Buildings - Conley House

THE CONLEY HOUSE

A Promising Future for Reflecting the Past

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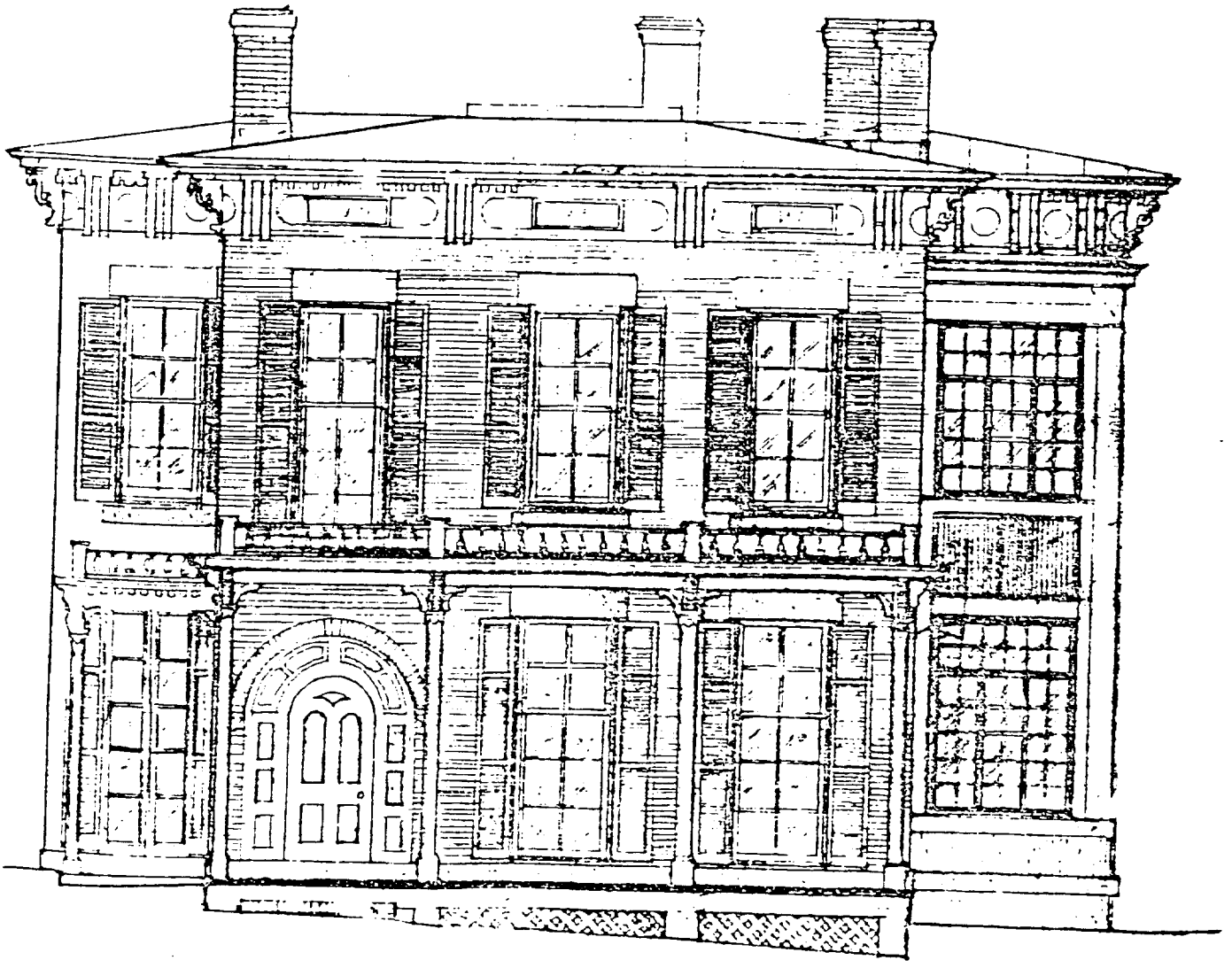

Adapted from James Darrough's
Conley House Plans

Preface

The Conley House, 602 Sanford, is an Italianate villa on the National Register of Historic Places and was purchased by the University of Missouri from the Conley family in 1980. Since then, several suggestions have been proposed for uses of the building. Housing the Honors College, serving as headquarters for the Missouri Cultural Heritage Center, welcoming visitors to campus, offering gallery facilities and reflecting a bit of the past are plans awaiting the preservation/restoration, rehabilitation and adaptation of the structure.

The purpose of this paper, in partial fulfillment for the requirements of Historic Preservation, is to explore the early period (1869-1890) in which the S.F. Conley family lived in the home. Political, technical, cultural and intellectual views are presented in a historical sense in order to enhance understanding of Victorian times, both locally and afar. In hopes of offering research for the restoration of the parlor, treatment of interior spaces, materials and resources, and popular trends common to the era are also discussed.

