descriptions of this room describe the treatment, though photographs of the Blue Room do not reveal this delicate painted ceiling. It is possible this treatment was too fanciful for even romantic Mrs. Harrison and was quietly painted over.

Three tall windows open onto the South Portico and a bucolic view of sloping lawn and the recently completed Washington Monument. The inherited window treatments by Louis Comfort Tiffany were out of style as a cult of light and fresh air was sweeping through interiors as the nineteenth century came to a close. Window treatments

---

<sup>41</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. Page 5 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>42</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187 “The Newly Decorated Blue Room,” December 1 1890. Page 11. Winterthur, Delaware.

kept implacably closed against the sun were being challenged. A popular guide to interior decorating informed readers with confidence their once fashionable lambrequins “are generally ugly and are worse than useless, as they cannot be drawn aside.”<sup>43</sup> Yergason took down the “rather cumbersome curtains” of “enormously heavy plush lambrequins” to replace them with curtains that appeared to be hung gracefully over curtains rods like a scarf.<sup>44</sup>

Innovative window treatments were designed by Yergason that incorporated elaborately carved and gilded grillwork (Figure 11). The grillwork was placed at the top of the windows with all shades and drapery falling below them, allowing sunlight to pass through the pierced grillwork, casting a shifting pattern of light and shadow onto the walls. Yergason’s drawing of the window treatments survives, showing the drapery hanging below the grillwork from a brass curtain rod (Figure 12). Republican symbolism was incorporated into the window treatment. The curtain rods were designed as Roman Fasces, symbol of strength in unity, while the grillwork incorporated a carved eagle in the center window and the shield from the Great Seal of the United States in the two side windows.

Edgar Yergason’s probable design source for the Blue Room drapery was “Pattern No. 14, An Irregular Drapery Festoon,” (Figure 13) illustrated in Frank A. Mooreland’s *Practical Decorative Upholstery* published in 1889.<sup>45</sup> The desired effect was for the curtains to appear as if a single swath of fabric has been looped three times over the curtain rod. It is actually four separate pieces attached to the curtain rod

---

<sup>43</sup> Arnold Brunner and Thomas Tryon. *Interior Decoration*. (New York. Wm. T. Comstock 1887), 46

<sup>44</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. Page 8 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>45</sup> Frank A Moreland. *The Curtain-Makers Handbook: A reprint of Practical Decorative Upholstery of 1889*. (New York. E.P. Dulton 1979), 57

consisting of two pieces to make a festoon with two drapery panels hanging on either side loosely tied back by large tassels. The drapery was made of the same brocatelle as used on the walls. Lemon yellow lining and fringe vividly contrasted the slate blue drapery. Lace curtains fell in gentle folds from behind the drapery down to the floor. Behind the lace was a drab shade that could be pulled down if required.<sup>46</sup> Drapery was not limited to windows in the late nineteenth century. Yergason billed the White House for table and mantle scarves.<sup>47</sup> Over the mantle a blue velvet scarf was “draped in the careless mode so much in fashion just now” similar to the scarf effect of the curtains.<sup>48</sup> Remaining on top of the mantle were French gilt bronze candlesticks and gilt bronze Minerva mantle clock whose golden brilliance contrasted nicely against the blue velvet scarf.

The Blue Room’s carpet proved particularly troublesome, “The critical taste of the First Lady is exemplified in the rejection of the carpet lately put down” reported one newspaper “in some way it did not shade correctly, and another had to be substituted by the contracted for refurnishing.”<sup>49</sup> The culprit was a majestic French Moquette, one of the highest grades of carpeting available. According to Frank Moreland, a French Moquette was highly praised due to its being finely woven to allow for fine shading and gradations of color along with a luxuriously deep pile of soft wool.<sup>50</sup> It is presumed the replacement carpet was met with approval by Mrs. Harrison. A kind press decided to deemphasize the extravagance of ordering a second carpet, instead focusing on Mrs. Harrison’s discerning taste.

---

<sup>46</sup> E.S. Yergason Papers. Office of the Curator of the White House. File I. Washington, D.C.

<sup>47</sup> E.S. Yergason Papers. Office of the Curator of the White House. File I. Washington, D.C.

<sup>48</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187 Page 8 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>49</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. Page 8 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>50</sup> Frank A Moreland. *The Curtain-Makers Handbook: A reprint of Practical Decorative Upholstery of 1889.* (New York. E.P. Dulton 1979), 292 – 283.

Visitors to the Harrison Blue Room marveled at the transformative power of the new electric lighting. Yergason's interiors embraced electricity. Illuminating the room for the first time were electric lights. Light floral designed light fixtures were affixed around the perimeter of the Blue Room just below the frieze. Novelty, low wattage, and American delight in technological advances resulted in exposed light bulbs in early electric fixtures. Compared to modern electric strength early electric light was comparatively dim. The most dramatic improvement with the introduction of electricity was the steady light; which did not flicker; neither the wind of the slow burning down of candles changed its intensity. Yergason experimented with the various effects that could be achieved with this new light source. It was said that "the colors of the frieze were prepared to give proper effect under artificial light, because the apartment is not used by day."<sup>51</sup> By gilding the raised elements of the ceiling and frieze, a lambent pattern of anthemions, swags, and wreaths encircled overhead delighting the eye.

President Buchanan's Rococo Revival parlor suite was maintained for the new scheme. Yergason did his best to transform the parlor suite with new gilding and expensive French velvets (Figure 14). Contrasted with the new neoclassical wall treatments, the Rococo Revival furniture remained a jarring note in the room. A few critics found the furniture "quaint" and "garish" in an otherwise "soft-toned" and "luxurious looking" room.<sup>52</sup> Tiffany had likewise been restricted to using the Buchannan furniture in his earlier scheme for the Blue Room. Critics often failed to acknowledge the limited funds available for the project and the practical mind of the chatelaine of the White House who insisted on reusing existing furniture. Yergason probably wished to

---

<sup>51</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. Page 5 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>52</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. Page 10 Winterthur, Delaware.

provide a new set of furniture for the room. Mrs. Harrison, however, was in the midst of completely renovating the kitchen and service quarters of the house and could not devote all the appropriations to the redecoration project. Buchanan's furniture was to remain. Perhaps Edgar Yergason took comfort in the fact that during the grand receptions servants removed most of the Blue Room parlor furniture to provide room for the vast assemblage.

Wary of criticism, Yergason emphasized the use of American made materials for the Blue Room. Despite his best efforts to use only American manufactured goods, he resorted to importing embossed plush blue velvet for furniture upholstery and lace for the curtains. Deciding to use imported textiles proved a headache for the first lady and her decorator as critics pointedly questioned the propriety of imported textiles in the home of the president. This was made all the more embarrassing by President Harrison's "America First" campaign promises aimed at promoting American industry through high tariffs on imported goods. One nettlesome newspaper reported that the president's policies meant that the price paid by the taxpayer for the first lady's French velvet was raised from .50 to \$3.50.<sup>53</sup> It was calculated by another critic that the 60 percent tariff on imported lace could not be justified when the lace industry was nonexistent in America. When Yergason was questioned about the imported lace used in the curtain arrangement he agreed, "My friend . . . if we [America] were to set up in the [lace making] business, we could not produce a pair of such curtains . . . for a thousand dollars!"<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. Page 10 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.



For crowd control, one final feature was needed, a golden gate (Figure 15) placed in the door into the Blue Room from the corridor.<sup>55</sup> Guests inevitably assembled in the corridor to watch the President and Mrs. Harrison greet their visitors. Some even attempted to double back once they had been through to enjoy the show again. Two guards were placed at the door to prevent guests returning to take a “wistful glance” at the “important events” transpiring in the Blue Room. “The crowd pushes in to watch the ladies with Mrs. Harrison, and the two officers who have been at the door are powerless to control the pushing through.”<sup>56</sup> For ventilation purposes the door between the Blue Room and the Cross Hall could not be closed. It was the ever practical Captain E. S. Dinsmore, head usher, who originated the idea for a gate as a compromise preventing a total rout while allowing air circulation. Designed to withstand the rather desperate measures taken to enjoy proximity to the first lady, the golden gate was four feet high and made of gilt bronze “just high enough for a short lady to look over it easily, but too close to the floor for the same lady to crawl under, if she were so inclined.”<sup>57</sup>

President and Mrs. Harrison welcomed family, friends, and staff members to the unveiling of the completed interior on November 24, 1890. The celebration was not hampered by the fact the electrical current was not working that evening. The Harrisons and the press were delighted with the new room. Yergason gave ultimate credit for the successful interior to his client. After this private gathering, Washington society anticipated the arrival of the Brazilian fleet led by Admiral Balthazar Silveira as the first White House reception of the season, and this would be the first public unveiling of the

---

<sup>55</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187 Page 5 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>56</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. Page 5 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>57</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. Page 6 Winterthur, Delaware.

refurbished Blue Room.<sup>58</sup> Yergason saved a letter on Executive Mansion stationary dated November 25, 1890 in which the first lady expressed her particular satisfaction.

My Dear Mr. Yergason,

Now that the Blue Room is all completed I wish to express to you my satisfaction with the work you have done – and with the great taste you have exhibited in the selection of natural color and harmony of every thing connected with it. I only hope that the Mansion may in the future be graced by more of your excellent work.

Very Truly, Caroline S. Harrison<sup>59</sup>

Now during White House receptions President and Caroline Harrison stood illuminated by electric light surrounded by republican symbols and ornament associated with the early republic. Of all the rooms Harrison and Yergason would create, the Blue Room most clearly referenced the early nineteenth century and the style of the early republic. Through decoration a continuum was established between the Harrison administration and John Adams and Thomas Jefferson and the early years in the White House. If the Blue Room, a setting for diplomacy and grand receptions re-imagined the neoclassical glory of the early republic, the décor for the Green Room, a setting for appreciating music and feminine refinement, would embrace the Chippendale or rococo style.

