

**“An Incessant and Engrossing Pursuit”:
Nancy Vincent McClelland, Wallpaper, and Period Decoration**

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B.A. in International Relations, May 2016, University of Delaware

A Thesis submitted to

The Faculty of
The Corcoran College of Art
Of The George Washington University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts

January 7, 2022

Thesis directed by

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Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank my advisor, Dr. Bridget May. I am so thankful that I found someone who is just as passionate about Nancy McClelland as I am (if not more). Thank you for talking through all of my ideas and offering words of encouragement throughout this process. It has been an absolute joy to work with you and I truly could not have done this without you.

Thank you to my readers, Dianne Pierce for suggesting Nancy McClelland as a topic, and Richard Nylander for answering all of my wallpaper-related questions as they came up. I am indebted to many people who supported my research over the past year. Each person who I spoke to about my research was excited to discuss Nancy McClelland, noting what an interesting figure she was. I am very appreciative to Arthur Athas, Shiloh Holley, Laura Mackelcan, Sarah Nerney, Emily M. Orr, Kory Rogers, all of whom supported my research and searched through archives for me.

Thank you to the Decorative Arts Trust for graciously supporting my research through an Emerging Scholars Grant.

To Allison, I am so lucky to call you my friend. I am eternally grateful to have had you to laugh with and lean on as we each embarked on our thesis research. You kept me sane this year.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. A few years ago, when my Dad suggested that I might like working in museums, I disagreed but thought I would humor him until I found a different profession. Turns out he was right and taking a job at the Winterthur museum showed me a path that I had not imagined before as my passion for

the decorative arts flourished. Without him, I would not be here today. Thank you to my Mom for always reminding me that I can do anything that I set my mind to. My parents have supported me in everything that I do and enthusiastically encouraged my scholarly pursuits. My grandparents have shown me the importance of life-long learning and are each a source of inspiration. Last but definitely not least, thank you to Charley for always being my best friend, lending an ear or helping me relax when I needed it the most. I could not have gotten through graduate school without you.

Abstract of Thesis

“An Incessant and Engrossing Pursuit”:
Nancy Vincent McClelland, Wallpaper, and Period Decoration

This thesis examines Nancy Vincent McClelland’s period decorating practices, focusing on her use of wallpapers. McClelland (1877-1959) is known for her pioneering wallpaper studies and the authoritative text, *Historic Wall-Papers: From their Inception to the Introduction of Machinery* (1924). In addition to her self-taught expertise and historical research, she was a practicing interior decorator and a wallpaper dealer and producer. She both sold wallpapers to and led redecoration projects of historic homes throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Previous studies have examined McClelland’s early career and her contributions to professionalizing interior decorating, yet no major study has focused on McClelland and her wallpapers.

McClelland’s career in antiques began in New York City’s Wanamaker’s Department Store where she created the first department for antiques. In 1922, she opened her own decorating firm, Nancy McClelland, Inc., and placed wallpapers at the forefront of her business. In the 1920s, McClelland began selling wallpapers to individuals collecting with future museums in mind. She began providing wallpapers to historic homes and leading redecoration projects, often relying on her knowledge of period decorating practices rather than archival documentation to inform her decisions. McClelland’s career cannot be limited to one word as her many roles influenced each other. Her role as a decorator led her decisions, yet her historical research and knowledge influenced her decorating decisions in historic homes.

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Introduction

Best known as an interior decorator and wallpaper historian, Nancy Vincent McClelland's passion for wallpaper spanned decades. Throughout her almost sixty-year career, she studied, collected, produced, and used wallpapers.¹ In 1924, McClelland published *Historic Wall-Papers: From Their Inception to the Introduction of Machinery*. *Historic Wall-Papers* proved to be one of the most important and comprehensive studies of historic wallpapers, even to the twenty-first century. A contemporary promotional pamphlet touted the book as "The only comprehensive and authoritative study of the subject in any language."² In the bibliography of Dorothy Draper's 1939 *Decorating is Fun!*, Draper describes *Historic Wall-Papers* as "an invaluable book" for interior decorators. Over fifty years later, wallpaper historian Catherine Lynn agreed in *Wallpaper in America* (1980) writing that *Historic Wall-Papers* is "the most extensive compilation of information about wallpapers used in American before 1840."³

In 1901, McClelland began working in advertising for the influential early twentieth-century retailer Wanamaker's Department Store's flagship location in Philadelphia. Later, John Wanamaker himself sent McClelland to Paris for shopping trips in the 1910s. Taking advantage of the seminal opportunity, McClelland began collecting wallpapers during these trips. Later, she exhibited wallpapers at Au Quatrième, the first dedicated antiques department in an American department store, in Wanamaker's,

¹ Athena Scott Preston, "Decorating History, from Wanamaker's to the Metropolitan: Nancy McClelland, Au Quatrième, and the Colonial Revival" (M.A. Thesis, Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution; and Parsons School of Design, 2005), 47.