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Sanford Francis Conley, the man whom the Conley House is named after, was born in 1838 on a small farm six miles north of Columbia. His parents moved from Kentucky to Boone County where he, a brother John, and a sister Sallie grew up together. Although from a farming family, S.F. was interested in merchantile establishments and became a clerk at James L. Stephens' drygoods store in 1853.[1]

At 30 years of age (1868), S.F. married Kate Singleton, an 1866 graduate of Christian College.[2] Kate's family, originally from Kentucky also, relocated to Savannah, Missouri in anticipation of settling near the "Gateway to the West."[3] Both the Conleys and Singletons were prosperous families.

While newlyweds, the Conleys lived on the corner of Third Street and Broadway at a residence previously known as Colonel F.T. Russell's. By the second year of marriage, the brick Italianate home at Conley Avenue and Providence Road had been built.[4]

Active in business as a Columbia mill proprietor, S.F. Conley pursed his other attraction, that for drygoods management, and joined with John S. Samuel as partner in a merchantile operation. He retired from the business in 1884 and opened an agriculture implement store where he was involved until his death in 1890.[5]

The Conleys had six children --John C. (The eldest son

who died in infancy), S.F. (Frank), William Thompson, Dudley Steele, Milton Robards, and Helen Singleton -- who were all born in the Conley home.[6] They became prominient leaders despite the financial conditions of their widowed mother. Kate Conley took in boarders to assist the family budget while the children's generous Uncle John (Conley) contributed $10,000 to each of them.[7] John Conley, a bachelor his entire life, was a businessman, merchant, farmer, trader and the founder of the Conley Poor Fund for needy Columbians.[8]

The Conleys lived in a time of rapid progress. By 1865, great changes were occuring throughout the continent and globe. The Victorian Era, generally defined as the years of Queen Victoria's reign from approximately 1840 to 1900, was well underway. England was enjoying a prosperous time due to her reign in combination with the disadvantaged situations of other countries.[9] France was descending from her accustomed lead as "center for the arts" with contol regained by the Bourbons, Germany and Italy were experiencing fragmentation and the United States was recovering from civil war and the assassination of President Lincoln.[10]

Nevertheless, progress was inevitable. The Industrial Revolution promoted economic growth and new trends in demographics. In the mid-nineteenth century, President Lincoln had dubbed the Department of Agricultue as the "People's Department" and it was estimated that nearly one-half of the nation's population was involved in agriculture.[11]

Boris Emmet and John Jeuck spoke of immigration and occupation

patterns which resulted after the civil war:

> When the Confederate cannon sounded at Fort Sumpter in 1861, the bulk of the population of the U.S. was concentrated in the region east of the Mississippi River. Of a total population of 31,443,321, only a little over 14% resided west of the Mississippi. The period between the end of the Civil War and the opening of the 20th Century saw a powerful migration of Americans to the Far West. New immigrants from Europe added to the swell of older Americans pushing the frontier to the Pacific Coast and in fact, bringing an end to the frontier. By 1890, nearly 27% of the people of the U.S. were living west of the Mississippi River, the overwhelming majority of them engaged in wrestling their livelihood from the soil.[12]

Part of the accelerating reconstruction and geographic expansion can be attributed to a burgeoning railroad system. To cite Emmet and Jeuck again, "From 1860-1910, railroad construction in this country averaged over 4,000 miles per year until, at the end of the first decade of this century, the United States had 1/3 of the world's railroad mileage."[13]

The curiosity and fascination surrounding technology and science led to new inventions like the ice cream freezer, typewriter, telephone, lightbulb, and the perfected steamboat and the telegraph instrument. Gradual gains in ocean going vessels also encouraged progress and an exchanging of information.[14]

More locally, the Conleys and other families like them would have witnessed similar occurrences. By the late 1860s, Columbia was quickly gaining access to the rest of the country. By being part of the national rail network through the construction of a feeder line to Centralia and the North Missouri Railroad, St. Louis, Kansas City and St.

Joseph became more considerable destinations.[15] In addition, gravel roads connected important Missouri points and were frequently traveled by stage coach.[16]

Other modes of transportation included horseback, wagon and buggy with provinces written in the local ordinances regarding their control:

> Whoever shall, in this town, ride or drive any beast of burden through or along any street or alley quicker than or beyond a moderate gait, unless in a case of urgent necessity, or shall ride or drive any such animal as to cause such animal or vehicle there to attached, to come in collision with or strike any other object or any other person, or shall leave any such animal standing in any public street or alley without being fastened or so guarded as to prevent its running away, or shall turn any such animal loose in any street or alley, or shall inhumanly, unnecessarily or cruelly beat, injure or otherwise abuse any such dumb animal, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and fined not less than $5 for each and every such offense.[17]

Missouri also felt touches of the immigrating masses. Columbians organized a meeting on April 5, 1869, to discuss the possibility of forming an Immigration Society to assist the orientation of immigrants "to develop the agriculture, mechanical, and manufacturing interests of Boone County."[18] The census of 1870 indicated that milling flour, sawing lumber, and carriage and wagon construction were the town's major industries.[19]

Ordinances of 1875 further suggest Columbia was somewhat characteristic of the "Wild West." Following the time of Frank and Jesse James and "Bloody" Bill Anderson's guerrilla antics at Centralia (1864),[20] Section 136 read:

> That any male person over the age of 18 years who, when called upon by the marshal to act as a posse to aid him in arresting and taking prisoner any offender, shall refuse or neglect to do so, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and fined $5 for each and every such offense.[21]

Additional ordinances list fines for unlawful acts. A selected few and their minimum fees include: card playing or gambling - $5.00, playing billards on Sunday "or any other game of amusement" - $20, "vulgar, indecent or offensive conversation" - $5, "publically singing any obscene song" - $5 and appearing in a state of dress "not belonging to his or her sex" - $5.[22] Such specification communicated unacceptable behavior.

