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INTERIOR FINISHES ANALYSIS OF SECOND AND THIRD FLOOR HALLS AT THEODORE ROOSEVELT HOME

Sagamore Hill National Historic Site

Rear Hall and Staircase (Room 109) Second Floor Hall (Room 201) West Staircase Hall (Room 202) Second Floor-Rear Hall and Staircase (Room 217) Third Floor Hallway (Room 301)

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#### PREFACE AND INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared by the Building Conservation Branch (BCB) of the Cultural Resources Center (CRC), for the North Atlantic Region in coordination with Harper's Ferry Center and Sagamore Hill NHS. Its purpose is to fulfill a scope of work for restoration of interior finishes in five second-floor rooms and the second and third floor halls, as part of a two-year historic furnishings project and the ongoing interior restoration at Theodore Roosevelt Home, Sagamore Hill NHS.

In October, 1991 the BCB prepared a report for the Division of Historic Furnishings, HFC on the five second floor rooms.<sup>1</sup> The rooms covered in that report, and their interpretive dates are:

Mother's Room (Room 204) Interpretive dates: 1912-1919

Gate Room (Room 206) Interpretive dates: 1917-1918

Nursery (Room 216) Interpretive dates: 1917-1918

**South Bedroom** (Room 214) Interpretive dates: 1917-1918

Alice's Room (Room 213) Interpretive dates: 1900-1906

The rooms covered in the scope of work for restoration of the halls are:\*

Rear Hall and Staircase (Room 109) Second Floor Hall (Room 201) West Staircase Hall (Room 202) Second Floor-Rear Hall and Staircase (Room 217) Third Floor Hallway (Room 301)

\*NOTE: Hall closets are not included.

The following report completes the research, analysis and recommendations for historic finishes in the halls. Both reports were based on evidence cited in the <u>Historic Furnishings Report</u>,

<sup>1</sup> "Historic Finishes Analysis of Five Second Floor Rooms at Theodore Roosevelt Home", Sagamore Hill NHS, BCB, CRC, NAR, NPS, October, 1991.



<u>Volume I (HFR)</u> and in the Historic Structure Report, as well as on additional investigation in 1991-92.

#### OVERVIEW AND CONDITIONS OF HALLS

All of the halls that comprise this report were altered during the 1950s, during the Theodore Roosevelt Association restoration of the TR home. The two most significant changes to the halls were: (1) Room 109 was "straightened" from its original "dog-leg" configuration and the staircase leading to the second floor was made wider and (2) a new staircase and hall (Room 202) was constructed at the west end of the second floor hall. The intent was to have visitors use the rear staircase to reach the second floor, ascend to the third floor by way of the second floor rear staircase (217), descend to the second floor via the new west staircase (202) and return to the first floor by way of the main staircase (Room 101, not included in this report). [See APPENDIX for floor plans.]

All walls were either patched or replastered by the TRA in the 1950s and painted.<sup>2</sup> More work was done on the walls in the early 1970s by the National Park Service. The latter work included installation of sheet-rock in certain areas and covering approximately seventy per cent of the walls with Sanitas, a fabricbacked vinyl wall-covering.<sup>3</sup> All walls were roller-painted in the same yellow-ochre latex paint.

Conditions of the plaster walls are basically good. There are some uneven areas and cracks behind the wallcovering, although the wall feels stable upon pressure. Therefore, it is not recommended to remove the wallcovering, but instead to simply repaint all walls according to the recommendations provided in this report.

Conditions of the woodwork vary, primarily due to surface abrasion from heavy visitor traffic. This exists largely on door surrounds subjected to contact where visitors gather near the barrier gates to view the rooms.

In 1983, an NPS electrical contract provided for the installation of new lighting and the removal and blanking of

<sup>3</sup> Bobby L. Flickinger, "Completion Report, Sagamore Hill", June 1971.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> E. W. Howell Co., Builders, NYC. "Outline Specification of Painting and Interior Decorating at Sagamore Hill...", Oct. 10, 1952.

certain switches and receptacles.<sup>4</sup> Any treatment of electrical fixtures related to this finishes restoration project is addressed in the Recommendations section, below.