### The Green Room: A Dream of Beauty

The Green Room, positioned between the East Room and the Blue Room, was one of the principle parlors on the State Floor of the White House. While it is tempting to assign the designation of the Green Room as a music room to the musically gifted Caroline Harrison, this was not so. Frances Benjamin Johnson described the parlor in her 1890 article in “Demorest’s Family Magazine” as a music room giving credit for this

<sup>58</sup> The Washington Post. “A Reception to Brazil: The Blue Room’s Christening.” November 25 1890.

<sup>59</sup> Edgar Yergason. Promotional booklet, *Smart Furnishings for Modern Homes*. E.S. Yergason Papers. Office of the Curator, the White House. (No date) 3

arrangement to Mrs. Garfield.<sup>60</sup> A greater proliferation of specialized rooms distinguished the homes of the wealthy during the latter decades of the nineteenth century. By 1891 the Green Room was looking careworn after a decade of frequent use as a principle parlor on the State Floor for entertaining guests. First Lady Lucretia Garfield had selected W. B. Moses, a local Washington D.C. company, to refurbish the parlor during her husband's brief administration; President Arthur allowed the commission to be completed.<sup>61</sup>

It is not clear when Yergason was first approached to refurbish the Green Room. Mrs. Harrison may have voiced her desire to re-do the parlor while Yergason was working on the Blue Room the year before. William H Post & Company sent Edgar Yergason's proposal for refurbishing the Green Room, the Vestibule, and the State Dining Room on May 29, 1891.<sup>62</sup> Caroline Harrison surveyed the estimates closely with Col. Oswald Ernst, superintendent of public buildings and grounds. Delighted with the plans for the refurbishment, a letter dated June 10, 1891 from Col. Ernst to the William H. Post & Company approved the Green Room plans. It was important that work begin immediately upon the Harrisons summer departure for Cape May and be completed by their return in October. Yergason complied with the request "to make all preliminary arrangements and be prepared" to start begun work on July 1.<sup>63</sup>

As is customary, work was conducted at a brisk pace during the summer while the first family was away. Those who found themselves entering the White House had to

---

<sup>60</sup> Frances Benjamin Johnston. "The White House: Part II Inside." *Demorest's Family Magazine* June (1890):.4.

<sup>61</sup> Betty Monkman, *The White House: Its Historic Furnishings and First Families*. (Washington D.C.: White House Historical Association. 2000), 162

<sup>62</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187 Boston Harold. May 30, 1891. Page 8 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>63</sup> E.S. Yergason Papers. Office of the Curator, the White House. File III. Washington, D.C.

make their way through a maze of scaffolding, ladders, canvas and paint cans.

Washingtonians, who enjoyed access to the President's Park, could hear the sounds of the workman echoing out of the White House. Journeying home to Connecticut with the approved plans finalized and the work underway, Yergason stopped just long enough in New York City to give an interview. "It is impossible," he teased, for him to go into all the "tedious details" about his recent commission. "I certainly think it can be surprisingly artistic and acceptable to the highest aesthetic taste." When pressed for more specifics he replied the new Green Room "style will be rococo" and will "look like a boudoir." With characteristic immodesty Yergason concluded the interview proclaiming the completed interior "will be a dream of beauty."<sup>64</sup>

For the Green Room Yergason exaggerated elements of the Chippendale or rococo style with the amplitude typical of late nineteenth century taste. Just as we saw in the Adam style influenced Blue Room, Yergason was not attempting to create a historically accurate parlor of the mid-eighteenth century. Instead, a playful selection of design elements associated with the era of feminine grace and elegant living are picturesquely combined. "Wiser," wrote Arnold Bramer and Thomas Tryon in their 1887 book *Interior Decoration* "to follow the spirit of a style as far as we can, but modernizing and adapting it."<sup>65</sup>

Edgar Yergason delighted in creating interiors of refined coloration for the Green Room. Yergason masterfully transformed an historic eighteenth-century color arrangement of green, pink, white and gold with contemporary influences. A pale citrus green, referred to as "absinthe", was contrasted with a dramatic pink color, and variously

---

<sup>64</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187 July 17<sup>th</sup> 1891. Page 6 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>65</sup> Arnold Brunner and Thomas Tryon. *Interior Decoration*. (New York. Wm. T. Comstock 1887), 34

referred to as “peachblow” or “old-rose”, with touches of cream and a sprinkling of gilt highlights. Yergason’s manipulation of an eighteenth-century color scheme reveals him to be a decorator “inclined to attach some importance to color in our dwellings.”<sup>66</sup>

Typical of the Colonial Revival are Harrison and Yergason’s preference for faded, tertiary colors were favored as a reaction against the rich jewel tones popular in mid-century. A rare black and white photograph of the Harrison Green Room does not capture the true achievement of an interior that relied so heavily on color for its effect (Figure 16).

Here Yergason’s penchant for large dados and friezes was not utilized. Instead the walls boasted a fanciful design of *tromp l’oeil* in a sort of exaggerated boiserie incorporating painted surfaces, hangings of patterned silk, and applied high relief plaster work. (Figure 16) The base color for the walls was absinthe upon which an inventive pattern of rectilinear sections of silk framed in a band of peachblow pink surrounded by “bold relief and appliqué” rococo style bas-relief decorated the walls.<sup>67</sup> Gilt highlights were applied upon the raised shells and *C* and *S* scrolls as well as the picture rail. Gilding was done with burnished gold leaf. Such courtly wall treatment recalled the refined aristocratic rooms of eighteenth century France.

Musical motifs were incorporated in the decor of the ceiling. Drawings survive of the ceiling “bordered by garlands of ribbons and flowers, and at the corners and at the middle the flesh tints of a number of cupids will make the pink.” (Figure 17 and 18) Gilding enhanced the asymmetrical shells, *C* and *S* scrolls, and raised musical instruments. Trophies of cymbals, violins, flutes, and lyres emphasized the parlor as a

---

<sup>66</sup> Jacob von Falke *Art in the House: Edited with notes by Charles C. Perkins*. (Boston. L. Prang. 1879) 282

<sup>67</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. Page 6 Winterthur, Delaware.

music room. Yergason explained that with “the musical instruments the cupids are playing touched in gilt and the foliage and ribbons in green will form an artistic *tout ensemble* of color so to speak.”<sup>68</sup>

An illustration of the Green Room’s exuberant window treatment survives. (Figure 19) Yergason out-did himself. Never before, claimed one admirer, had “as finely and artistically hung” drapery ever been created. This triumph of the upholsterer’s craft was achieved with a harmony of contrasting elements, complex layering of different textiles, and complementary color combinations. Yergason placed the window treatment within the architectural framework of the window, incorporating the architecture within his overall design scheme. Just as he had in the Blue Room, Yergason filled the upper part of the windows in the Green Room with three foot high carved gilt grills with drapery and lace hanging from brass curtain rods set at the base of the grillwork. A design of exuberant acanthus leaves entangled laurel wreaths tied with ribbon graced the windows filigree grillwork. The entire pierced grillwork was gilded so that it glowed with the reflected vibrancy of the southern light during the day or the steady glow of electric light at night. Whimsically draped and intertwined within the grillwork was a satin scarf-like lambrequin the color of peachblow embellished with a border of lavish open work gimp and fringe.

Below the pink silk lambrequin were two panels of absinthe green satin drapery heavily bordered with tassels and point appliqué parted in the middle and tied back to either side of the window. The curtains were made out of four separate pieces of fabric attached to the curtain rods and tied back with heavy cord and tassel. These curtains remained immovable. Hidden behind the satin drapes hung a pair of lighter muslin

---

<sup>68</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. Page 6 Winterthur, Delaware.

curtains of the same shade which could be pulled closed if required. Fine honiton point lace curtains were placed next to the sash continuing the delightful effect of filtered sunlight for the entire length of the window. The absinthe green velour piano cover, table scarf, and mantel lambrequin were each as opulently fringed as the window curtains.

The Green Room carpeting was manufactured by Smith & Co. of Yonkers, New York after specifications made by Yergason. William H. Post & Company invoiced the White House for carpeting “made to order and perfectly plain.”<sup>69</sup> The wall-to-wall carpet was an American Axminster, considered one grade below the French Moquette used in the Blue Room. The invention of the so-called Axminster loom could create a carpet of an infinite variety of color which was once only possible with labor intensive hand knotting. The further benefit of the Axminster loom was it allowed infinite tonal gradations of one color. Further richness was provided by the thick padding laid below the carpet. Along with the cost of the carpet William H. Post & Company charged the White House for the fitting and laying of the padding and carpet in the Green Room by Post company employees.<sup>70</sup>

Most of the furniture provided by W.B. Moses in 1881 was re-used in the room. The existing parlor suite of furniture, consisting of a sofa, two arm chairs, and three side chairs, was shipped to Hartford to be reupholstered by the company’s shop.<sup>71</sup> The only new piece of seating furniture for the room was a remarkable three cluster center chair at the cost of \$85.<sup>72</sup> Yergason selected “plush”, a luxurious velvet textile to upholster the furniture. The seating furniture is characteristically deeply tufted and tasseled. Peachblow

---

<sup>69</sup> E.S. Yergason Papers Office of the Curator, the White House. File III Washington, D.C.

<sup>70</sup> E.S. Yergason Papers Office of the Curator, the White House. File III Washington, D.C.

<sup>71</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. “White House Art: Handsome Transformation Brooklyn Citizen” October 11, 1891. Page 11 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>72</sup> E.S. Yergason Papers Office of the Curator, the White House. File III Washington, D.C.

pink covered the three reception chairs while absinth green plush covered the sofa and two arm chairs.<sup>73</sup> Mrs. Harrison and Yergason arranged the furniture artistically, with the sofa set at an angle near a window and chairs set about in asymmetrical conversation groupings. The three cluster chair replaced the center table in the middle of the Green Room. Retained from the Garfield commission was an aesthetic movement inspired *étagère* with various glass and silver objects displayed. Perhaps peachblow glass vases were included.