² J.B. Lippincott Company, "Promotional Pamphlet for Historic Wall-Papers by Nancy McClelland.", 1924. Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum,

³ Catherine Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, 1st ed. (New York: WWNorton, 1980), 308.

sometimes also publishing corresponding advertising pamphlets.⁴ Before McClelland, the history of wallpapers had received little attention from art historians or interior decorators. Author and art critic Clarence Cook asked, “What shall we do with our walls?” in 1881. In 1905, Kate Sanborn, an American author known for her housekeeping and cooking works, published *Old Time Wall Papers: An Account of the Pictorial Papers on Our Forefathers' Walls*, in which she acknowledged the field’s sparse research in her introduction.⁵ McClelland noted that between the publishing of her own book and Sanborn’s, almost all writing about historic wallpapers was “purely conjectural that there seems still to be room for a book that is purely fact.”⁶ *Historic Wall-Papers* expanded on Sanborn’s work in a number of ways. McClelland recounted the history of wallpapers in France, England, and America to the mid-nineteenth century. She examined early block printing in France, the imitation of tapestries and Chinese influences on French and English wallpapers then spent a considerable portion of the book on scenic wallpapers. The 450-page tome has served as a definitive study on wallpaper since its publication and is also an important marker in McClelland’s personal wallpaper education. McClelland dedicated three years to write and research the book; She traveled throughout the United States and Europe while also consulting numerous experts and professionals in the field.⁷ She set out on a “paper chase” as she responded to letters and photographs that she received and visited libraries and other collections throughout the country.⁸ She spent

⁴ John Coy Bond Turpin, “The Life and Work of Dorothy Draper, Interior Designer: A Study of Class Values and Success.” (Ph.D., Arizona State University, 2008), 193.

⁵ Kate Sanborn, *Old Time Wall Papers: An Account of the Pictorial Papers on Our Forefathers' Walls* (Literary Collector Press, 1908), 7.

⁶ Nancy Vincent McClelland, *Historic Wall-Papers: From Their Inception to the Introduction of Machinery* (Philadelphia ; J. B. Lippincott Company, 1924), 14.

⁷ McClelland, 14.

⁸ McClelland, vii.

much of 1922 and 1923 in Europe collecting antique papers where she used her vast network of impressive social contacts to access collections in private homes and country houses.⁹ Her archive, now at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York City, is a testament to her passion as it contains folders filled with the hundreds of images she collected in her study. She shared her research and writing process in the first chapter “The Scope of this History” in which she recounts her research leading her to:

“a Governor’s mansion, to the cellars of the great Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, to country inns, to dusty old books printed in French and English and German of a by-gone day, to manuscripts and museums, to attics and long-locked boxes and forgotten trunks. It has been an incessant and engrossing pursuit during the last three years.”¹⁰

Quoting the amateur archeologist Frederick William Hunter in reference to his seminal Stiegel glass study published in 1914, McClelland wrote that *Historic Wall-papers*’ is a product of “what I found and what I failed to find.”¹¹

Even as her interior decorating practice grew, McClelland continued her studies, publishing additional books about wallpaper history and use. Her extensive writings and studies of wallpaper reveal why she was so revered in her lifetime (See Appendix B). Her interests were vast, and she approached all subsequent endeavors with the same dedication in which she approached *Historic Wall-Papers*. For example, she completed a survey of the famous New York cabinetmaker Duncan Phyfe and published *Duncan Phyfe and the English Regency, 1795-1830* in 1939, which historians of American furniture still regard as one of the most comprehensive studies of his life and work. Her

⁹ Preston, “Decorating History, from Wanamaker’s to the Metropolitan,” 47.

¹⁰ McClelland, *Historic Wall-Papers*, 14.

¹¹ McClelland, 14.

scholarly publications and decorating business were both continually praised during her lifetime. However, McClelland's myriad of contributions to the fields of wallpaper and decorating are often overlooked by historians today.