Each of the five hall rooms is discussed briefly, below, for purposes of summarizing those features or problems unique to each room:

## Rear Hall and Staircase (Room 109)

The Rear Hall and Staircase includes the rear portion of the first floor hall and the staircase that ascends to the Second Floor Rear Hall (Room 217). These two rooms were used primarily by the children and the servants to move between the kitchen and service wing, the children's east bedrooms on the second floor and the servant's rooms on the third floor. Although Room 109 begins on the first floor, it is included in this report since its staircase continues to the second floor. Its original plan curved south around the ell of a pantry and original basement stair. In the 1950s this was "straightened", the staircase made wider and reversed. The reconstruction od the stairs resulted in changes at the second floor level. The stairs originally opened directly into the Second Floor-Rear Hall (Room 217), separating the rear hall from the main Second Floor Hall (Room 201) which had to be entered through a door. The 1950s work involved moving the steps to the west side and removing a hall closet west of the staircase. The end result of this reworking is that the stairs now open into the east portion of Room 201 instead of into Room 217.

The walls are painted plaster, dating to the 1950s. Woodwork is varnished. The condition of walls and woodwork is good. There is a blanked fire-hose box, in the north wall. A radiator that sits in a small alcove at the foot of the stairs is painted silver.

## <u>Second Floor Hall</u> (Room 201)

The Second Floor Hall is entered from the main staircase; it includes all the west corridors and extends eastward to a door which leads to the Second Floor-Rear Hall (Room 217). The main bedrooms and nurseries revolved around this hall. Among its special architectural features are a stained glass skylight over the main staircase and archways leading to other corridors. The archway leading to the east corridors was constructed after 1948, presumably during the TRA restoration. It is differentiated from the other arches by its lack of impost blocks. In a 1948

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Electrical work, SAHI NHS. Contract CX1600-3-0079, NAR, NPS, 1983.

photograph of the second floor hall this wall is seen as rectangular in shape (fig. 1). Archways were indicated in the original Lamb and Rich drawings by dotted lines. However, this particular one did not have the word "arch" written across it, as the others did (see Appendix A, second floor plan), further indicating that the opening was not built as an arch.

The northwest portion of the Second Floor Hall was reworked in the 1950s, when three closets were removed to make room for construction of the West Hall and Staircase (see also Room 202, below). As originally built, the north end of the west corridor had an additional door, (now extinct), which separated the hall from the master bedroom suite. Beyond this was a door, with a translucent upper panel (extant). The latter door was designed as a pocket door, which was never built or was removed shortly after construction of the house. The extra wall thickness to accomodate a pocket door still exists.

The northeast portion of the hall was also reworked in the 1950s, to allow visitors better access for viewing the Family Bathroom (Room 209). This involved moving northward the door to the bathroom anteroom and removing a dumbwaiter west of this door. This created more space with which to accommodate the 1950s wider staircase of Room 109. The walls around this area are wainscoted. There is a blanked firehose box on the north wall, in place of the former dumbwaiter.

The stained-glass skylight over the main staircase, original to the house, was adapted for electric back-lighting in the 1950s. Also on the ceiling over the staircase is a blanked electric plate, where a c. 1919 electric light fixture hung until the TRA period. The blanked switch plate for this is at the top of the stairs; the bottom screw is loose.

All walls are covered with Sanitas except the upper (south) stairwall which is plaster.\*

The woodwork in Room 201 is varnished and in fair condition. The varnish on the door surrounds is in poor condition, as stated above. Areas of bare wood alternate with areas of thick varnish buildup, particularly on the door frames. The baseboard molding east of the doorway to Room 208 is gouged in several places and has been painted dark brown in place of varnish.

\*NOTE: The lower stairwall (in Room 101) was wallpapered as part of the restoration of the first floor front hall and is not part of this project.

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Fig. 1. Main staircase; Front Hall (Room 101) looking east, 1948. Photographic collection, SAHI NHS. After 1948, the rectangular wall at the top of the stairs was changed to an arch.