The Victorians have been commonly noted for unblemished reputations and high ideals. Such folklore surrounds the proper role images for men and women. In the genteel tradition, men were self-determined, hard-working providers fulfilling the Protestant Work Ethic. In 1890, Mr. Conley was described as "an enterprising and much-esteemed citizen" and for possessing "...unusual ability. Few men were his equal in tact, energy and judgment ."[23] The 1869-70 catalog of the University of Missouri contained additional standards and rules for proper student conduct. Male students were not to "loiter" after dark, keep late hours, smoke in the buildings or on the campus, were forbidden to enter a billiard or drinking saloon on any pretext whatsoever, to be quiet and orderly - "in short, to be a gentleman."[24]

In the same manner, women also had mores to follow. Popular authors of the day depicted their heroines as frail

women, esteemed for their ornamental and domestic charm. The Rise of Silas Lapthan by William Howells, Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House and Dicken's Tale of Two Cities provided examples. Periodicals became widely desired and shared the current attitudes. An 1868 volume of Harper's Magazine offered this stanza from a poem concerning a husband's view of his wife during Mrs. Conley's day:

> My house is as neat as a pin;
> You should see how the door-handles shine;
> And all of the soft cushioned chairs,
> And nicely swept carpets are mine.
> But then she so frets at the dust,
> At a fly, at a straw, or a string,
> That I stay out of doors all I can;
> She is such a fidgety thing...[25]

Literature experienced great popularity and high demands as Victorians discovered how easily communication processes could be enhanced through reading and travel.

No where else than the home was the woman's domain most evident during those times. In Manners or Happy Homes and Good Society All Year Round (1868) Sarah Joseph Hale wrote:

> Character it has well been said, is seen through small openings, and certainly is as clearly displayed in the arrangements and adornments of a house as is in any other way. Who cannot read grace, delicacy, and refinement in the lady of a house, simply by looking at the little elegances and beauties with which she has surrounded herself in the home?... As home is the place where our best and happiest hours are passed, nothing which will beautify or adorn it can be of trifling importance.[26]

Mrs. Conley's home was said to have been "proverbial for the generous and gracious hospitality dispensed and the cordial welcome always extended its guests."[27]

In addition to greater role constraints, the Victorian Era brought new meaning to social activities and interests. Of all the things the period introduced, probably the most favorable was the rise of the middle class. Grant wrote, "Probably the most important continous thread which joined the diverse elements of the century together was the factor of middle-class ascendancy."[28] New methods of production offered consumers a choice and a cheaper means of obtaining goods. The wealthy had numerous social options, but the majority centered around the home. The most important events of the social calender were somewhat ceremonial being College and University commencements, weddings and the holidays of Christmas and New Year's. Crighton wrote, "The newspapers carried detailed accounts of the marriages of the socially prominent."[29] The wedding of Helen Conley to Charles Miller in 1903 was reported as "one of the social events of the year in Columbia."[30]

Although the working week was long -- ten hours a day, six days a week--more leisure time was evolving. Women especially had the luxury of enjoying pastime activities such as sewing and handwork, card playing and tea parties. Another popular custom was "calling." Friends would come by to visit the family and the family would generally welcome them. If a family was not receiving visitors, it would be indicated by the placement of a basket on the front porch for visitors to place their calling cards.[31]

Very comfortable families could join the nation's elite

and travel abroad. Traveling was very much in vogue with Europe, Chautauqua, New York and the Colorado Mountains being popular spots for Columbians.[32]

Interesting trends were resulting from improved economic conditions the post-war days brought. As mentioned, rising income among the middle class was one outcome. In combination with the development of natural resources, new inventions, and industrial and agricultural expansion, people began to acquire wealth and desired to express this new status through their surroundings.[33] Several sources discussed this phenomena. Grant stated the new wealth demanded "ready-made backgrounds that were showy, durable, respectable and not too outrageously modern...." and styles with "all the comfort that the new technology could provide them with."[34]

This concept is exactly what typified Victorian interiors. In 1870, the difference between style and taste was accute. Style was associated with design themes obtained through household purchases. Taste connotated the "manner in which an interior space was finally put together."[35] Thus, "taste" included arranging the furniture, hanging pictures, selecting colors, covering the floor, etc. William Seale explained, "Household art, by the 1870s, was in the hands of women...To the American room, women brought criteria that they applied to matters of personal dress. Now they were put to the task of adorning rooms."[36]