Photographs of the room reveal the overall effect to be surprisingly sparse (Figure 16). This sparseness is reflective of both aesthetic and practical considerations. A reduction of density is characteristic of Colonial Revival interiors. “I often feel” Mrs. Harrison said “on entering a house, as if I would like to sweep the walls down from top to bottom, and tumble half the ornaments out of doors. Women have over done decoration.” Her list of offending ornaments included “flimsy lithographs, cheap gewgaws, and showy color cards . . . let us have good, rather than a heterogeneous mass with now and then a valuable article.”<sup>74</sup> For practical reasons the Green Room could not be cluttered with the characteristic late nineteenth-century taste for small tables covered in photographs and *bibelots* which would get in the way of receiving lines and prove tempting souvenirs for tourists.

A few decorative accessories were chosen from the existing White House collection. A large silver vase that been a gift from Japan was set on the Renaissance Revival side table. Two large Chinese vases were placed on either side of the mantel;

---

<sup>73</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. “Beautified by Artists.” October 5 1891. Page 5. Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>74</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. “In Parlor and Kitchen.” (No date) Page 5 Winterthur, Delaware.



their coloring complimented the Green Room. A collection of large handsomely bound folios, the titles of which are unfortunately unknown, were placed on the piano. On the mantel was “an exquisite clock in French gilt”<sup>75</sup> of white marble and ormolu mounts topped with a classical urn that had been purchased during the Grant administration. Two ceramic vases with painted landscape scenes stood on either side of the clock. Remaining in the Green Room were the overmantel and pier mirrors ordered by President Franklin Pierce from L. R. Menger of New York. Their Rococo Revival splendor provided an appropriate complement to Yergason’s dream of beauty.

Paintings were moved with some frequency during the Harrison administration; new arrangements of the growing collection of presidential portraits and the nascent collection of portraits of presidential wives were tested. Portraits of Mrs. Tyler, Mrs. Polk and Mrs. Hayes were hung in the distinctly feminine Green Room in 1891. Later the Green Room would be hung with portraits of presidents while the first ladies portraits were moved to the Red Room where Mrs. Harrison frequently received lady callers for tea. New picture frames of a uniform design were created to harmonize the grouping of first ladies portraits. It is not yet known if Yergason designed or played a role in the selection of the new picture frames.<sup>76</sup>

Upon first consideration the claim of a rococo inspired interior as Colonial Revival seems antithetical. This has more to do with the powerful influence of twentieth century modernism than late nineteenth century ignorance. If the Colonial Revival is defined by interaction and interpretation of America’s colonial past then the rococo can

---

<sup>75</sup> Frances Benjamin Johnston. “The White House: Part II Inside.” *Demorest’s Family Magazine* June (1890): 4

<sup>76</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. “White House Renovated.” ( October 5 1891) Page 5 Winterthur, Delaware.

indeed be appropriated without embarrassment. The playful and ornamental rococo, or Chippendale style, was deemphasized by later Colonial Revivalists who preferred and promoted the clean lines of the Queen Ann and Federal styles. Yergason, unhampered by modernist opposition to ornament, could embrace the rococo as an expression of colonial America.

### The Vestibule: The American Renaissance

Mrs. Harrison and Edgar Yergason wanted those who stepped across the threshold of the President's House to be awestruck by a rich and dramatic interior that embodied the magnificence of the presidency. For Yergason achieving this effect was complicated by the fact that all aspects of presidential life passed through this hall. The Vestibule, or Entrance Hall, (Figure 20) was a large nearly square shaped hall that served as the primary entrance to both a private dwelling, and a place of work. Before the building of the West Wing in 1902, the presidential offices were located on the second floor of the White House. Yergason was further faced with creating a cohesive interior from a palimpsest of previous decorative schemes. Surveying the existing Vestibule, Yergason sniffed, "colors that are harsh enough to offend do not belong to true art."<sup>77</sup> Perhaps this was a jab at Louis Comfort Tiffany's brilliantly colored stained-glass screen and Hayward & Hutchinson's encaustic tile, although both elements were to remain. A photo of the ever dapper Edgar Yergason seated outside the north entrance of the White House reveals the stained-glass front doors (Figure 21).

The Harrison Vestibule expressed, through its ornament, two important messages. One was union, or a re-union of a nation reconciled after the terrors of civil war. The

---

<sup>77</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187 "A Dream of Beauty." July 17 1891. Page 5 Winterthur, Delaware.

second was imparting on increasing numbers of foreign visitors the strength and longevity of the century old presidency. During the summer of 1891, Yergason conceived a scheme for the Vestibule in what he called “the style of the American Renaissance.” Appropriating classical ornament and materials, Yergason proclaimed America to be the inheritor of classical values and ancient empires.<sup>78</sup> “Symbolic of Union” proudly proclaimed one newspaper headline after Yergason’s decoration of the Executive Mansion’s entrance.<sup>79</sup> The notion of union held powerful meaning to the generation of Americans who had come of age during the Civil War. Both President Harrison and Yergason revered their time as officers in the Civil War. To commemorate the theme of union was, by extension, a celebration of re-union, or reconciliation, between north and south.

Yergason was restricted to guiding the decoration of the walls and ceiling. The ceiling was laid out in a complex pattern of circles within a large lozenge shape surrounded by a series of framed laurel wreaths all converging in the center. Not coincidentally the largest circle in the center was made up of forty-four panels, representing the forty-four states of the Union. Such heavy handed symbolism was characteristic of the Harrison White House; forty four gilded stars also decorated the Harrison state china. The whole was painted shades of subdued terra cotta with highlights detailed in gilt and sage green.<sup>80</sup> The existing gilt and glass chandelier was altered by suspending along the lower registry a row of drooping lily shaped crystal shades incasing small electric light

---

<sup>78</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. Page 5 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>79</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. Page 7 “Symbolic of Union” (No date) Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>80</sup> Yergason had the two allegorical paintings Liberty and Union by Constantine Brumidi from 1869 removed from the ceiling. Nearly one hundred years later these two paintings were discovered in a crate in the barn on Yergason’s Connecticut estate and were returned to the White House collection.

bulbs. For dramatic night-time effect Yergason scattered across the ceiling small raised gilt stars.<sup>81</sup> In the evening when the electric chandelier was lit, the ceiling became an expanse of twinkling starlight. Guests were delighted to find the shimmer of their jewels and medals mirrored above them.

Walls were decorated in bold relief with what Yergason referred to as appliqué plaster work. Yergason selected the New York firm of Dabelstein and Johansmeyer to do the plaster appliqué relief work. Predictably, these foreign and Semitic sounding names caused the press to perk up their ears and question the nationality of those conducting the redecoration. “Yergason, Dabelstein and Johansmeyer are not extremely suggestive of American citizenship,” claimed one critic. Reassurances were quickly issued that both materials, and workers, were made in America.<sup>82</sup> The designs were first penciled onto the wall.<sup>83</sup> Various classical ornaments such as laurel wreaths, emblematic of triumph and truce, were combined in a dynamic composition. Fasces, the Roman symbol of strength in union, are used here as well as in the Blue Room. Two sets of large plaster fascia serve as pilasters above the mantel while smaller fascias hang precariously over doorways. Eagles outstretch their wings within the arches between the columns. Stars, which Yergason confessed were “a concession to the national character of the building”, were thrown in for good measure.<sup>84</sup>

Dull brownish red walls served a neutral background to the brilliant colors of the tile and glass. Gilt work touched the outline of the heavily plastered walls achieving a

---

<sup>81</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Folio 187. ( July 17 1891.) Page 5 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>82</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Library Folio 187. “Busy at Work on the Home of the President: Work By American Artists.” (No date) Page 7. Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>83</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Folio 187 “An Army of Workmen Busy Renovating the White House” August 1 1891. Page 6 Winterthur, Delaware.

<sup>84</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Folio 189. Page 6 Winterthur, Delaware.

brilliant nighttime affect when reflecting the glow of the electric chandelier. The terracotta color alluded to the classical past, achieving an historic appearance considered appropriate. An even more antiqued look was achieved by painting faux decay with burnished gilt and sage green coloring applied along the edges of the raised plaster. By implication its classical allusions resonated with the strength of the presidency and even the genealogy of Benjamin Harrison whose “lineage runs back unbroken to the stout Puritan England of Cromwell.”<sup>85</sup> Coloring walls in imitation-aged terracotta would have horrified a design reformer who valued honesty in materials. However, there were those who disagreed with this theory. As the author of *Art in the House* Jacob von Falke wrote in 1879, “to find satisfaction in the conscious of the simple value of the material itself . . . is really a piece of barbarism.”<sup>86</sup>

Yergason replaced the monochromatic *tromp l’oeil* cameo portraits of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington in the Vestibule’s east and west walls with two bas-relief profile portraits of the same men surrounded by decorative wall panels of raised antiqued terra cotta colored plaster (22). Washington was placed above the marble mantel on the east, while Lincoln’s remained on the west wall above a console table. America’s first president and its martyred sixteenth president appeared crowned in a glory of eagles, laurel wreaths, and the national flag. The two presidents stoically greeted tourists and diplomats into the Executive Mansion unfazed by the fanfare surrounding them.

With the only furnishings in the Vestibule being two umbrella stands and four chairs, Yergason was restricted to guiding the decoration of the walls and ceiling. With

---

<sup>85</sup> The Illustrated London News. No title. November 5, 1892. 582. White House Historical Association. Washington, D.C.

<sup>86</sup> Jacob von Falke *Art in the House. Edited with notes by Charles C. Perkins.* (Boston. L. Prang. 1879), 284

walls and ceiling profusely ornamented with republican and patriotic symbols the Vestibule provided a potent first impression for visitors to the White House. Upon entering the President's House one was heralded by trumpets, flags, stars and eagles assuring you of the strength of the president and the inviolability of the union. An allegorical Colonial Revival is achieved by incorporating ornament recalling the glories of the Revolutionary War while extolling the might of republican government.