#### West Staircase Hall (Room 202)

The West Staircase Hall is located northwest of the central part of the Second Floor Hall. It was built by the TRA in the 1950s, borrowing space from a hall closet in Room 201, a closet in Room 207, and portions of Rooms 306 and 307 on the third floor. It begins in an enclosed foyer at the second floor level and runs to the third floor where it opens directly to the third floor hall. The West Staircase Hall is used primarily by the public to exit from the third floor. Walls are painted plaster; woodwork is varnished. The condition of the walls and woodwork is good.

#### Second Floor-Rear Hall and Staircase (Room 217)

This hall was used primarily by the children and servants. (See also Room 109, above.) The Second Floor-Rear Hall and Staircase are located east of the Second Floor Hall; it is completely closed off from the main Second Floor Hall (Room 101) by a wall and a framed doorway. The Splash Closet (Room 210), and east bedrooms (Rooms 211, 212 and 213) open to this hall. Along the north wall a staircase leads to the Third Floor Hall (301). By the removal of a slop closet under the staircase to the third floor, the stairs were made less steep, which improved visitor circulation and safety.

As originally design Room 217 was continuous with Room 109, set apart from the central halls by a door on both the first and second floors. The TRA reconstruction of the stairs in Room 109 resulted in Rooms 217 and 109 now being separated from each other by a door. Also, as originally designed, the east-west corridor of Room 217 continued east to Room 212 at the rear of the house. However, physical investigation of the building fabric indicates that this part of the hall may not have been built according to the original plan. The consistency in appearance of wall and woodwork fabric in this area suggest that either it was not built as planned or that it was altered soon after construction.

Wall surfaces include plaster and fabric wallcovering, both overpainted. An early, burlap wallcovering remains on the west wall in the northeast corner of the hall and on the lower part of the stairwall. Whether this was a decorative or a functional wallcovering, serving to stabilize a plaster wall in poor condition, is not known. In any case, the wall in this area appears to be relatively stable. A more recent, canvas cloth covers the lower east wall between Rooms 211 and 213. Most of the other walls have been patched or replastered in recent years and appear in good condition.

Woodwork is in fair condition. The staircase exhibits considerable abrasion, as well as having had two balusters removed near the top of the stairs, where the holes remain unfilled. All woodwork is varnished; the doorframes show considerable abrasion of varnish finish, as in Room 201.

#### Third Floor Hallway (Room 301)

This hallway is essentially a long corridor which provides access to the six chambers, Gun Room, various storage areas and Four of the chambers were occupied by family attic stairway. The TRA period construction of the West Staircase Hall servants. (Room 202) resulted in changes to the north wall of the west end of the Third Floor Hall (Room 301) and to the south walls of Rooms 306 and 307 that face the hall. Also at this time, the configuration of the small corridor between Rooms 302 and 303 was changed, and the south wall and built-in shelves of the linen closet were removed. The original plan was restored by the NPS in 1966. Consequently, these wall surfaces are relatively new. Also of recent vintage is the surface of the long north wall outside the Gun Room, which was stabilized with sheet-rock and covered with Sanitas wallcovering in 1971. The doorway to the Tank Room (Room 308) was filled in during the TRA period and equipped with a firehose box. There is a louvred metal grill in the ceiling installed by the TRA to provide air circulation from an attic ventilating fan. This replaced the light shaft for the skylight in the Second Floor Hall (Room 201).

All walls are painted plaster or wallcovering; woodwork is painted the wall color, excepting the staircase, which is varnished. Both walls and woodwork are in generally good condition, excepting the rear staircase, which is varnished and exhibits much wear. (See ...Staircase (Room 217) above. Paint analysis indicates the wood panel door leading to the attic stair (Room 312) may be original to its present location. There are seven wood panel doors stored in the attic, which also may have come from the third floor hall.

## ANALYSIS OF HISTORIC FINISHES IN HALLS

The research and analysis of historic wall and woodwork finishes of the Theodore Roosevelt Home were substantially completed during the preparation of the 1988 draft HSR. Samples were taken by the NPS in 1978 and again in 1987. A paint analysis was also prepared and included in a 1964 HSR for Sagamore Hill.<sup>5</sup> A minimal number of new samples have been taken, and existing conditions updated. All combined data has been reviewed and/or analyzed according to standard operating procedures at the BCB.