In determining the "adornment" of rooms, the intention of use becomes necessary information. Hopefully, the parlor

in the Conley House will be restored with attention paid to its uses. Titled "the preacher's parlor" by George Miller, or a room that received little use, Seale explained its functions:

> In very large houses, and in many others toward Mid-century, especially with the advent of central heating, the double rooms were both used as sitting rooms-- that is, a formal parlor in front, and a less formal one or library in the rear. Apparently "double parlors," the term commonly used for those double rooms, does not describe the use of most of them. They rarely functioned as a pair of drawing rooms before the 1870s, and even then only in big and costly houses. Double rooms were obviously a great advantage for social and ceremonial occasions, when crowds were present. That must not, however, be considered their first purpose. Our modern eyes find it hard to accept a bulky dining room table or a bed in a full view through a double doorway from the parlor, but that is often the way it was.[37]

This is true of the Conley's home. According to an interview with Mrs. C.B. Miller, the parlor with double doors was rarely used except for funerals and parties. When they entertained, Kate, her mother, would play the piano, guests would dance the Virginia Reel and the doors would be opened to connect the rooms.[38] The wedding details published in local newspapers mentioned decorations in the parlor and revealed its exclusive use for special occasions.[39]

Mrs. Miller explained that the living room with the fireplace was the room they used the most. The sitting room on the north side of the home (also with a fireplace) was, as Seale suggested, her parents' bedroom too. (Figure 1.)

The parlor, occasionally referred to as the drawing room, was intended for receiving visitors and entertaining. Symonds

and Whineray confirmed the following:

> In smaller houses it [the drawing room] played a very important part in the life of the family, for it was the only room suitable for entertainment, and entertainment at home was more important in Victorian days than it is today when so many attractions exist outside. At a dinner party the guests assembled there before dinner, and afterwards the ladies retired to the drawing room where they were later joined by the gentlemen. At an evening party it was the room where the guests would be entertained by singing and music. One of its essentials, therefore, was a piano and a music cabinet.[40]

The Victorians were enthralled with the use of a variety of patterns, regardless of the room's use or purpose. Pattern upon pattern was introduced throughout rooms yielding pleasing reactions from the Victorian culture. Colors were often intense and heavy, with the red-based hues being most abundant. Family ranges included shell pinks through terra cotta to a deep burgundy. Olive green, umber and ochre were also popularly used together. Accents usually included cream, metallic gold, and teal blue.[41]

Wallpapers provide good color and pattern analysis, especially since walls compose the largest interior surface and therefore represent uses of color and pattern most noticeably.

Victorians regarded walls no differently than the other interior features. They received the same attention as other details. There were popular customs of using sets of paper which could include a dado, field, ceiling frize, a dropped border and/or a ceiling pattern. (Figures 2. and 3.) Several patterns used together was not only accepted but preferred by many Victorians. It is almost definite that the Conleys

employed the use of wallpaper in the parlor, but we can not be sure since no traces remain. Mrs. Miller described the wallpaper as, "flowers, and at one time some kind of Japanesey looking paper." She recalled fancy paper with borders and lots of pictures hanging against it.[42] However, George Miller, Eleanor Conley and Katherine Conley Turner never recalled wallpapers being that formal. They remembered a highly embossed, neutral colored paper without much character. Of course it must be remembered that they might be reflecting different times or different rooms. Mrs. Eleanor Conley added that the rooms were most likely wallpapered every two years or so, due to coal stoves used for heating.[43]

Although paint may have been the early wall treatment, it is unlikely. Seale contended there was a time span between the late 1860s until the turn of the century, "when wallpaper enjoyed enormous popularity and was used nearly everywhere."[44] It is also known that machines were capable of producing designs on "endless paper" at inexpensive costs and offered wide variations of designs.[45]Wallpaper was believed to have been available to anyone who wanted it.[46]

Three main types of wallpapers were considered most widely used even though a great selection was available. In the 1870s, Frederick Walton developed a wall covering known as Lincrusta, a composition based on linseed oil. Its characteristics were thickness, strength and high relief. It was usually a plain color and intended to be painted after it was hung. Japanese "Leather Paper" was another

wallpaper in common use. It simulated leather through heavy gauge paper, highly embossed patterns, and varnished and/or richly colored and guilded finishes. The third class was known as "oatmeal" paper because it resembled the appearance of oatmeal. More correctly termed "ingrain" paper, it was prepared by a mixture of cotton and woolen rags which were dyed before pulping so a thick, rough textured surface resulted.[46]

The Conley bedrooms have layer after layer of paper, but painted plaster succeeds in the parlor. Of current wallpaper remains still adhered to the walls in the hallway (the second layer under), it appears to resemble the leather paper without a guilded finish. Like leather, it is of a neutral color. A great supply of sources exist on wallpapers. Research could have easily consumed this paper, especially since they were so popular with Victorians.

Previously indicated, wall treatments were associated with ceiling adaptations. An elaborate illustration of a papered ceiling is provided in Figure 4. Remodeling has hindered obtainable information about the ceiling of the Conley parlor but Figure 2 depicts possible treatments. Mrs. Turner remembered a rosette centered in the room with a hanging light fixture but mentioned no ceiling patterns. She suggested records from Mr. Bill, the architect who remodeled the home, to provide additional information. Of the limited photographs in existence, many parlors of the period reveal this feature.