### The State Dining Room: Like a Glorious Sunset

The State Dining Room is at the western end of the enfilade of the East Room, Green Room, Blue Room and Red Room. Before the 1902 expansion of the State Dining Room, which was achieved by the removal of the grand staircase, the room's orientation was east to west, with a fireplace at either end. One entered the dining room from either the Corridor or the Red Room. Two tall windows on the western wall overlooked the expanse of White House conservatories where Mrs. Harrison cultivated her orchids and painted studies of them (Figure 24). Here the president and first lady were expected to host a series of state dinners in honor of his cabinet, the justices of the Supreme Court, senators and representatives.<sup>87</sup>

The Washington social season ran from November through the start of Lent. When Easter occurred earlier than usual, as it did in 1891, it meant a compression of the standing number of dinners and receptions to be hosted at the White House. As Mary Logan pointed out in *Thirty Years in Washington*, "Many men officially entitled to White House dinner invitations are either not accomplished or are ill adapted to the usage of good society. Naturally the wives of such men are equally unsuited to their positions,

---

<sup>87</sup> During the nineteenth century state dinners were defined as any large official dinner held by the president. By the 21<sup>st</sup> century the appellation State Dinner was reserved for dinners in honor of a head of state.

consequently between timidity and ignorance they make very uninteresting table companions.”<sup>88</sup> Many considered an invitation to a private dinner at the President’s House, where protocol was lessened, to be far more enjoyable than the rigidity of a state dinner.

Mrs. Harrison held her popular ladies’ luncheons in the State Dining Room. For these she thoughtfully assembled a party of women from various spheres of Washington society. Occasionally these lunches would be held in honor of a woman of distinction, such as former First Lady Julia Grant. Frequent lunch guests included Jane Stanford and Mary Henderson, both wives of influential senators. The indomitable Mrs. Henderson shared Mrs. Harrison’s dream of a larger President’s House and almost single handedly established 16th Street and the surrounding area as the fashionable neighborhood in the nation’s capital.

Yergason needed to make a bold statement in the room while incorporating the existing furniture and light fixtures. He overcame this restriction by lavishing the walls and ceiling. Yergasons combined neo-classical ornament and patriotic motifs with emblems of nature’s bounty to reflect America’s dominance over land and sea. Arnold Brunner and Thomas Tryon wrote in their guide to household décor titled *Interior Decoration* that a dining room was heir to the “luxurious banquets” of the renaissance prince who dined in halls decorated “to represent nature as closely as possible” and Saxon lords who feasted in vast halls “hung about with skins from the chase, tapestries from conquest, and rude armor and trophies.”<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> Mary Cunningham Logan. *Thirty Years in Washington*. (Hartford Conn. A.D. Worthington & Co. 1901), 155

<sup>89</sup> Arnold Brunner and Thomas Tryon. *Interior Decoration*. (New York. Wm. T. Comstock, 1887), 42

Harrison and Yergason's taste for refined coloration was exhibited in the State Dining Room. Yergason explained, "I intend to make its tone light and cheerful, the coloring a blending of fawn and golden brown shades."<sup>90</sup> A tonal expression of brown and cream, called *café au lait*, was achieved by the application of reflective shades of creamy brown paint, over which a translucent layer of glaze was applied giving the room a waxy, highly reflective wall surface, enhanced by touches of gilding.<sup>91</sup> The result of this labor intensive technique was a "wonderfully lustrous result" in the evening when the electric chandeliers were lit.<sup>92</sup> Yergason enhanced the effect of the electric lighting by painting the ceiling a light brown above the chandeliers, a brown that gradually darkened until reaching the frieze. A newspaper headline proclaimed, "The State Dining Room Made More Beautiful Than Ever – Lit by Electric Light."<sup>93</sup>

The walls of the State Dining Room were heavily encrusted with plaster appliqué work. A drawing (Figure 26) of the wall decoration reveals a large dado and frieze overflowing their traditional confines until nearly the entire wall is covered in high relief plaster appliqué. A photograph of a Monroe era mantel (Figure 27) reveals the raised pattern of Yergason's surrounding appliqué work.<sup>94</sup> Nautical motifs of coral and sea shells dominate the dado's design. The sea shells may have been influenced by American colonial furniture. Branches of coral blend upwards from the dado into the darker center wall, creating a rough texture and variegated top to the dado. Maritime imagery in the dado was contrasted with earth's abundance in the ceiling and window grills. The shield

---

<sup>90</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur portfolio 187. "A Dream of Beauty" (No date) Page 6 Winterthur, Delaware

<sup>91</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Folio 187 Page 5. Winterthur, Delaware

<sup>92</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Folio 187 Page 7. Winterthur, Delaware

<sup>93</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Folio 187. "The State Dining Room Made More Beautiful Than Ever – Lit by Electric Light." (No date) Page 11 Winterthur, Delaware

<sup>94</sup> Arnold Brunner and Thomas Tryon. *Interior Decoration*. (New York. Wm. T. Comstock 1887), 46



of the Great Seal of the United States was placed prominently in the frieze over the doors. Yergason incorporated this element in an attempt to unify the wall décor with the existing 1853 side tables from A & H Jenkins of Baltimore (Figure 28) that had the shield carved on their fronts.

Such ornately patterned and richly cut wall decoration was in harmony with the “rich-cut” and “brilliant” Russian pattern glassware ordered by the Harrisons from C. Dorflinger & Sons.<sup>95</sup> (Figure 29) Yergason’s design of patriotic emblems and nature’s bounty complemented Mrs. Harrison’s design for the Harrison state china (Figure 30) created by Tressemanne & Vogt, Limoges, France. Assisting Mrs. Harrison in designing the new china was her instructor in china painting, Paul Putzki, who taught courses in china painting in the White House conservatories at the invitation of the first lady.<sup>96</sup> When Edgar Yergason received a bowl and pitcher painted by Mrs. Harrison he proudly displayed the First Lady’s handiwork in the window of William H. Post & Company’s storefront in Hartford.

Like a familiar face in a crowd, the Monroe era mantels (Figure 27) appear in photographs in their original setting in the State Dining Room. One visitor to the Harrison White House remarked that these mantels “can really be classed among the few permanent treasures of the home” although amidst the splendor of the room “have scarcely ever been noticed by anyone.”<sup>97</sup> Placed atop the mantel were the gilt bronze stands purchased by Monroe for the President’s House. Perhaps Yergason was inspired

---

<sup>95</sup> Jane Shadel Spillman. *White House Glassware*. (Washington D.C.: White House Historical Association, 1989), 99

<sup>96</sup> Margaret Kpalthor. *White House China*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 127.

<sup>97</sup> Yergason Scrapbook Winterthur Folio 187. Washington Star. “Work of Improvement: White House to be redecorated and Refurnished.” July 4 1891. Page 9 Winterthur, Delaware

by the neoclassical ornament on these historic objects for his wall and ceiling design scheme.

Yergason continued his successful format for window treatments of drapery falling below elaborately pierced grillwork. A sketch survives (Figure 31) on hotel stationery of his window treatment with measurements and other notes scrawled across it.<sup>98</sup> A more finished drawing reveals Yergason's customary setting of the window treatment within the architectural frame, an ornate grill set above, and a layering of heavier drapery in front of lace curtains (Figure 32). Drab colored shades which could be pulled down between the lace curtains and the window were ordered; a sample survives in the White House Office of the Curator's archives.

That the good republican decorator used neo-classical ornament in the window grillwork to remind diners of America's promise of prosperity and liberty. In the center an elongated burning torch is framed by two curling cornucopias bursting forth with curling garlands whose pierced pattern makes up the rest of the grill. The effect of sunlight filtered through the gilded grills cast golden refulgence over the room. One enthusiastic viewer proclaimed the State Dining Room "looks like a gorgeous golden sunset."<sup>99</sup> Yergason's window treatment of a gilded grillwork became popularly associated with the Harrison White House. A *Puck* cartoon of President Harrison overwhelmed by the presidency and haunted by his inheritance, includes a Yergason window treatment (Figure 33). In this cartoon we have an image of the dramatic effect of golden sunlight pouring through the gilded window grills. Photos of the dining room reveal drapery falling straight to the ground from rods below the grill or pulled and tied

---

<sup>98</sup> E.S. Yergason Papers Office of the Curator, the White House. File IV Washington, D.C.

<sup>99</sup> Yergason Scrapbook Winterthur Folio 187 "Beautiful and Artistic." (No date) Page 5 Winterthur, Delaware

back. Deep folds are evident in the drawing of the golden brown velour curtains. Subtle banding along the bottom included hand worked stylized floral ornament providing visual interest in a comparatively simple drapery design. Plush fawn colored portieres are mentioned in the estimates for the room but do not appear in any of the surviving photographs.<sup>100</sup>

Yergason selected a wall-to-wall Royal Wilton carpet manufactured by the Lowell Manufacturing Co. from the New York Department store Arnold, Constable and Co.<sup>101</sup> (Figure 34) A Royal Wilton carpet was not as fine a grade of carpet as a French Moquette or Axminster. Its principal attraction was its durability. Wilton carpets are woven with a strong worsted, or wool, pile with a linen back. The worsted is woven over small wires which are then removed. The loop of wool is then cut to create a velvet like sheen which complimented the iridescent wax like finish of the walls. Thus Yergason had a luxurious looking carpet strong enough to withstand the traffic caused by the endless round of official lunches and dinners. An overall pattern was practical since an “entirely plain carpet” was not to be recommended “owing to the difficulty of keeping it clear of footprints,”<sup>102</sup> consideration the practical Mrs. Harrison would have taken seriously.

One further embellishment was never installed. Caroline Harrison desired cabinets to be created to exhibit the White House collection of historic presidential china.<sup>103</sup> Perhaps she imagined corner cabinets associated with colonial architecture and depicted in painter Edward Lamson Henry’s 1889 *A Lover of Old China* (Figure 35). Corner cabinets to display china may have enhanced the colonial atmosphere in the room,

---

<sup>100</sup> E.S. Yergason Papers Office of the Curator, the White House. File IV Washington, D.C.