No physical evidence of wallpaper was found on the walls of the upper halls during the finishes investigation. A review of historic data indicates that the halls were painted, then wallpapered and then painted again later. The walls of the Front Hall (Room 101) above the wood paneling were originally finished with red paint on plaster. At that time (1885) the walls in the other halls were probably also painted. Family letters of 1891 discuss having the halls painted.<sup>6</sup> Another letter of 1896 states that the "upstairs hall...and the main hall" were wallpapered and that the halls were greatly improved. C. 1905 a black and gold embossed paper, extending onto the dado of the stairwall of the main staircase, was hung in the Front Hall.<sup>8</sup> (This was reproduced by the NPS in 1981.) An original sample of the paper (SAHI 01 WP011) is the only known sample of historic wallpaper from the This wallpaper, still in place in 1948 in the first floor halls. hall above the paneling and on the stairwall, was removed during

<sup>6</sup> David H. Wallace, <u>Historic Furnishings Report</u>, Vol. 1, p. 133, n. 2. Family letters indicate that Mrs. Roosevelt was thinking about having the halls painted in 1891.

<sup>7</sup> <u>Ibid.</u>, n. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Marie Carden and Richard Crisson, "Draft Historic Structure Report", p. 72. During the TRA restoration the stairwall between the dado paneling and molding strip was not repapered; however, in 1981, a reproduction of the c. 1905 black and gold embossed wallpaper was hung in the Front Hall (Room 101), and on the stairwall.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Norman M. Souder, <u>Historic Structure Report, Architectural</u> <u>Data Section</u>, II, 1964. A paint analysis, entitled "Paint colors used originally at Theodore Roosevelt's house,..." prepared by Penelope Hartshorne was included in the HSR.

the 1950s TRA restoration.<sup>9</sup> (The same paper, found in the North Room, was left in place.) If there was any other wallpaper in the halls at the end of the Roosevelt tenure, it was removed in the 1950s. The TRA renovation of the halls included: ceilings repainted one coat; wall plaster repaired and repainted two coats; woodwork cleaned and varnished [woodwork in third floor hall was painted]<sup>10</sup>. In 1971 the plaster was patched again and seventy per cent of the walls were hung with Sanitas by the NPS.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, it is not known whether, during the historic period, the upper halls were painted or wallpapered. Regardless of wall finishes, the arch brackets in the Second Floor Hall were always painted. The most complete stratigraphies of paint were found in samples from the arch impost blocks. SAHI 01 P091 from the west arch shows a sequence of peach/yellow/yellow/cream/pinkish-buff/ ochre/ochre. Sample SAHI 01 P204 from a wood corner guard has layering similar to P091. Samples from the walls show fewer layers, representing mainly the TRA and NPS restorations in the Second Floor Hall (Room 201). Two possible explanations for this are: (1) most of the paint evidence on the walls was lost during "restoration" or (2) there may at times have been wallpaper (now extinct) on the walls while the impost blocks were painted in a harmonizing scheme.

The Second Floor-Rear Hall (Room 217) has a somewhat different paint sequence on the walls, primarily differentiated by the absence of the thin, red-peach first layer seen in the Second Floor Hall (Room 201). Paint samples from the Second Floor-Rear Hall and Staircase (Room 217) revealed a scheme of yellow/beige/ cream ochre/ochre, (or cream ochre/ochre on the newer walls). The Third Floor Hall (Room 301) exhibits mainly the cream ochre/ochre sequence, attributable to the many new wall surfaces and to the possibility that the walls were wallpapered and later stripped.

Similar to the main staircase, a horizontally placed plaster bead divides the stairwall of Room 217 into lower and upper walls. This bead may have been applied historically to mark the termination of an area of wallpaper, or to separate the decorating

<sup>9</sup> Mrs. Reginald P. Rose, "The Sagamore Story,", <u>The Long</u> <u>Island Courant</u>, Vol. I, No. 2, Oct., 1965. This account of the restoration of the TR Home states that the walls were stripped of their papers.