Prior to this study, no work has focused solely on McClelland and wallpaper despite wallpaper clearly being a focal point of her career. Most relevant to the present study, Athena Scott Preston examined McClelland in her 2005 master's thesis, "Decorating History, from Wanamaker's to the Metropolitan: Nancy McClelland, Au Quatrième, and the Colonial Revival," which considers McClelland as a decorator and traces her professional history. Preston places McClelland's work in the context of the 1910's "genteel 'lady decorators,'" using historian Pat Kirkham's definition of a woman "without formal training who mainly designed historicist interiors for the homes of a social elite."¹² While McClelland did take commissions from wealthy, socially elite clients, public historic houses also employed her. Further, Preston centered her study on McClelland as a twentieth-century decorator and tastemaker, highlights how her legacy paved the way for future decorators. However, McClelland's significant work with wallpaper is also a necessary component of her legacy.

In 2008, Bridget May published "Nancy Vincent McClelland (1877-1959): Professionalizing Interior Decoration in the Early Twentieth Century" in the *Journal of Design History* focusing on McClelland's role in the field of interior decorating. May's article traces McClelland's involvement in formalizing the profession of interior decorating. May described how many professions started professionalizing in the late

¹² Preston, "Decorating History, from Wanamaker's to the Metropolitan," 12, 64; Pat Kirkham, *Women Designers in the USA, 1900-2000: Diversity and Difference* (The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts: New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000, 307.

nineteenth and early twentieth century before focusing on interior decorators. Interior decoration was regarded as an appropriate profession for a woman in the early twentieth century as it kept women in a traditional, domestic space.¹³ Some decorators, like McClelland, argued for the professionalization of the industry; professional groups subsequently formed. In 1931, the American Institute of Decorators defined an interior decorator “one who, by training and experience, is qualified to plan, design, and execute structural interiors and their furnishings, and to supervise the various arts and crafts essential to their completion.”¹⁴ Despite McClelland’s autodidactic decorating education, May highlights her ardent belief that apprenticeship was not sufficient training and that decorators should be formally educated and licensed to practice.¹⁵ May emphasized that McClelland valued education and explored the various ways she promoted formal education through her practice. In the early twentieth century, American visitors looked to historic house museums as an informal educational source for historic or historically-inspired interiors. This thesis builds on May’s assertions and explores how McClelland disseminated her knowledge of historic spaces in public and private houses through the lens of her wallpaper scholarship, sales, and practical use.

The Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, has a comprehensive archive consisting of documents regarding her decorating business and wallpaper studies. The archive is filled with materials that illuminate all facets of McClelland’s work; both May and Preston examined this archive. It also has a number of unpublished manuscripts and

¹³ Bridget May, “Nancy Vincent McClelland (1877-1959)): Professionalizing Interior Decoration in the Early Twentieth Century.” *Journal of Design History* Vol. 21, no. 1 (2008): 63.

¹⁴ May, 66; See May’s article for a study of the development of interior decorating as a profession in the context of McClelland’s work.

¹⁵ May, 64-67.

lectures which offer first-hand insight into how she approached her work. Twigs Wallpaper and Fabric, a Los Angeles-based wallpaper firm, purchased a portion of her wallpaper archive in the 1980s and continues to print her wallpapers today yet has never published any of their research or holdings. Mauny, a French manufacturer, also still prints her wallpapers. However, they appear to be offered in different colorways and the company's website makes no mention of McClelland.¹⁶

A pioneer in many areas who has long been understudied, this thesis examines Nancy McClelland's roles as a historian, dealer, decorator, and wallpaper expert. A small group of historic homes where McClelland sold or donated wallpapers (that are now public institutions) offer an opportunity to examine how her work as a knowledgeable historian and savvy dealer influenced her decorating and vice versa. During the first half of the twentieth century, she sold historic wallpapers, and her own reproductions and original designs to many of America's important historic houses and museums. Her eponymous business, Nancy McClelland, Inc. introduced her to important collectors of early American antiques as they were building their collections. Her writings and commissions established her reputation as an esteemed historian and credible source for private collectors such as Henry Francis du Pont at the Winterthur Museum in Delaware and Electra Havemeyer Webb at the Shelburne Museum in Vermont. Webb and du Pont both valued her expertise not only as a historian and dealer but also as a decorator as she could recommend appropriate wallpaper choices with relevant documentation when desired. In addition to working with private collectors, she began advising and selling her

¹⁶ See <http://www.manufacture-mauny.fr/produits.html> and <https://twigswallpaperandfabric.com/> for more information regarding contemporary retailers of Nancy McClelland, Inc. wallpaper.

