

Running and Enriching a Ceiling Medallion. The method of running and enriching a ceiling medallion remains the same today.

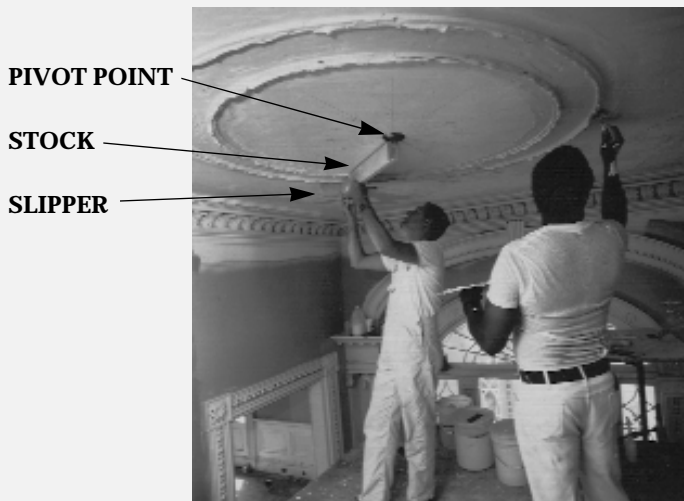


Fig. A. First, a plain-run surround is spun from a pivot point centered in the ceiling field. Photo by Peter Sanders.



Fig. B. Ornament layout is determined using plane geometric principles; segmented locations are deeply scratched to provide a rough surface for adequate bonding using plaster as an adhesive. Photo by Peter Sanders.

Students of Greek revival plaster medallions who could see the plaster models in the author's personal study collection or the restored medallion on-site, would understand why it is appropriate to say that the medallion form has never been designed and executed more brilliantly than in the double parlors of the Merchant's House. Peering through windows of Greenwich Village townhouses, one observes centerpieces composed with varying degrees of success. But at the Old Merchant's House, there can be no question that this unidentified craftsman was the reigning genius of American classical revival plasterwork.

For a more detailed description of running and enriching a ceiling medallion, please refer to Preservation Briefs 23.

David Flaharty has 25 years experience as an ornamental plasterer and is also a sculptor and educator. He is the author of *Preservation Briefs 23: Preserving Historic Ornamental Plaster*.

An Architectural Historian

Through the existence of architectural elements in architectural study collections it is possible to develop drawings to explain the methods of construction and to highlight individual features. Architectural study collections can also be sources for replicating or reproducing lost or severely deteriorated features or elements. Many manufacturers will study the historic original and develop a new product or a reproduction product for use in other buildings. This viewpoint contrasts two drawings of windows—one from an early historic window, and one from a now historic window.

Residential Casement Windows

Kathleen Catalano Milley

The wood casement sash depicted in the detailed drawing in figure 1 dates from c. 1641, and comes from the Newport, RI, home of Governor William Coddington. Now in the study collection of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, the sash was the only feature salvaged when the Coddington house was demolished in 1835. Its survival, complete with glazing, affords a rare opportunity to examine the construction and design of a mid-17th-century architectural artifact.

The sash echoes the windows seen in the European towns and villages from which the colonists migrated. The simple mortise and tenon construction and the casement method of operation (side-hung sash that swing outward on hinges) are typical of the period, although stationary sash were also popular. The small size of the Coddington sash (27 1/2" H. x 20 1/2" W. x 1" D.) is characteristic of 17th-century American windows and reflects the scarcity and high cost of window glass, as well as the need for protection against harsh North American winters.

Glazing consists of small, hand-blown panes, set into the sash with lead strips termed "comes" or "calmes," reinforced with thin wooden bars. Although a rectangular pane is used here, diamond-shaped glazing was also common. Despite attempts at window glass manufacture at Jamestown, VA, most early glazing had to be imported from

Europe. So difficult and costly was it to obtain that the colonists frequently urged friends back home to bring their own. In 1634, William Wood advised prospective immigrants

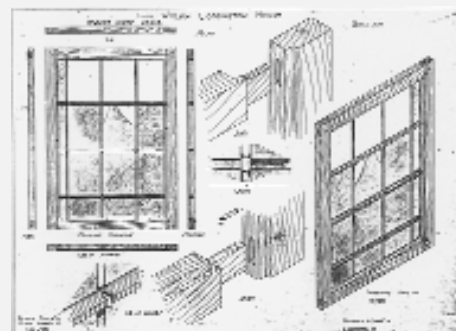


Fig. 1. Drawing made in 1929 of a c. 1641 wood casement window from the Governor William Coddington House, Newport, RI. The Rhode Island Historical Society's unsuccessful attempt to save the house from demolition in 1835 was one of the first concerted preservation efforts in the state. Both the sash and the drawing are now part of the study collection of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, RI. Drawing courtesy Rhode Island Historical Society.