<sup>10</sup> "Outline of Specification of Paintingand Interior Decorating at Sagamore Hill...", E. W. Howell, Builders, NYC., Oct. 10, 1952.

<sup>11</sup> Bobby L. Flickinger, "Completion Report, Sagamore Hill", June 1971. scheme of the Second Floor Rear Hall from that of the Third Floor Sample SAHI 01 P284b from the bead shows a first layer of Hall. Paint analysis bronze paint, followed by creams and ochres. reveals that the lower stairwall and return wall covering is a burlap fabric of early vintage and the upper wall is covered with the 1971 Sanitas; both have been over-painted. (Neither of these resembles the historic wallpaper in sample SAHI 01 WP011). Paint sample SAHI 01 P287 from the return wall shows a sequence of yellow/beige/size/fabric wallcovering/beige/ ochre cream/ ochre/ochre. A plaster corner bead on this wall shows a sequence of bronze/yellow/beige/yellow/beige/ochre/ochre, indicating five or six consecutive paintings. This bead molding carries a sequence of paint layers similar in color and number to the adjacent wall, and similar to the bead molding on the stairwall.

Paint analysis indicates that the third floor walls were painted less often than those of the first and second floor halls. Relatively few layers were found on both walls and woodwork-attributable to the large amount of new wall surface and replacement woodwork on this floor, and to the possibility that the walls may have been papered at times.

An undisturbed area of woodwork immediately south of the door to the Gun Room produced the best sample of woodwork finishes (sample SAHI 01 P294), with a sequence of shellac/pinkish cream/ light cream/yellow cream/ochre cream/ochre/ochre. Sample SAHI 01 P392 from the door to the Storage Room (Room 312), which provides access to the attic, bears a stratigraphy of cream/thin varnish/ ochre/ochre. (A gray filler appears in a few woodwork samples.) The fewer layers here suggest that the doors remained varnished longer than the woodwork before overpainting, or that this door may have been reused from another location.

Treatment of the hall ceilings before 1950 is not known, since at that time the TRA had all ceilings replastered and painted white. Woodwork finishes in the first and second floor halls, as well as on the staircases, were originally shellacked and later varnished.

## Summary and Conclusions

In summary, it is known that the walls were first painted, then wallpapered, and subsequently painted again. There are no extant samples of wallpaper from the upper halls, and no family recollections of patterns or colors, only that paper was hung in 1896. The only other known paper in halls is the c. 1905-09 black and gold embossed paper in the Front Hall and Main Staircase (Room 101). There are no later references to wallpaper in the halls.

Because all of the halls in this report were rehabilitated during the TRA period to accommodate visitation requirements, historic fabric was removed. Restoration of historic finishes would be inappropriate unless the halls were to be restored to their historic appearance. Therefore it is recommended that the halls be painted in a contemporary color that meets the requirements of the halls today. It is recommended that the existing Sanitas wallcovering be retained, since it provides a protective and stabilizing covering and one which can be repainted.

Chromochronologies are included here for purposes of documenting the color history of the halls and for future reference. The chromochronologies presented below are based on historical data and physical evidence.

## Chromochronologies

#### Rear Hall and Staircase (Room 109)

[Extensive reconstruction in the 1950s left little evidence of finishes; primarily two schemes: 1950s ochre-cream walls; 1971 ochre walls. Woodwork is varnished.]

## Second Floor Hall (Room 201)

Date	<u>Wall</u>	<u>Woodwork</u>
C. 1885	oil sealer red-peach (oily, thin) red-peach (oily, thin)	orange shellac
C. 1891	maize yellow (flatted oil) maize yellow """	
C. 1896	<pre>wallpaper, pattern unknown; color possibly yellow; arch brackets yellow</pre>	
C. 1906	same scheme dirt layer*	
C. 1923	peach-buff (lead paint) peach-buff "" peach-buff """ dirt layer*	
C. 1950	white (thin, primer) ochre (thick, latex paint) white primer	varnish
C. 1970	ochre (thick latex paint)	

\*The accumulation of dirt between paint layers indicates a time lapse between paintings.