reproduction wallpapers to historic sites such as the Mount Vernon Ladies Association and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, both in Virginia. Historic house museums trusted McClelland's expertise to recommend suitable wallpapers. Through her work with private collectors and properties, McClelland gained insight into the various ways to recreate America's colonial past in her interiors. Then in the 1940s, she began leading projects at the eighteenth-century Morris Jumel Mansion in New York City and nineteenth-century Brompton in Fredericksburg, Virginia, where she was responsible for the entire redecoration scheme. In this study, McClelland's work at these institutions will be referred to as period decorating, not historic preservation.¹⁷ In her work in historic homes, McClelland used her general knowledge of the past to create an atmosphere reminiscent of a moment in time, but her work, as was common in this time, was not largely based upon documentary and physical evidence.

McClelland's dedication to research, seen through her extensive travels and field work, culminated in her publishing a key reference text that is still used by contemporary scholars and experts. Simultaneously, McClelland cultivated valuable social connections to wealthy collectors who shared her passion for wallpapers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, all while establishing herself as a successful and sought-after entrepreneur. Chapter one begins with a background of McClelland's early career. Then chapter two follows how McClelland built her reputation as a wallpaper expert and her successful practice using, selling, and reproducing wallpaper. Following that, chapter

¹⁷ See Technical Preservation Services, National Park Service, "Four Approaches to the Treatment of Historic Properties," National Parks Service, U.S. Department of Interior, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments.htm> for a brief overview of historic treatment approaches.

three examines her relationships with private collectors and providing wallpapers to historic houses will reveal the influences that prepared her to lead redecoration projects at the Morris Jumel Mansion and Brompton, two important commissions discussed in chapter four.

Chapter 1: Early Beginnings

Nancy Vincent McClelland (1877–1959) was born into a middle-class family of Methodist ministers in Poughkeepsie, New York (Fig. 1). Always ambitious and a life-long scholar, she enrolled in college at a time when few other women did. At Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, she received a Bachelor of Arts in Latin and English in 1897. Later authoring and publishing several books, her interest in writing began in college where she was an editor of the yearbook, *The Vassarion*, served as her senior class’s poet, and frequently published her poetry for the school newspaper, *The Miscellany News*.¹⁸ She was also a member of Phi Beta Kappa, a prestigious academic honor society. Multilingual, she spoke English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Later in her life, she credited her multilingualism as a key component to her success while traveling for her career. When offered a position as a Latin teacher at a girl’s school during her senior year of Vassar, McClelland turned down the role as she couldn’t see herself as a teacher.¹⁹ Instead, she embarked on a career as a reporter for stories of women’s interests, arts, schools, and clubs for the *Philadelphia Press* from 1897 to 1900.²⁰ She built a strong social network throughout her career, beginning at the *Philadelphia Press* where she corresponded with famed contemporary artists such as Winslow Homer and William Merritt Chase.

Her break into the world of design and antiques came when she took a role in the advertising department at Philadelphia’s Wanamaker’s Department Store after John

¹⁸ “McClelland Furniture and Decorations; Sale and Exhibitions.” (*Artnews*, 1932)

¹⁹ Nancy McClelland, “Merchandising.” *Vassar Quarterly*, July 1, 1922.

²⁰ “Personals” *Vassar Miscellany*, February 1, 1899; “Points of View.” *Vassar Miscellany*, October 1, 1897.

Wanamaker himself took notice of her writing abilities.²¹ From 1901-1907, McClelland worked in advertising while also studying Wanamaker's window displays and exhibits.²² During this time she decided to learn "proper and effective arrangement" in decorating, a decision that served as her entry into the field.²³ In 1907, Wanamaker's sent her to Paris as a representative and buyer for the department store where she sent regular updates back to the United States about the latest French fashions and interiors for a Wanamaker's newsletter.²⁴ The early twentieth century saw women buyers emerge as more women entered into the workforce; Wanamaker's valued and trusted this new influential group as evidenced by McClelland's creative freedom as a buyer.²⁵ While in Paris, McClelland studied art and art history, visited France's museums and chateaux, and met France's most famous and infamous residents, such as Paul Cézanne, Pablo Picasso, and Gertrude Stein.²⁶ Another trip abroad ensued after she learned of an English antique sale to which she alerted Wanamaker's English representative. In response, the English representative told McClelland to go over to England to see the sale herself. Suffering from terrible seasickness during the voyage John Wanamaker insisted that she stay abroad until she felt better; the extension of her trip inspired her to take full advantage of the opportunity. She stayed in England for a few months and spent a quarter of million dollars (approximately \$7 million today) on antiques to bring back to New

²¹ "In Memory of a Pioneer: Nancy Vincent McClelland, 1877-1959," (*Interiors*, 1959), 78.