Floors, as well as the ceilings and walls, were not ignored. It is certain the Conley's had carpeting but the

style is unknown. In 1892, during the fire at the University Administration Hall, the carpets were removed from the home to put out burning debris carried into the yard.[49]

The carpet industry is speculated to have been a big business in 1844 due to the use of Erasmus Brigham Bigelow's power loom, capable of weaving ingrain. By the late 1840s, manufactured carpet was "readily available to the average American."[50] Parlor carpeting was described as:

> ...a likely purchase (late 1830's) either ingrain or perhaps even Brussels. It was usually laid wall to wall, the strips were either sewn together or tacked side by side, and almost invariably the whole was tacked down around the edges.[51]

The parlor carpeting at the Lenoir-Nifong Home, a registered historical site in Columbia, is an example of the technique. (Figure 5.)

By 1878, this approach was addressed by Charles Eastlake:

> ...the practice of entirely covering up the floor, and thus leaving no evidence of its material, is contrary to the first principles of decorative art, which required that the nature of construction, so far as possible, should always be revealed, or at least indicated by the ornament which it bears.[52]

In addition, it was recommended for the color of the carpet to contrast rather than repeat the wallpaper's hues.[53] Although color is not mentioned, an 1870 advertisement in Harper's Weekly suggested carpet patterns and types. Axminster, Aubusson, and Brussels are mentioned along with the "rich madallians and borders to match."[54] (Figure 6.)

The floor material may be difficult to determine, yet the time prior to 1870 observed hardwood floors from Wisconsin westward and softwood floors in eastern and southern homes.[55] The original

floor in the Conley parlor has been covered, but the removal may signify further clues, like evidence of tack holes. George Miller recalled dark floors perhaps laid in a random plank fashion with a 9'by 12'area rug used in the parlor.[56]

Window treatments, like most other interior components of the Victorian period, underwent great elaboration. Drapery hardware was invented during the era and top treatments were no longer used soley for the purpose of hiding unattractive headings.[57] New decorative rods were heavy and somewhat expensive, but offered dramatic effects. Romantic, generally complicated treatments with swags, jabots, valances and/or heavy fringe were not strongly prefered until the 1860s.[58] Lambrequins and lace curtains had already high ratings among Victorians. Although varying in cost from very inexpensive to imported high price speciality laces, Seale wrote:

> The common denominator for window treatments by about 1880 was lace....Lace was as indispensable to the elegant drawing room of the 1870s as it was in the 1880s to the pretty parlor of a modest row house.[59]

The popularity of lace was demonstrated at the Nifong House with the discovery of original lace curtains stored away in trunks. One set is currently hanging in the dining room.[60] (Figure 7.) Keeping in mind that the Conley parlor faces west, toward the street, it is likely the original treatment offered more privacy. George Miller recalled full length draperies with pulled curtains underneath. To provide illustration, figures 8 - 14 represent Victorian dressed windows.

Advertisements from The Illustrated London News suggested textiles

used for draperies. Damask, cretonne, brocatelle and satin are mentioned.[61] (Figure 15.)

With such heavily treated windows, only a few rooms offered much light. Since lighting has its own detailed history and could easily be another paper itself, only general possibilities for the Conley parlor are discussed here. The evolution of lighting experienced candles, colza oil, parafin, gas and finally electricity as sources.[62] 1870 advertisements advocated the use of kerosene rather than gas as "Safe Light For Our Homes." (Figure 16.) Mrs. Miller remembered the use of hanging lamps in the Conley home that were fan-shaped. She mentioned that some fixtures of the day were combined for gas and electricity both, but there were none at the Conley home.[63] Frank Conley, great-grandson of S. F. and Kate Conley, owns the original gas light fixture that formerly lit the hallway of the home. His mother, Eleanor Conley has the second fixture which was electric and replaced the original. (Figure 17.) The home was converted to electricity in the early 1900s.[64]

The type of lighting selected for restoration purposes can most accurately reflect a date. Great caution must be taken for that reason. No suggestions are provided although Seale offered guidelines for recreating historic lighting sources. When present in a room, "...let it seem to be that they are there for a purpose."[65] He advised:

> Treat only the ornamental devices, bronze Argand lamps, or stationary devices, as fixtures of the room's decoration. In the prime of their use, most of the portable oil lamps and candleholders would probably have been kept stored somewhere until needed for a specific reason.[66]

Besides the rosette ceiling ornamentation mentioned earlier, other architectural amenities were used in the interiors of many Victorian homes. The Conley parlor still possesses the original plaster cornice and picture molding. There were three principal types of moldings favored during the Victorian period, Roman, Grecian and Gothic with each type having particular styles.[67] Diagrams offered in Charles Eastlake's Hints on Household Taste, closely resemble the style in the Conley parlor. (Figures 18. and 19.) New mechanical tools facilitated cutting the moldings. With the toupie, a rotary molding cutter, more chamfering could be accomplished in one hour than could be done by hand in an entire day.[68]