## West Staircase Hall (Room 202)

[Of 1950s construction, this hall has only two schemes: 1950s cream-ochre walls; 1971 ochre walls. The woodwork is varnished.]



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# Second Floor Rear Hall (Room 217)

Date	Walls	<u>Woodwork</u>
C. 1885 C. 1891 C. 1896	unknown painted yellow papered or painted; possibly remaining yellow	shellac
C. 1906 c. 1923 C. 1952 C. 1971	beige beige ochre cream ochre	varnished

# Third Floor Hall (Room 301)

Date	Walls	Woodwork
C. 1885 C. 1896	unknown possibly papered	shellac varnished or painted pink-cream
C. 1906 C. 1923 C. 1950 C. 1966 C. 1971	wallpaper or paint yellow-cream ochre-cream ochre ochre	light cream yellow-cream ochre-cream ochre ochre

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## RECOMMENDATIONS OF FINISHES FOR SECOND AND THIRD FLOOR HALLS

The Sanitas wallcovering that now exists on approximately seventy per cent of the walls should be retained and repainted. All walls in the second and third floor halls, including walls on the first floor of Room 109, should be painted with a washable, latex semi-gloss enamel. Woodwork that is not varnished should be painted with washable, alkyd or latex semi-gloss enamel. Archways and impost blocks are plaster and shall be painted to match the wall. Details for refinishing varnished woodwork are provided at the end of this section under <u>Varnished Woodwork</u>.

#### FINISHES RECOMMENDATIONS

## <u>Walls</u>

Wall color shall be selected in the field by the Historical Architect and the Curator.

## <u>Ceilings</u>

Ceiling color shall be latex flat paint, "ceiling white" to match existing. The louvred metal grill in the third floor ceiling shall be painted with an alkyd, rust-inhibiting, semi-gloss enamel, to match the color of the ceiling.

#### Woodwork

Woodwork shall be washed and waxed or varnish touch-up as needed. The original orange shellac finish shall be retained wherever possible.

Details for varnished woodwork are the following:

The rear staircase (Room 217) leading to the third floor should be repaired and refinished. On the fourth and fifth treads from the top, where two balusters were removed, the remaining holes should be infilled. The entire staircase should be refinished, either by touching up the existing varnish or by stripping and refinishing the whole to match the main staircase in Front Hall (Room 101).

The damaged molding on the baseboard east of the doorway to Room 208 (Double Guest Room) should be repaired either by infilling the gouges or by replacing the cap molding.

The woodwork in the Third Floor Hall (Room 301) shall be painted to match the walls, excepting the balusters of both staircases.

The infill of the Tank Room doorway shall be replaced with a historic door now in storage, and refinished to match the walls.. that matches the existing door to the Storage Room.

#### <u>Miscellaneous</u>

Radiators shall be repainted with alkyd, aluminum radiator paint.

Wall-mounted hot air registers in the walls should be repainted with an alkyd rust-inhibiting, semi-gloss enamel, to match the wall color. The fire-hose boxes in the halls shall be filled in with plaster and repainted to match the walls.

Blanked electric plates shall be removed, filled in and repainted to match the walls, excepting the ceiling plate over the main staircase in Room 201 and its switch plate at the top of the stairs. APPENDIX