(**Architectural Historian**—continued on page 20)

in his *New England Prospect* that “glasse ought not to be forgotten of any that desire to benefit themselves, or the Countrey: if it be well leaded, and carefully pak’t up, I know of no other commodity better for portage or sayle.”

The existence of architectural features like the Coddington sash in study collections can often provide the physical documentation needed to reproduce missing elements in historic house restorations. Such was the case in 1929 when architect R. Kinnicutt used the Coddington sash as a model in one of his Rhode Island projects. The study drawing shown here is one that he produced on this occasion.

The wood casement window illustrated in the advertisement in figure 2 was manufactured in the 1930s by the Andersen Corporation. The company retains both the advertisement and the actual window in a collection at its head-

quarters in Bayport, MN. Examination of these materials provides an opportunity to study technological advances in the window industry. Following the introduction of vertically sliding sash in the 18th century, residential casements declined in popularity. In the early-20th century, however, they were revived by manufacturers like Andersen, who updated the old design



Fig. 2. Both a sample casement and the original product information are kept in the collection held by the Andersen Corporation. Courtesy, Andersen Corporation.

and produced wood casements, which, unlike the 17th-century ones, were shipped as complete units and came with modern conveniences like interior screens, weatherstripping, removable double glazing, and extension hinges to permit cleaning the outer side of the sash from inside the sash. In addition, under screen sash operators permitted opening and closing of the window just by turning the handle. Anyone viewing this window and accompanying advertising materials can appreciate the technology involved in “modernizing” a centuries-old design.

Now in the Mid-Atlantic Region of the National Park Service, Kathleen Catalano Milley has served during her NPS career as a museum curator, architectural historian, and interpreter.

A Historical Architect

The individual object in a collection often represents a distinct reference point—about the building, carpentry techniques, craft practices of prefabrication and assembly, manufacturing practices, and the way in which the design incorporated performance or stylistic concerns. The information is there but it can only be interpreted if supported by documentation and research, and corroborated by the tangible evidence in existing buildings of the time or by objects found in architectural study collections.

Salvaged Artifacts: The Lessons They Offer

Lee H. Nelson

These six cut-off joists (figure 1) are from the Greater Meeting House in Philadelphia, which was first built in 1755 on Second Street near the waterfront, then was moved to a new location on Twelfth Street in 1812, and then was dismantled and reconstructed at the George School in Bucks County, PA, in 1972. In the last move, the ceiling framing was discarded in favor of an “open” ceiling, and these joist fragments from the 1755 building were rescued and accessioned into the Independence National Historical Park Architectural Study Collection (INHP Acc. No. 2630-25).

It is useful to salvage structural parts of buildings into study collections especially when their context is recorded, as in this instance, with HABS drawings. With such specimens we can learn about the methods used by the carpenters for framing the mortise and tenon joints with different depth joists, some with wooden pins, some without pins, some with double tenons or with single tenons (as seen here), and some (seen here nearest to camera) have a haunch below the tenon. This latter aspect shows that the carpenter understood the possibility that this shallow joist might fail in vertical shear at the tenon, and the haunch provides extra bearing to compensate for the thin tenon.

Very evident in this photo are the Roman numerals used by the carpenters because the entire ceiling framing, together with the roof trusses, was

prefabricated on the ground by a group of carpenters, each using their own joint details, and thus the Roman numerals were necessary so that when the prefabricated system was taken apart for reassembly in the ceiling, every one of the pieces would go back into the correct location.

There is a long history of mortise and tenon construction from the earliest buildings in America; this type of construction continued to be used, for example in barns, until well into the 20th century, even though balloon framing had been in use for decades. There are



Fig. 1. Structural specimens from a 1755 Quaker Meeting House. Photo by the author.