The home's Italianate architectural style combined urban and rural characteristics.[69] It is likely the interior echoed the same sharing theme. Gowans associated simplified furniture styles with a variety of names--"Belter," "French Rococo," and "Late Empire"--belonging to the same Italianate manner.[70] Yet Seale warned of such assumptions:

> Because a house was built or occupied at a certain known time does not necessarily mean that the accepted tastes of the intelligentisa, nor the current high style, determined the decoration of its rooms. People can make unpredictable decisions. The architectural worthiness of buildings can never be taken as proof that their furnishings originally approached similar excellence.[71]

While heading Seale's advice, research has suggested one of the most abundant styles of furniture for the period and area to be Rococo or French Revival in nature. Otto cited Thomas Blanchard's explanation that the lathe and band saws, introduced in 1840, promoted the crafting of scrolls, curves and carvings

to achieve delicate cabriole legs distinctive of the style. French Rococo was especially popular for the drawing room.[72] Typical pieces were tables, numerously distributed to display objects; at least two arm chairs; four side chairs, for the seating of more guests than could be accommodated on the upholstered furniture; and one or more sofas.[73] The development of furniture sets is credited to the Victorian period.[74]

"Essential" parlor pieces were represented in the Conley's parlor. Mrs. C. B. Miller named a settee, a Gentleman's and Lady's chair, a davenport and four side chairs which were placed in the parlor.[75] Mrs. S. F. Conley has a settee very similar to the original and is shown in figure 20. The following descriptions matched the style of the Conley's furniture very closely:

> The typical Louis XV rococo chair of the period was balloon backed with plain finger-molding and with or without a carved crest at the top of the back or on the serpentine splat in the open back....The rococo sofa was made in various forms. The one with a serpentine back and enclosed arms is the most common. It is made with finger-molding, in walnut, and in mahogany and rosewood with carved cresting at top sides and center.[76] (Figures 21-24.)

French Rococo furniture was illustrated in trade catalogs of the late 1860s and was still in production until the 1890s.[77] It seemed ubiquitous throughout America and several examples survive today.[78]

The Civil War diminished the activity of most small, independent furniture manufacturers and was followed by new mechanical processes of the nation's industrial growth which practically ceased the production of hand crafted furniture.[79] Most American

furniture was made at Grand Rapids and Cincinnati.[80] It was transported to destination points across the continent. Seale researched the growth of the business:

> Nineteenth-century documents are filled with references to crated furniture being shipped by water and later by rail but the vast number of those crates unquestionably contained new furniture from the burgeoning manufactories.[81]

Mass production and distrubution lead to lower prices, increased choice and a large trade.[82] Seale further explained the transition process of hand crafted furniture to that which was machine made:

> At a steady pace the market filled with machine-made cabinet and upholstered furniture and a more general public found within its eager grasp costly looking household objects at prices far lower than the cabinet makers. This completely changed the appearance of the American middle-class interior. To tempt a fast spreading field of consumers, the manufacturers pitched their products on the most acceptable and pretentious design vocabulary they could find, the so-called French style current in England.[83]

Gowans added how new machines, "made it possible as never before in history for goods, services, and art to be produced impersonally, by men not directly or ultimately involved in the actual work; they were symptoms of a fundamental change in the nature of human labor itself."[84] In 1873, Richard Bitmead wrote in his London Cabinet--Maker's Guide :

> "...the demand everywhere is for quantity and cheapness, which renders it necessary that workmen should be acquainted with every method of construction work in the quickest and easiest manner possible, so as to be able to complete with cheap trade-workers and foreign importations.[85]

Of all the latest wood-working machines the most important were those used for sawing, planing, morticing and tenoning, dovetailing and carving and for molding as emphasized earlier.

Some machines were composite, capable of performing more than one operation, and were known as "general jointers."[86] In the discussion of furniture styles, rosewood, mahogany and black walnut were indicated as the primary woods in use for furniture. Oak and imitation ebony were also used. Of limited quantities constructed in Missouri, walnut was the most commonly used wood due to its abundancy.[87]

With faster production processes came faster trends. Apparently, Victorians preferred contempory styles. Mrs. Miller believed her parents had purchased their furniture new, with the exception of the square piano which may have belonged to Kate's mother. (Figure 5.)[88]This may be accurate information since the Conley's had been married for only a short time, most likely tennants of a furnished residence and not possessing many pieces, but this is conjectured. Still, other data indicated the value of "new" furniture to Victorians. In a report by Max O'Rell after a visit to Grand Rapids in April 1890, he wrote:

> I was not very surprised to hear that when the various retail houses come to make their yearly selections, they will not look at any models of the previous season, so great is the rage for novelties in every branch of of industry in this novelty-looking America... over in Europe, furniture is reckoned by periods. Here it is an affair of seasons. Very funny to have to order a new sideboard or wardrobe, 'to be sent home without delay' for fear of its being out of date"[89]

As today, most generations disliked the furniture styles of the preceeding generation and it was no different during Victorian times. Garrett supported, "In fact, one homeowner could ask, 'What is life without new furniture?'"[90]