²² "Miss McClelland Antiquary Here - Interior Designer Is Dead -Founded 'Qatrieme' at Wanamaker Store." (*New York Times*, October 2, 1959).

²³ "In Memory of a Pioneer: Nancy Vincent McClelland, 1877-1959," 79.

²⁴ May, "Nancy Vincent McClelland (1877-1959)): Professionalizing Interior Decoration in the Early Twentieth Century," 60; Preston, "Decorating History, from Wanamaker's to the Metropolitan," 10.

²⁵ Preston, "Decorating History, from Wanamaker's to the Metropolitan," 11.

²⁶ "In Memory of a Pioneer: Nancy Vincent McClelland, 1877-1959."

York.²⁷ In her future travels for Wanamaker's, she visited England, Ireland, France, Belgium, Germany, and Italy. McClelland continued to travel to Europe throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, undeterred by the Great Depression or World War II.²⁸ Ultimately, her time traveling for the department store proved to be important training for McClelland's future in antiques and interior decoration. In an unpublished manuscript, McClelland recalled:

*“There, for the first time, I found myself loose in the storehouses of art treasures. I spent every free hour in museums and among antiquaries. I learned not only the French language, but the language of art. I studied history, architecture, furniture, color - all in concrete form as well as in lectures and courses and schools. In a word - before I knew it I had found myself.”*²⁹

Other contemporary decorators such as Elsie de Wolfe and Jeannette Lenygon also traveled through Europe to study the collections and decorating arrangements, a tradition dating back to the eighteenth-century's Grand Tour.³⁰ Zeal for learning and a strong work ethic drove her success as McClelland became a self-taught antiquarian through her travels.

In 1913, after McClelland returned to the United States, John Wanamaker asked her to oversee the “re-decoration” of the entire department store's New York City location. It is likely that McClelland's informal education while in Paris informed this

²⁷ All future references to monetary values today are valid to August 2021 and were calculated using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

²⁸ Preston, “Nancy McClelland, Au Quatrième, and the Colonial Revival,” 45; Travel records accessed through Ancestry.com indicate that McClelland went to Europe almost every year through the 1930s.

²⁹ Nancy McClelland. “Confessions of an Interior Decorator as Told to Norval Richardson,” n.d. Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 17.

³⁰ Anne Massey. *Interior Design of the 20th Century* (London : Thames & Hudson, 2001): 123; Sarah Eleanor Dew, “Lenygon & Morant (c.1904-1943): ‘Period Style’ Interior Design and the Transatlantic Market for English Antiques,” (Dissertation, The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture): 78.

decision as she spent her time there studying “good design.” Sales in the store reportedly increased immediately, indicating her work was a success. McClelland then suggested the addition of an antique shop to the fourth floor, which was mostly offices and workspaces at that time.³¹ Shortly after, Au Quatrième opened as a new department, making Wanamaker’s the first American department store to sell antiques. Au Quatrième mostly sold European antiques but also held several sales of important American antiques.³² McClelland served as head buyer and supervised a large staff of approximately 100 employees, including three other female buyers. Groundbreaking for its time, the department featured important sales, such as the 1918 Wallace Nutting Collection of Early American Furniture. McClelland initially filled Au Quatrième with French and English antiques; the 1918 Nutting sale marked her shift towards American antiques.³³ Always aware of current trends, Au Quatrième was estimated to turn out \$1,000,000 in 1920, a large sum at the time (almost \$28,000,000 today).³⁴

Through the 1910s, McClelland returned to Europe for shopping trips, up to three times a year while at Wanamaker’s. During her travels through Europe, McClelland searched for historic wallpapers to bring back to America and visited important sites such as the German Wallpaper Museum, now part of the Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel. She found historic paper samples, fragments, and whole rolls ranging from small floral motifs seen in the eighteenth century to the nineteenth-century’s popular scenic papers. It

³¹ Mary E. Dunn, “‘Au Quatriem’ Manuscript Draft.” (Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 1952), 1-2

³² May, “Nancy Vincent McClelland (1877-1959),” 60; Preston, “Nancy McClelland, Au Quatrième, and the Colonial Revival”, 7.