<sup>101</sup> E.S. Yergason Papers Office of the Curator, the White House. File IV Washington, D.C.

<sup>102</sup> Frank A. Moreland. *The Curtain-Makers Handbook: A reprint of Practical Decorative Upholstery of 1889*. (New York. E.P. Dulton 1979), 294

<sup>103</sup> Abby G. Baker. “The White House Collection of Presidential Ware” *The Century Magazine* (1908): 830

though admittedly would have done little to support Yergason's assertion that his interior was in keeping with the architecture of the White House.

Such an exuberant interior for the epicurean setting of the presidency could only have existed in the final decades of the nineteenth century. After the layers of translucent color and gilding were applied to gloriously appliquéd walls, electric chandeliers hung, wall to wall carpet laid, elaborately embroidered curtains and portieres hung, one could be excused if incredulous to Edgar Yergason's declaration that the State Dining Room "will be finished in colonial designs in order to conform to its architecture."<sup>104</sup> Mrs. Harrison and Mr. Yergason, unfettered by considerations of historical accuracy manipulated ornament to express a Colonial Revival interior uninhibitedly picturesque.<sup>105</sup>

### Conclusion

Harrison and Yergason's last project was the refurbishment of the Cross Hall 1892. In October of that same year Mrs. Harrison died of tuberculosis. Caroline Harrison's effort to restore the historical atmosphere of the residence was continued by numerous first ladies. Mrs. Harrison's china collection was expanded by succeeding first ladies, notably Edith Roosevelt and Edith Wilson. Caroline Harrison's dream of the President's House partially serving as a museum was fulfilled by Jacqueline Kennedy who, among other things, hired the first White House curator and created a White House Special Committee on Paintings in 1961. Ninety-two years after Caroline Harrison hung Albert Bierstadt paintings in the President's House (Figure 36), Nancy Reagan acquired Bierstadt's *Rocky Mountain Landscape* for the White House collection (Figure 37).

---

<sup>104</sup> Yergason Scrapbook. Winterthur Folio 187. July 17<sup>th</sup> 1891. Page 5. Winterthur, Delaware

<sup>105</sup> For an examination of the picturesque in nineteenth-century furniture see Oscar P. Fitzgerald "How to Appreciate Victorian Furniture: The Rise and Fall of the Picturesque" draft submitted for publication to *Decorative Arts: The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts* (November 2007).

Yergason, flush with the success of the White House commission, left William H Post & Co. to open his own decorating business in New York City. There Yergason's theatrical historicism was well suited to the city's grand residences, hotel and apartment building lobbies, and private clubs. During the early twentieth century Yergason moved with the times and packaged himself as a decorator, Yergason privately published an undated promotional booklet entitled *Smart Furnishings for Modern Homes* where he described himself as a decorator. As a "Decorator and Furnisher of the Executive Mansion" Yergason would "make your home beautiful" though it "need not involve a large expenditure" he can create "the most attractive place on earth to yourself and to those you love."<sup>106</sup> Edgar Yergason continued to receive commissions until the year of his death in 1920 at the age of eighty.

Edgar Yergason returned to the White House in 1899 during the McKinley administration to redecorate the Blue Room, the resulting interior an elaboration on the work done during the Harrison administration. The Yergason and Harrison interiors had remained essentially intact during the second Cleveland administration. Mrs. Cleveland preferred to live at her suburban retreat and used the White House ceremonially for official receptions and events. The assassination of President McKinley brought Vice President Theodore Roosevelt to office in 1901. Much has been written about the extensive re-imagining of the White House accomplished by Theodore Roosevelt and the firm of McKim, Mead, and White redecoration of the White House in 1902. While the firm continued the historicist approach to White House interiors begun by Edgar Yergason and Caroline Harrison, aesthetically the two decorative schemes are radically

---

<sup>106</sup> Edgar Yergason, *Smart Furnishings for Modern Homes*. Yergason Scrapbook, Winterthur Portfolio 187. Page 1 Winterthur, Delaware.

different. Imbued with the rigors of neo-classical taste and architectural scale the McKim, Mead and White's interiors are spare and well proportioned. McKim, Mead and White transformed the White House both stylistically and institutionally, preparing the stage for the twentieth century president. The style is highly photogenic. Though the rooms have been greatly altered, one recognizes the White House when viewing images of the Theodore Roosevelt White House. One can be forgiven for not having the same reaction when confronted with Frances Benjamin Johnston's photographs of the Benjamin Harrison White House. However, Caroline Harrison and Edgar Yergason's influence on White House interiors would resonate long after their work was destroyed. Their self-consciously historical setting for the presidency was the first step in the journey from the president's house into a historical shrine.

The President's House is the public representation of the taste of the American people. Examining the White House interior created by Caroline Harrison and Edgar Yergason from 1890 – 1892 enhances understanding of popular domestic taste in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The White House, both home and office to the president of the United States, is the principle stage in which the head of state performs his executive duties. While in residence a president and first lady walk a fine line between democratic simplicity and the august trappings of power. Moving into the White House on the centennial of the presidency Benjamin and Caroline Harrison presented themselves as inheritors of the noble sentiments of the founding generation through interiors that expressed an authentically American style: the colonial.

Few nineteenth century redecoration projects are as well documented as work done for the home of the president. As the most significant and best documented

commission in Edgar Yergason's career one can deduce his unique taste and personality, as well as better understand the creative relationship between clients and upholsterers during the nineteenth century. An upholsterer's creations are temporary and fragile, subject to constant wear and tear by inhabitants until they move or die or redecorate. When a work of art or piece of furniture becomes unfashionable, the offending object can be placed in storage or sold to await rediscovery by an enthusiast. The few decorative schemes that do survive as museum period rooms slowly give way to the inevitable decay; colors fade, textiles deteriorates. Preservation efforts are often initiated, the result inevitably reflecting the taste and of the restorers and the blandness of design by committee. As the interiors are lost, so often are the stories of their creators.

Edgar Yergason's luxuriant and comfortable interiors were praised by contemporaries as colonial and were widely thought to be in keeping with the historical character of the White House. Confronted with Colonial Revival interiors that were neither historically accurate nor conformed to a conception of the later Colonial Revival influenced by Wallace Nutting and Colonial Williamsburg, tastemakers and historians confidently dismissed their creators as ignorant. A more expansive view of the Colonial Revival will instead see in them the emergence of an on-going and evolving search for an authentically American style, expressed through an aesthetic that valued visual complexity, an abundance of material goods, and a delight in the fanciful. As a more complex view of the evolution of the Colonial Revival style is being formed, the contributions of Caroline Harrison and Edgar Yergason to the Colonial Revival can now be understood.

## Bibliography

### Archives and Manuscript Collections

The Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford Connecticut

- Edgar Yergason Papers MS 82322.

Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington D.C.

- Benjamin Harrison Papers.
- Frances Benjamin Johnston Photographs and Papers.

Office of the Curator, the White House, Washington D.C.

- E.S. Yergason Papers, Decorator for Mrs. Caroline Harrison 1890-92, and Mrs. Ida McKinley, 1899. 980.1428.3.

The Washington Post (1889 -1894)

The Winterthur Library: Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera.

- Edgar S. Yergason, Scrapbook, 1890-1913, Folio 187.

### Secondary Sources

Abbot, James and Elaine Rice. *Designing Camelot: The Kennedy White House Restoration*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold. 1998.

Ames, Kenneth. *Death in the Dining Room: And Other Tales of Victorian Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 1992.

Anthony, Carl Sferrazza. *First Ladies*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1990.

Axelrod, Alan, ed. *The Colonial Revival in America*. New York: W.W. Norton. 1985.

Baker, Abby G. "The White House Collection of Presidential Ware." *The Century Magazine*, volume 76, number 6 (October, 1908)

Brunner, Arnold and Thomas Tryon. *Interior Decoration*. New York: Wm. T. Comstock 1887.

Codman, Ogden Jr. and Edith Wharton. *The Decoration of Houses*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. 1997.

Cook, Clarence. *The House Beautiful*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1881.



Cooke, Edward S. Jr. *Upholstery in America and Europe from the Seventeenth Century to World War I*. New York: W.W. Norton. 1987.

Craven, Wayne. *Gilded Mansions*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 2008

Denenberg, Thomas Andrew. *Wallace Nutting and the Invention of Old America*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 2003.

Dozer, Donald Marquand. *Benjamin Harrison and the Presidential Campaign of 1892*. *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 54, No.1 (October, 1948) Page 49-77

Fitzgerald, Oscar P. "How to Appreciate Victorian Furniture: The Rise and Fall of the Picturesque" draft submitted for publication to *Decorative Arts: The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts* (November 2007).

Flanders, Judith. *Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. 2003

Foster, Harriet Newell McIntire. *Mrs. Benjamin Harrison, The First President-General of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution*. Indianapolis: Daughters of the American Revolution. 1908.

Garrett, Elizabeth Donaghy. *At Home: The American Family 1750 -1870*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1990.

Gere, Charlotte. *19<sup>th</sup> Century Decoration: The Art of the Interior*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1989.

Gibbs, Margaret. *The DAR*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.

Green, Leticia. *Brief History of the Daughters of the American Revolution*. Bloomington: D.A.R. 1913.

Grier, Katherine C. *Culture & Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850-1930*. Washington D.C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press. 1988.

Harris, Eileen. *The Country Houses of Robert Adam: From the Archives of Country Life* London: Aurum Press 2008.

Hoover, Irwin Hood. *42 Years in the White House*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934.

Howe, Katherine S., Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, and Catherine Hoover Voorsanger. *Herter Brothers: Furniture and Interiors for a Gilded Age*. New York: Harry N. Abrams. 1994.