The furniture arrangement was consistent with the great use of several furniture styles, patterns and textures that represent Victorian interior design. Defined as the devaluation of space, Bridgeman described the occurrance:

> The advancing century eventually saw the complete breakdown of the principle of formal furniture arrangement and by the 1880s and '90s the tendency was for no piece to match another, nothing to be placed squarely in position and everything to be informal, casual, crowded and irregular.[91]

Although it resulted in an uncontemplated appearance, there may have been logical reasons for the furniture placement. The environment's physical features like heat, cold, and light strongly dictated the arrangement of a room.[92]

Objects in a clustered fashion may have been inspired by early formations around gaslights lit in circles.[93]

Other reasons suggested why furniture was often moved out from parallel wall positions as common in the early seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The interior space reflected dynamic processes of the era.

The emerging bourgeois could afford to purchases similiar styles preferred by their "betters" but were uneducated about the formality and set codes of behavior which accompanied them. Emotional views were regarded more important than formal etiquette and the Romantic Movement allowed this expression through furniture arrangement. In addition, progressive furniture trends contributed to new placement. Furniture became more comfortable and suggested relaxing positions while lighter weight furniture and casters enabled

versatility. Chairs especially experienced frequent moves to allow easy conversation.[94]

It is difficult to determine what type of arrangement the Conleys employed. Mrs. Turner recalled the settee's position to be diagonally positioned in the corner near the double doors, but her recollections post-date the focused period. (Figure 25) She did not mention the placement of other furniture pieces, but recalled a large pier glass placed between the two front windows. It was framed in dark wood and located behind and above a small oval marble table.[95]

Finer details (accessories) were quite important in the Victorian home. Objects were not actually brought into the home "for the express purpose of decorating" until late 1870.[96] Items continued to accumulate until 1890 or so and then began to decrease in frequency.

Endless possibilities existed for Victorian accessories. Sculpture, paintings, weapons, tidies and antimacassars, chromolithographs, peacock feather, ceramics, sentimemtal steel engravings, charcoal portraits, dried flower arrangements, hair-worked art and needlework were considered tasteful accompanists.[98] Mrs. Miller said at one time, many pictures were hanging against a wallpapered background. Frank Conley recalled a needlepoint piece displayed on the wall which may have been worked by Kate or Helen when she was a child. Mrs. Turner vividly remembered two portraits which hung on the south wall. The subjects were Kate's parents, Helen and Milton Singleton.

A general overview of Victorian taste and time has been offered for assistance in the planning of the Conley parlor. In the restoration of any period home, it is considered fortunate if as much as 15 percent of the original items are recovered.[99] With restricted resources, the University's intentions are not to restore ("return it to its exact appearance at a specific time in its past"[100]) but to recreate, or approximate a typical parlor of the period. Figures 26 through 30 provide a few final images for application to the Conley House. The period selected for the focus of this paper is a wide span but allows flexibility. In closing, Seale has been cited for pointing out the following:

> Even though that family may have built the house, you should normally place greater emphasis upon, say, the fifth and tenth years of their residence than you do upon the first, for it is their lives as lived that gives you story substance.[101]

It is hoped the period as well as the family life will be reflected in the Conley House's future.