³³ Preston, “Nancy McClelland, Au Quatrième, and the Colonial Revival”, 30.

³⁴ “Selling Antiques as a Department: A Large Money-Making Feature of a Store That Had Very Small Beginnings.” *New York Times*. sec. Sports & Real Estate, October 24, 1920.

is probable that McClelland also took the opportunity to build her personal archive of wallpaper while she was also collecting wallpapers for Wanamaker's.³⁵ Seeing nothing as off-limits or too extravagant, McClelland brought back all types of decorative furnishings, including an entire English Tudor house named "Goatley Farm" built in 1490 outside of Canterbury.³⁶ During World War I, she bought the entire contents of the c. 1867 Palazzo Carminati from Milan, oversaw its packing, wrote a catalog in English and Italian, wrote the advertising, and brought the purchases back on a steamer that was chased by enemy submarines.³⁷ Inside Au Quatrième, McClelland referred to her arrangement of antiques as 'comfortable,' meaning shoppers felt like they were in a home, not a department store.³⁸ This was done in part because clients began to ask for help decorating their own homes.³⁹ In an interview, McClelland noted she "[tries] everywhere to give the proper settings for everything so that people may see it as it should appear in their own rooms or so that they get an appropriate effect."⁴⁰ Unfortunately, no images of Au Quatrième are known. However, descriptions of Au Quatrième paint a colorful image; McClelland erected a brick house in the fourth floor's center hall. Inside the brick house, the drawing room, dining room, and bedrooms were all furnished "in the most charming manner."⁴¹

³⁵ "In Memory of a Pioneer: Nancy Vincent McClelland, 1877-1959" 79, 168.

³⁶ "Selling Antiques as a Department"; Preston, "Decorating History, from Wanamaker's to the Metropolitan," 25.

³⁷ "About Nancy McClelland" *The Youth's Companion (1827-1929)*, Boston. Boston, United States, Boston: Perry Mason Co. [etc.], March 1929.

³⁸ McClelland, "Confessions of an Interior Decorator" 24-25.

³⁹ "In Memory of a Pioneer: Nancy Vincent McClelland, 1877-1959."

⁴⁰ "Selling Antiques as a Department."

⁴¹ Dunn, "'Au Quatriem' Manuscript Draft", 3.

McClelland filled Au Quatrième with exceptional employees. For example, famed French designer Paul Poiret designed a theatre used by Virginia Ralston, head of the French fashion salon, in Au Quatrième. Belle Baker headed the riding shop. Ruby Ross Goodnow (née Wood) became the head of the interior decorating department, leading to her successful career as an interior decorator. Goodnow employed other decorators who would go on to make names for themselves such as Margaret Owen and Rose Cummings.⁴² Directly reporting to McClelland, Myron Holmes supervised the antique department. Holmes later became a dealer specializing in antiques and historic woodwork.⁴³ As McClelland's taste and decorating skills developed at Au Quatrième, she also established her managerial skills. As a savvy businesswoman who would go on to own and manage her own business, McClelland learned important and useful skills while managing important and recognizable employees. Similarly, Au Quatrième's clientele list boasted a 'who's who' of 1910's New York society where Vanderbilts and Astors reigned. Reputable museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art purchased a number of objects from the Dwight Prouty collection sale held at Au Quatrième. In New York City, McClelland attributed her good fortune to the French term, 'succès de snobism,' which described how in New York City, one only needed the favor of a few influential people in order to succeed.⁴⁴ Like many contemporaries, McClelland formed an extensive network of socially connected clients. In *Confessions of a Decorator*, an

⁴² Dunn, "'Au Quatriem' Manuscript Draft," 3-4. For further reading on some of McClelland's employees, see Harold Koda and Andrew Bolton, "Paul Poiret (1879–1944)," The Metropolitan Museum of Art Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, September 2008, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/poir/hd_poir.htm; Massey, *Interior Design of the 20th Century*, 132, 141.

⁴³ Julie Eldridge Edwards, "The Brick House, the Vermont Country House of Electra Havemeyer Webb," *Magazine Antiques* 163, no. 1, (January 2003): 199.