- Hurst, Ronald L. and Jonathan Prown. *Southern Furniture 1680-1830: The Colonial Williamsburg Collection*. Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. 1997.
- Kaplan, Wendy, et al. *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*. New York: Rizzoli. 1986.
- Klaphor, Margaret Brown. *Official White House China 1789 to the Present*. 2d ed. New York: Harry Abrams. 1999.
- Kloss, William, et al. *Art in the White House: A Nation's Pride*. Washington D.C: White House Historical Association and National Geographic Society. 1992.
- Lears, Jackson T.J. *No Place of Grace: Anti-modernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920*. New York: Pantheon Books. 1981.
- Lewis, Arnold. *The Opulent Interiors of the Gilded Age: All 203 Photographs from Artistic Houses, with New Text* New York: Dover Publications. 1987
- Logan, Mrs. John A. *Thirty Years in Washington*. Hartford, Conn: A. D. Worthington & Co. 1901.
- Marling, Karal Ann. *George Washington Slept Here: Colonial Revivals and American Culture, 1876-1986*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press. 1988.
- Monkman, Betty C. *The White House: It's Historic Furnishings and First Families*. New York: Abbeville Press and the White House Historical Association. 2000.
- Montgomery, Florence M. *Textiles in America: 1650 – 1870*. New York: W. W. Norton. 2007
- Moreland, Frank A. *The Curtain-Makers Handbook: A Reprint of Practical Decorative Upholstery of 1889*. New York: E.P. Dulton 1979.
- Seale, William. *The Presidents House: A History*. 2 vols. Washington D.C: White House Historical Association. 1986.
- . *The White House: The History of an American Idea*. Washington D.C.: American Institute of Architects Press. 1992.
- . *The Tasteful Interlude: American Interiors through the Camera's Eye, 1860-1917* Washington D.C.: AltaMira Press; 2 edition, 1982.
- Sievers, Harry J. *Benjamin Harrison: Hoosier President*. 3 volumes. Newtown, CT: American Political Biography Press, 1997.
- Singleton, Esther. *The Story of the White House*. 2 vols. New York: McClure Co. 1907.

Spillman, Jane Shadell. *White House Glassware: Two Centuries of Entertaining*. Washington D.C.: White House Historical Association. 1989.

Kammen, Michael. *Mystic Cords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. New York: Vintage. 1993.

Thornton, Peter. *Authentic Decor: The Domestic Interior 1620 – 1920*. London: Seven Dials; new edition. 2001.

Trachtenberg, Alan. *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*. New York: Hill and Wang. 1982

Von Falke, Jacob. *Art in the House*. Edited with notes by Charles C. Perkins. Boston: L. Prang. 1879.

Vorsanger, Catherine Hoover. "Gorgeous Articles of Furniture Cabinetmaking in the Empire City." *Art and the Empire City*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2000

Wilson, Richard Guy. "McKim's Renovations: American Renaissance and Imperial Presidency." 182 – 200. *Our Changing White House*. Edited by Wendell Garrett. Boston: Northeastern University Press. 1995.

---. *The Colonial Revival House*. New York: Harry N. Abrams. 2004.

Wolff, Perry. *A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy: Based on the Television Program*. New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1962.





Figure 2: *Caroline Scott Harrison* by Daniel Huntington. 1894. The White House Collection.



Figure 1: President Benjamin Harrison and Family. 1889. Library of Congress.

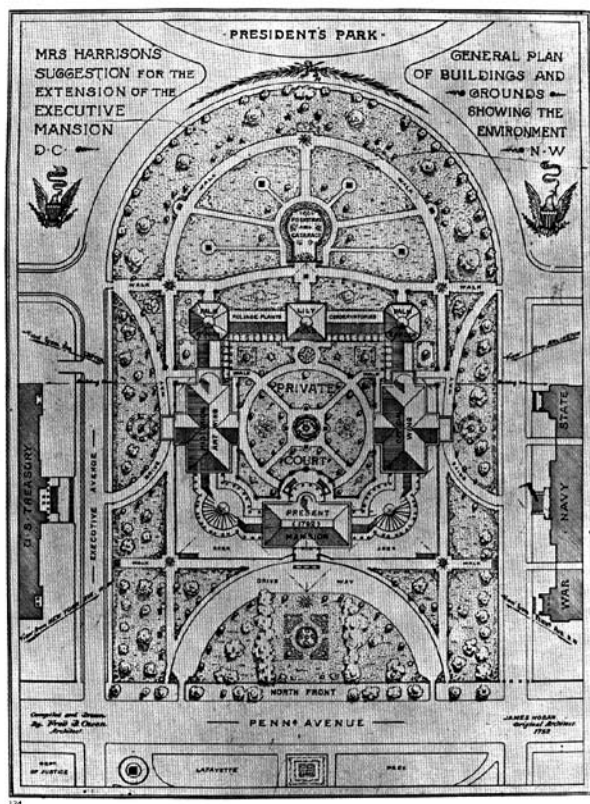


Figure 4: Mrs. Harrison's Suggestion for the Extension of the Executive Mansion. 1889. National Archives.



Figure 3: Centerpiece. Franklin Pierce Administration . 1853. The White House Collection. The White House Historical Association.



*E. S. Yergason*

Figure 5 Edgar Yergason. c.1900. The White House Collection.

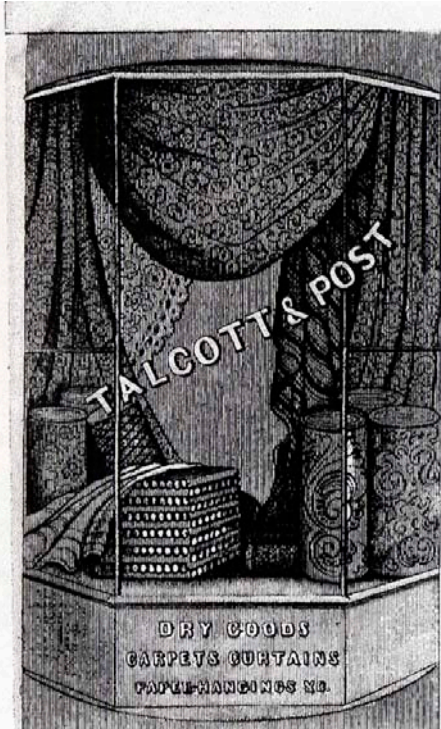


Figure 6 Talcott & Post Letter Head. c. 1860. Connecticut Historical Society.

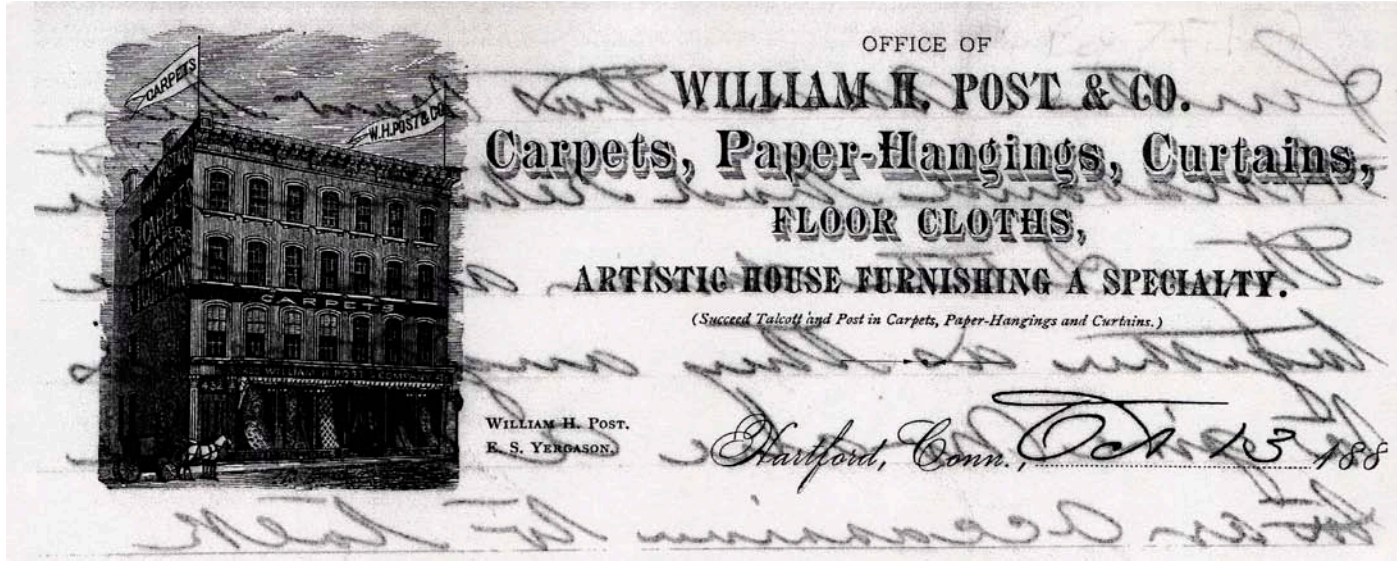


Figure 7 Letter Head for the William H. Post & Co. 1888. Connecticut Historical Society

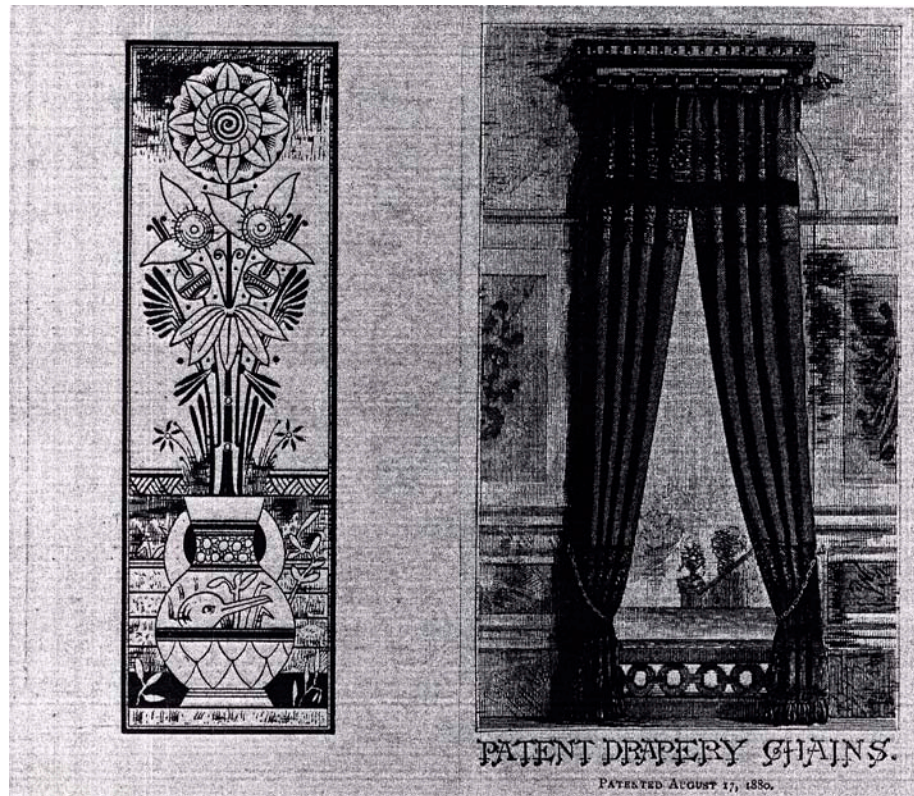


Figure 8. Edgar Yergason's Patent Drapery Chains card. 1880  
Connecticut Historical Society.