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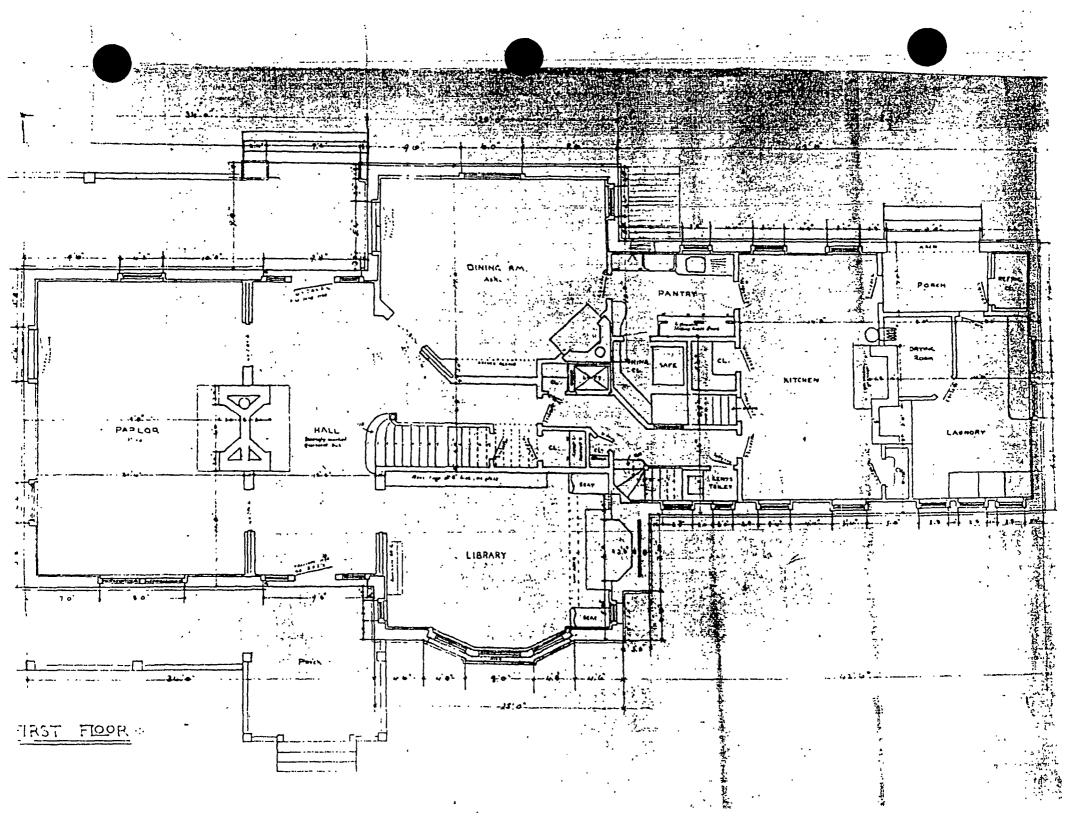
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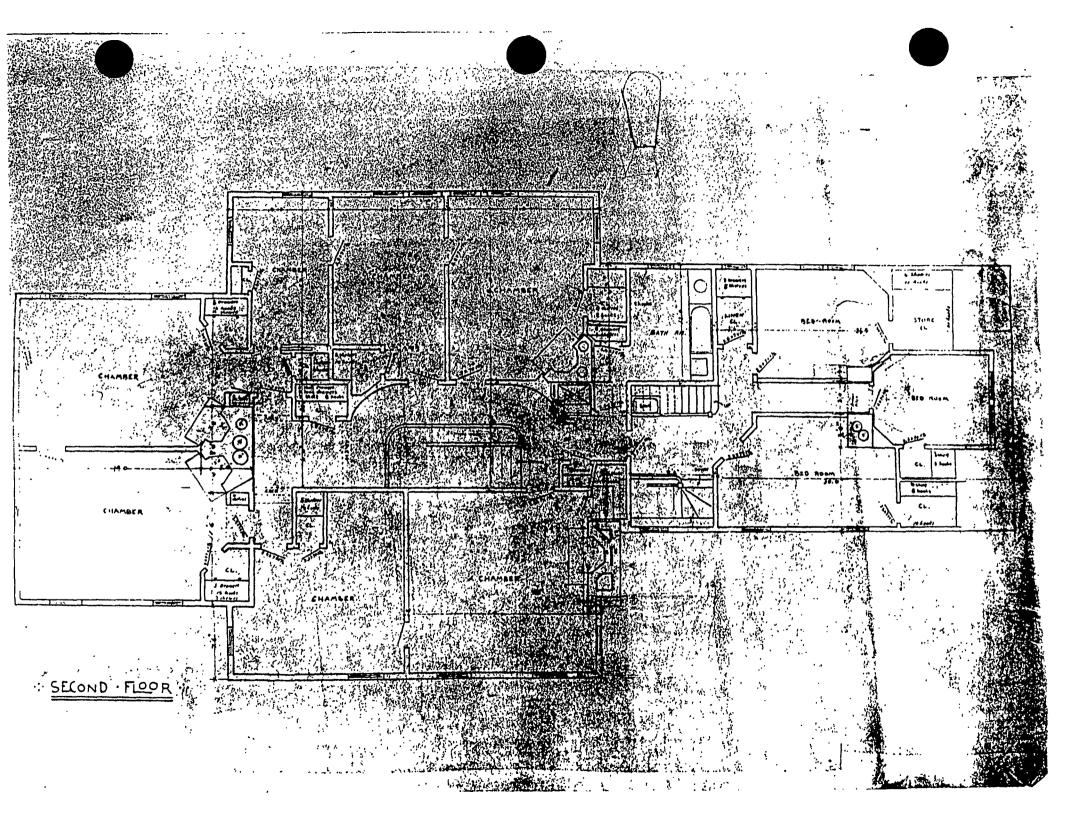
# A. Lamb and Rich Drawings:

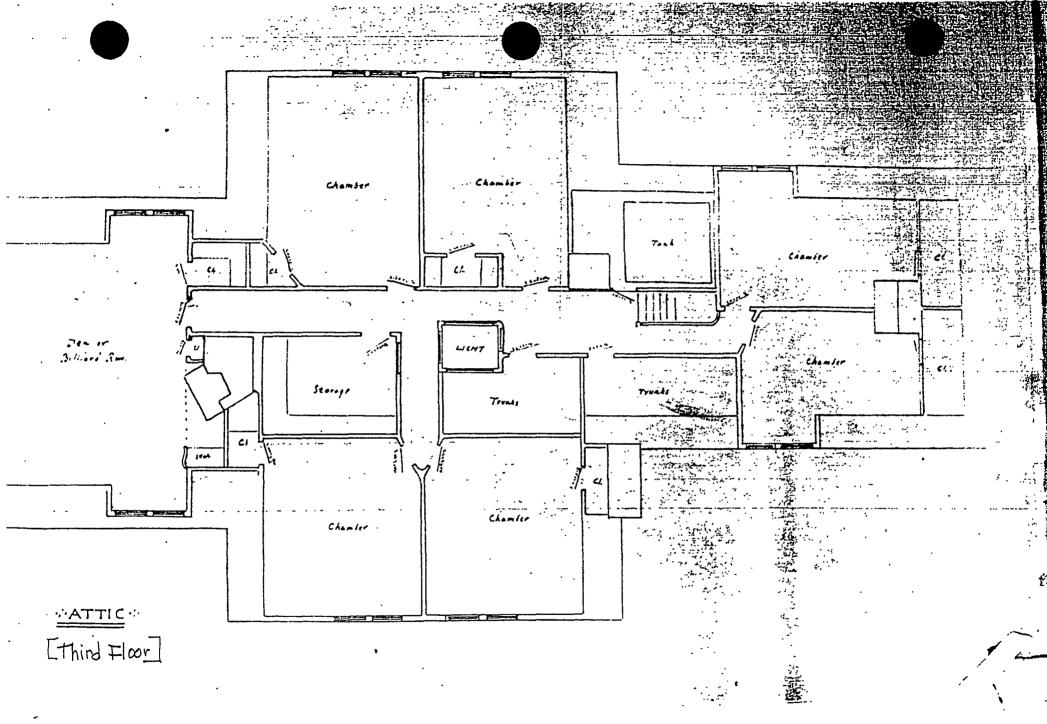
"The House of Theodore Roosevelt Oyster Bay, Long Island Lamb and Rich, Architects" [1883] First, Second and Third Floor Plans

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## B. HABS Drawings:

The House of Theodore Roosevelt at Sagamore Hill, Historic American Building Survey Drawings 1963 First, Second and Third Floor Plans [Room numbers added for draft HSR, 1988.]

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