⁴⁴ McClelland, "Confessions of an Interior Decorator," 5.

unpublished manuscript recounting tales from her career, McClelland tells a story of Mrs. Anne Harriman Vanderbilt, Electra Havemeyer Webb, and Mrs. Frelinghuysen coming to see her shop a day before its opening, all members of New York's social elite.⁴⁵

McClelland was clearly connected with New York's society ladies, once listing Mrs. Blanche Ferry Hooker and Mrs. Martha Baird Rockefeller as her personal references, in addition to Lois Katzenbach, who also a wallpaper manufacturer.⁴⁶

In March 1922, McClelland left Wanamaker's and opened her own firm and storefront, Nancy McClelland, Inc. in New York City, located at 753 5th Avenue. She soon needed more space to accommodate her expanding business and decorating practice, so she moved to 15 57th Street in February 1926.⁴⁷ The shop offered similar antiques to Au Quatrième ranging from eighteenth-century French styles to English Regency, English Georgian, and American Colonial. Much like Au Quatrième, McClelland's shop was designed to look like a home. The space was divided into small vignettes to display her offerings in a tasteful way.⁴⁸ As visitors to her shop exited the elevator, they were immediately meant to feel as if they were in an indoor garden. To achieve this, McClelland installed a dark green rubber tile floor and pale green trellises. Shoppers then could walk through double doors to enter into a drawing room, or a large exhibition space which McClelland decorated as a bedroom or a dining room depending on the shop's current inventory. The drawing room was painted a "warm, sunny yellow" and had a

⁴⁵ McClelland, "Confessions of an Interior Decorator," 31–32; It cannot be determined which Mrs. Frelinghuysen McClelland referred to as there were many women in the prominent Frelinghuysen family at the time.

⁴⁶ "Biographical Records Questionnaire, Alumnae Office of Vassar College." March 21, 1950.

⁴⁷ Preston, "Decorating History, from Wanamaker's to the Metropolitan," 70.

⁴⁸ Preston, 70.

fireplace with a mantel at one end. Between the drawing room and the exhibition space, shoppers traveled through a corridor of small vignettes decorated as boudoirs. The boudoirs were all decorated differently; McClelland noted one had wood paneling from a French house with a small marble mantel. She called another small room the ‘red lacquer room’ as its walls were painted cream with a brown varnish. When wiped off, the varnish gave “an effective impression of something mysterious and rich.” McClelland also filled this room with antique Chinese paintings in red lacquer frames.⁴⁹

McClelland placed wallpaper at the forefront of her business from the start, as the first advertisements distinguish her as a “specialist in hand-blocked papers,” something she would become well-known for throughout the remainder of her career (Fig. 2).⁵⁰ McClelland was part of a group of professionals who specialized in both decorating and antique sales - two fields closely linked in the early twentieth century.⁵¹ Lenygon & Morant, a London-based firm with a New York City location, had a similar operation as they offered traditional furniture reproductions and salvaged architectural interiors, similar to McClelland’s wallpaper reproductions.⁵²

McClelland was part of a group of decorators who created “historicist interiors,” an apt term used by Kirkham.⁵³ McClelland approached her work as trying to capture “the spirit of the past,” which did not create historically accurate spaces. Decorating with eighteenth-century antiques and reproductions was the fashion in the early twentieth

⁴⁹ McClelland, “Confessions of an Interior Decorator,” 24-27.

⁵⁰ “In Memory of a Pioneer: Nancy Vincent McClelland, 1877-1959.”

⁵¹ Massey, *Interior Design of the 20th Century*, 123.

⁵² For more information, see Eleanor Sarah Dew, “Lenygon & Morant (c.1904-1943): ‘Period Style’ Interior Design and the Transatlantic Market for English Antiques” (Dissertation, New York, The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture, 2014).

⁵³ Kirkham, *Women Designers in the USA, 1900-2000 : Diversity and Difference*, 307.

century. McClelland's contemporaries such as Ruby Ross Wood, Jeannette Lenygon, and Dorothy Draper created similar interiors using antiques and reproductions for their wealthy clientele. However, McClelland was more scholarly inclined than many other decorators as she also researched historic decorating practices for her various books.

Despite her knowledge, McClelland's interiors still reflect the popular preference for decorating with antiques; thus her work in historic homes cannot be called historic restoration. Historic restoration practices as they are understood today are vastly different from what McClelland sought to do when redecorating historic homes. The National Park Service defines historic restoration as "depict[ing] a property at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods."⁵⁴ Thus, McClelland's work in historic homes will be referred to as period decorating, not historic restoration, throughout this thesis. While McClelland used her knowledge of historic decorating practices, she typically did not use documentation or physical evidence to inform her decisions. In the sites discussed in chapters three and four, McClelland created interiors using antiques and wallpapers, old and new, to evoke a feeling of historicity but did not use documentation to accurately recreate a particular moment in time.