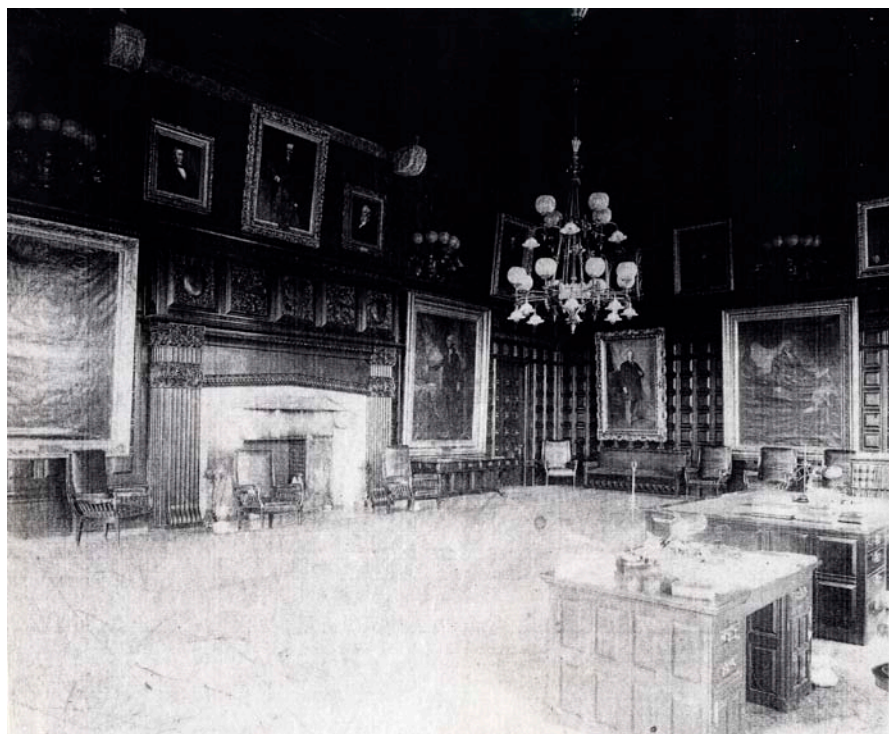


Figure 9 Governor Roosevelt's Chamber in the Capitol, Albany New York. c.1899  
Connecticut Historical Society



Figure 10. The Blue Room. Harrison Administration. 1890. Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers, Library of Congress.

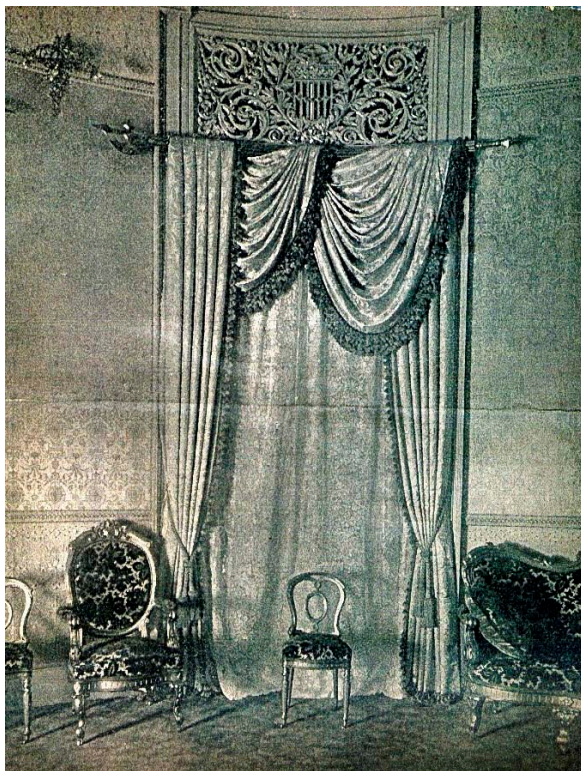


Figure 11. Blue Room window treatment. 1890. The Winterthur Library: Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera

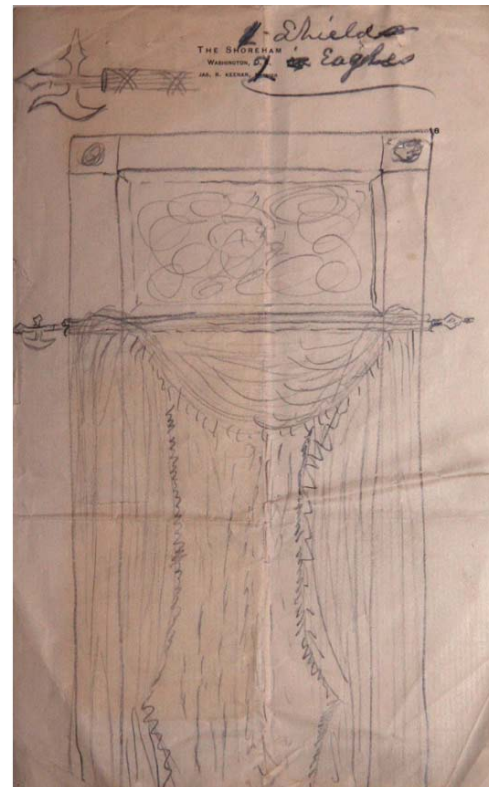


Figure 12 Sketch for Blue Room window treatment. 1890. Edgar Yergason Papers, White House Curators Office



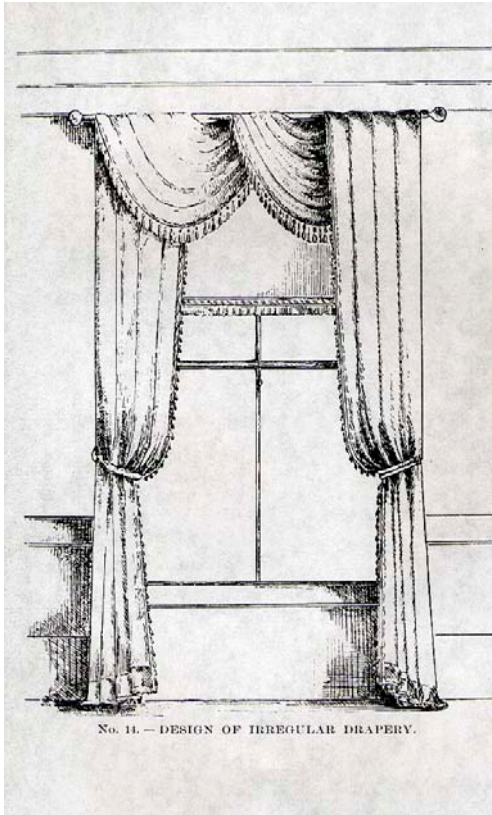


Figure 13. Design of Irregular Drapery, from Frank Moreland, *The Curtain-Makers Handbook: A Reprint of Practical Decorative Upholstery of 1889*. New York. E.P. Dulton 1979. 10.



Figure 14. Blue Room furniture upholstery fabric, 1890. Edgar Yergason Papers, White House Curators Office



Figure 15. Design proposed for Blue Room gate. 1890. Edgar Yergason Papers, White House Curators Office



Figure 16. The Green Room. Harrison Administration, 1891. In Perry Wolff's *A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John K Kennedy* 1962. Doubleday & Company, Inc. New York. 117.



Figure 17. Design of Green Room ceiling, 1891. Edgar Yergason Papers, White House Curators Office

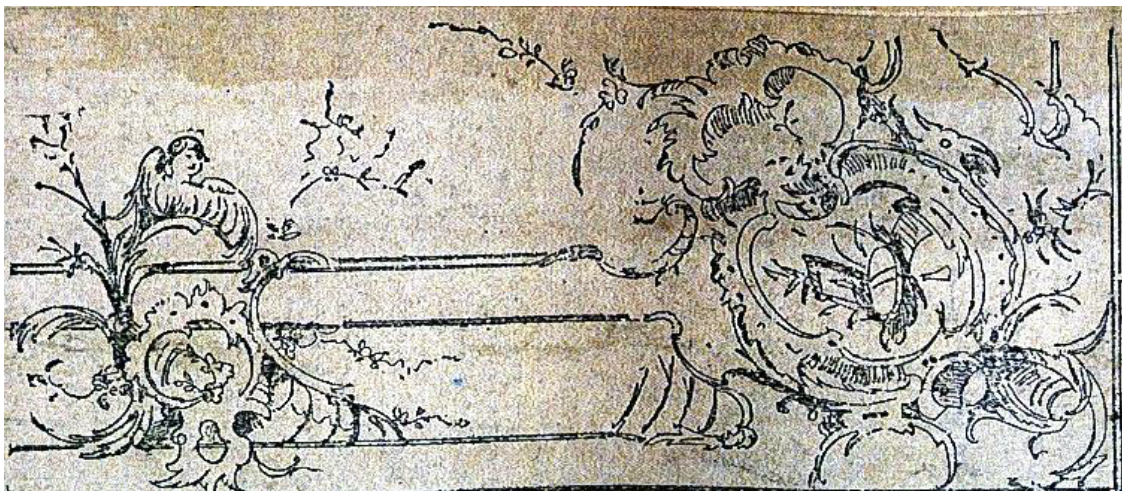


Figure 18. Design for Green Room ceiling, 1891. The Winterthur Library: Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera