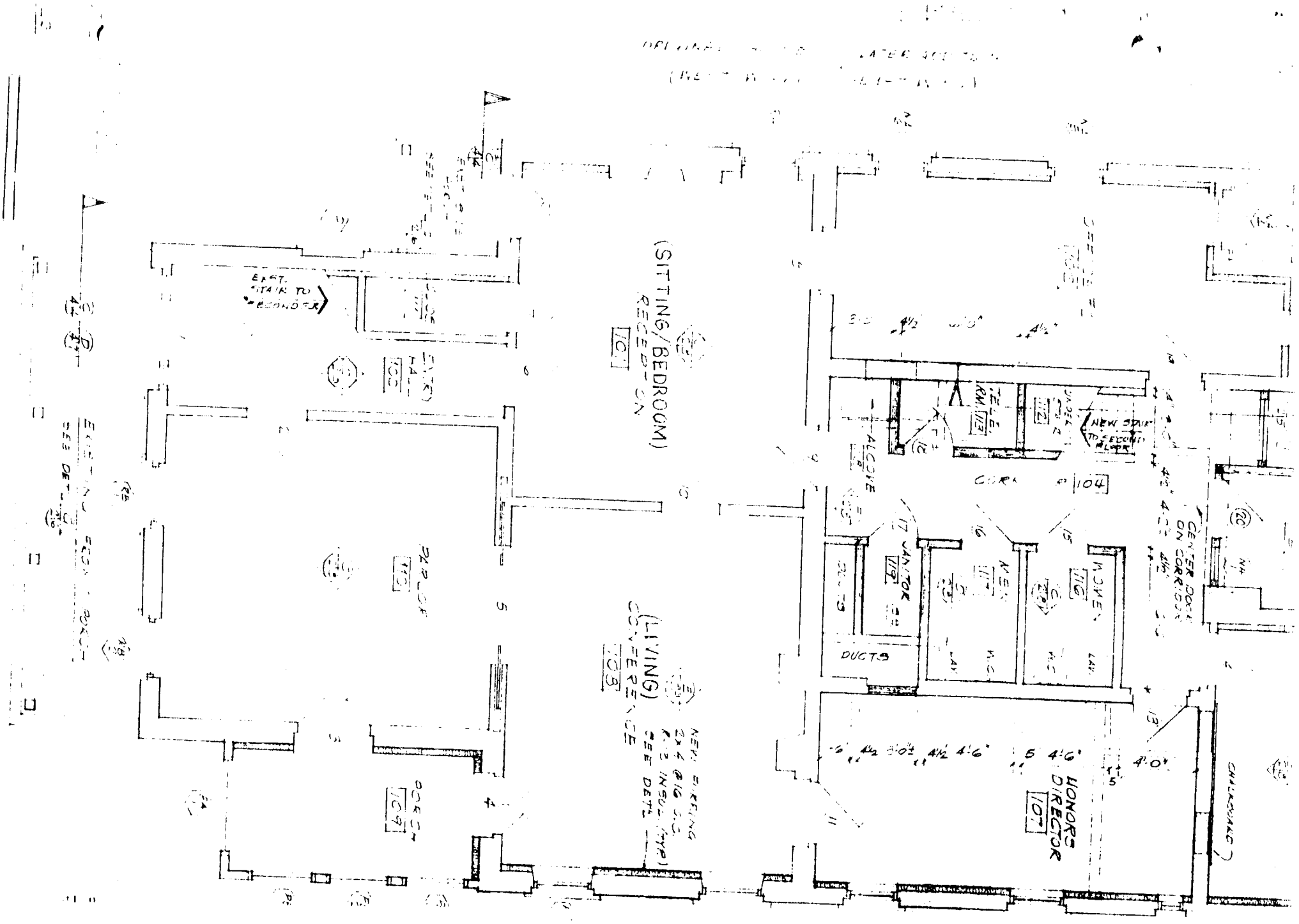
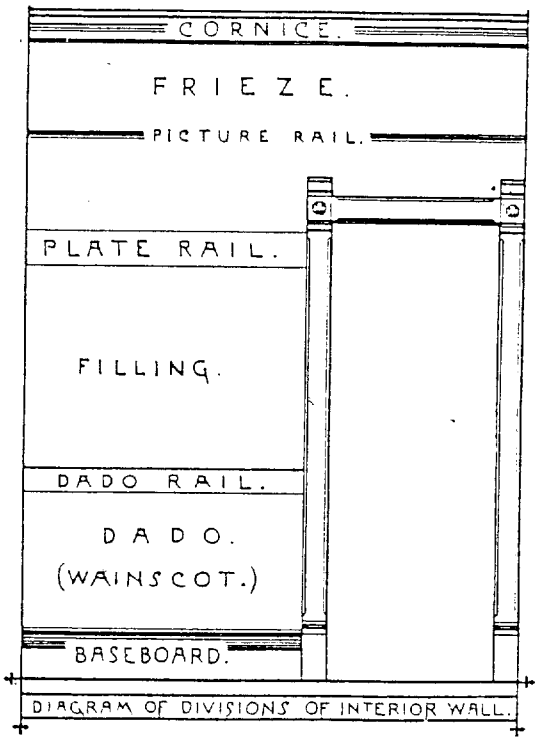
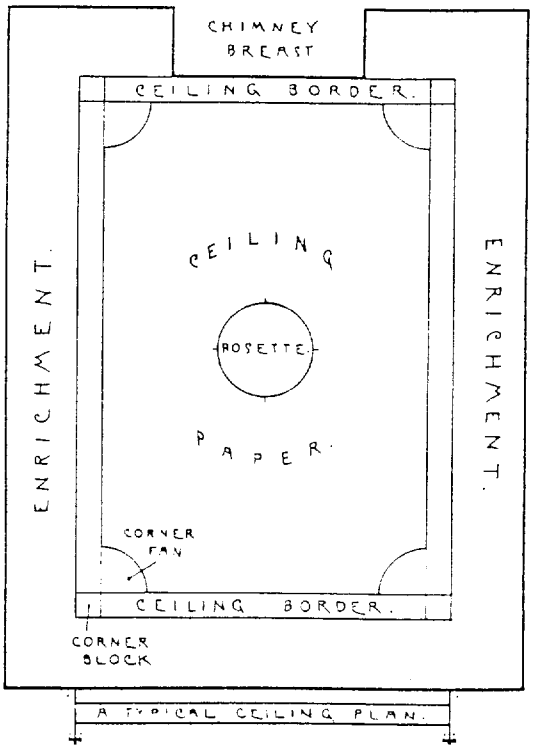


FIGURE 1. Section of Conley House floor plan indicating original living areas. Source: James Darrough

DIVISIONS OF THE VICTORIAN WALL →





DIVISIONS OF THE VICTORIAN CEILING ←

FIGURE 2. Divisions of the Victorian Wall and Ceiling.
Source: Bradbury and Bradbury