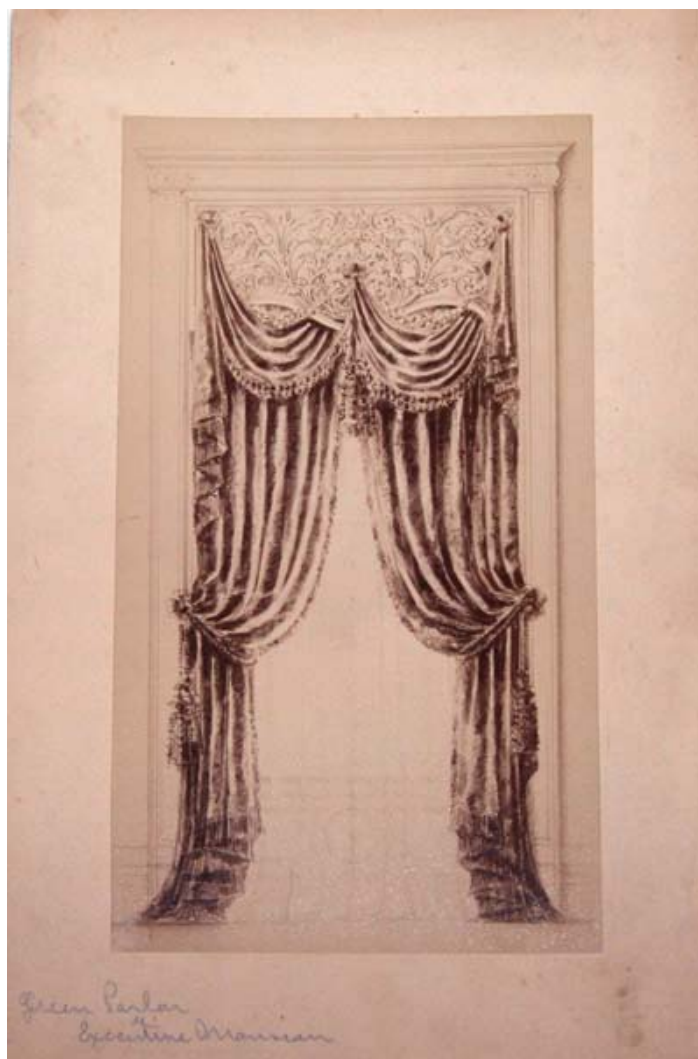


Figure 19. Design for Green Room window treatments, 1891  
Edgar Yergason Papers, White House Curators Office



Figure 20. Vestibule, or Entrance Hall. Harrison Administration, 1893. Note the umbrella stand to the left of the fireplace. Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers, Library of Congress



Figure 21. Newspaper Illustration, with Yergason's corrections, of Vestibule relief panel. 1891. The Winterthur Library: Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera



Figure 22. Edgar Yergason in front of the north entrance of the White House, with doors opening into the Vestibule or Entrance Hall. c. 1890. Connecticut Historical Society.



Figure 23. The State Dining Room. 1893. Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers, Library of Congress

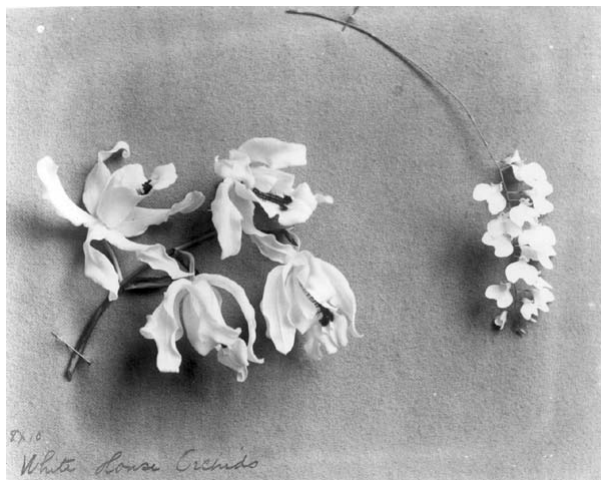


Figure 24 White House Orchids c. 1890. Frances Benjamin Johnson Papers, Library of Congress



Figure 25. *Four Generations*. Caroline Scott Harrison, Baby McKee, Mary Harrison McKee, Mary McKee, Dr. Rev. Scott. 1889. Library of Congress



Figure 26. Design for State Dining Room wall decoration. 1891.  
Edgar Yergason Papers, White House Curators Office



Figure 27. Monroe Mantel, State Dining Room.  
1893. Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers, Library  
of Congress



Figure 28. Side Table attributed to A. & H. Jenkins. 1853.  
White House Collection, White House Historical Association.



Figure 29. Russian-Pattern glass service, Harrison Administration. 1891 White House Collection, White House Historical Association.



Figure 30. Dinner plate, Harrison administration. 1893. Note the forty-four stars representing the states of the union. White House Collection, White House Historical Association.

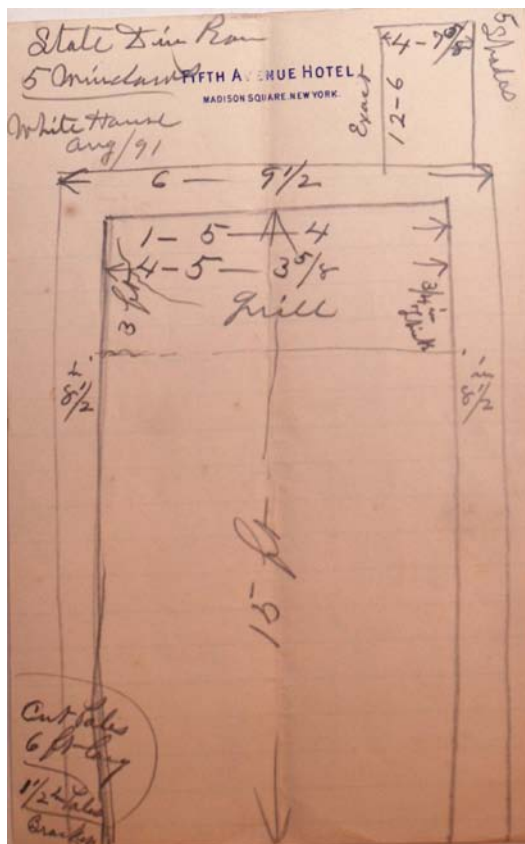


Figure 31. Sketch for State Dining Room window treatment. 1891. Edgar Yergason Papers, White House Curators Office.

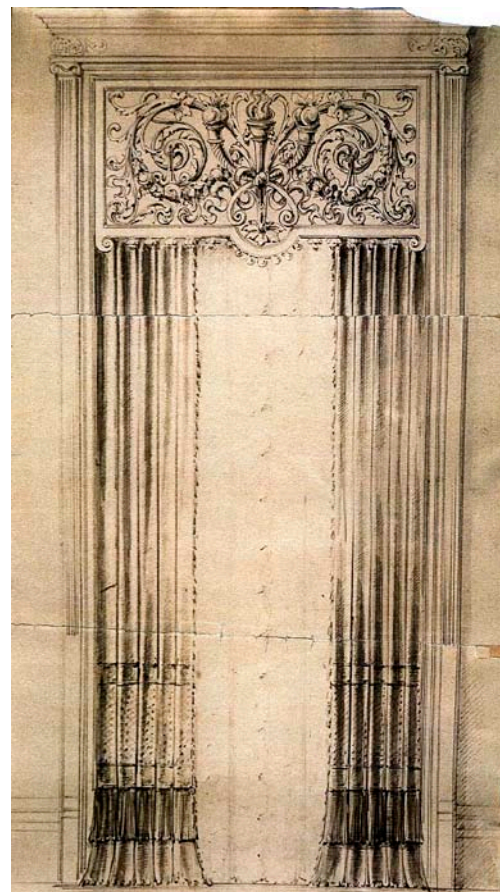


Figure 32. Design for State Dining Room window treatment. 1891. The Winterthur Library: Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera



Figure 33. *The Raven*, A Puck cartoon of Benjamin Harrison in his grandfather's hat, haunted by Secretary of State James G. Blaine, perched within an Edgar Yergason-esq window treatment. 1891.

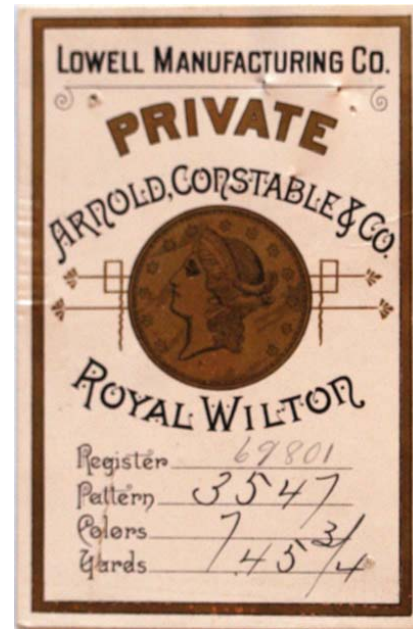


Figure 34. Lowell Manufacturing Co. tag for State Dining room's Royal Wilton carpet. 1891. Edgar Yergason Papers. White House Curators Office



Figure 35. Edward Lamson Henry. *A Lover of Old China* 1889. Shelburne Museum





Figure 36. The West Sitting Hall, Harrison Administration. c. 1890  
 Washingtoniana Division, District of Columbia Public Library



Figure 37. The Red Room, Reagan Administration. 1982.  
 White House Historical Association.