⁵⁴ Technical Preservation Services, National Park Service, "Four Approaches to the Treatment of Historic Properties," National Parks Service, U.S. Department of Interior, accessed November 9, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments.htm>.

Chapter 2: Wallpaper

Historic Wall-Papers cemented McClelland's role as a leader amongst the few wallpaper scholars at the time and she continued to learn and write about wallpaper throughout her entire career. Published in the same year as the opening of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, McClelland's work with historic wallpapers evolved simultaneously as exhibitions at art museums legitimized and endorsed interest in early American interiors. Expanding her study beyond wallpapers, McClelland published *The Practical Book of Decorative Wall-Treatments* in 1926.⁵⁵ Written as a guide for both homeowners and professionals, this book covered all types of wall treatments ranging from painted frescoes to wood paneling and spent little time on wallpaper.⁵⁶ She still wrote numerous articles and lectured on wallpaper, among other topics. Articles published in *Vogue*, *House Beautiful*, and *Home and Garden* instructed readers on various ways to use wallpaper in their homes. Her promotional booklets and pamphlets such as *Wall-papers Old and New: Exclusive Designs* (c. 1925) and *Re-creating old American designs in Wallpaper* (1941) could help the average American consumer decide which wallpaper was right for their home.

In the 1951 forward of *The Practical Book of American Wallpapers* by Lois and William Katzenbach, McClelland shared which books on wallpaper were included in her personal library. A short list, McClelland owned *Traite Historique de la Gravure en Bois* by Jean Baptiste Michel Papillon, *Old Time Wallpapers* by Kate Sanborn, her own

⁵⁵ Nancy McClelland, *Wall-Papers Old and New: Exclusive Designs* (New York: N. McClelland, n.d.): 3.

⁵⁶ Nancy McClelland, "The Practical Book of Decorative Wall-Treatments. With 8 Illustrations in Colour and 206 in Doubletone" (1926), 5.

Historic Wall-Papers, Tableaux Tentures de Dufour & Leroy (introduction by M. Henri Clouzot), *A History of English Wallpaper* by Alan Victor Sugden and John Ludlam Edmonson, *Histoire du Papier Peint en France* by Henri Clouzot, and the Katzenbach's *The Practical Book of American Wallpapers*.⁵⁷ She celebrated other scholars; for example she credited *A History of English Wallpaper* as a “mine of information about the industry in that country” and Clouzot's *Histoire* “a complete history of the art.”⁵⁸ McClelland's comments and enthusiasm for other scholars' contributions to the field reflects her passion and commitment to the study and dissemination of historic wallpaper.

McClelland herself was also a noted and celebrated figure in the industry. Her expertise and collecting habits garnered attention from museums and mainstream media. In 1934, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England, entrusted McClelland with the duty of reviewing and criticizing their wallpaper collection.⁵⁹ Then in 1936, she was featured in *The New Yorker's* “Talk of the Town” feature. *The New Yorker* praised her work suggesting that if “New York had to have a museum of Wallpaper by tomorrow morning, all it would have to do would be to buy out Mrs. McClelland and open the doors.”⁶⁰ At one time, McClelland's personal collection was estimated to contain between thirty to forty scenic wallpapers. Regarded as one of the greatest private wallpaper collections, she exhibited a selection of it to commemorate Nancy McClelland,

⁵⁷ The Katzenbach's dedicated the book to McClelland, citing their appreciation of her “generosity, encouragement and wisdom.”

⁵⁸ Lois Katzenbach and William Katzenbach, *The Practical Book of American Wallpaper*, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1951): vi-vii.

⁵⁹ “Correspondence between H.F. Du Pont and Nancy McClelland, Inc.” (1923- 1952), Antique Dealer's Papers, Box AD 41, Winterthur Library.

⁶⁰ Preston, “Decorating History, from Wanamaker's to the Metropolitan,” 52.; Despite *The New Yorker's* reference to her Mrs. McClelland, Nancy McClelland was not in fact married.

Inc.'s twenty-fifth anniversary in 1947.⁶¹ Dismissively, when reporting about her twenty-fifth-anniversary exhibit, the *New York Herald Tribune* referred to her career in wallpaper as a hobby despite her decades of professional experience.⁶² Examples of passive sexism, such as the statement above, reinforces why professional women fought for recognition of their work. While some decorators specifically advocated for the professionalization of the field, others questioned why, or even if, decorating was, in fact, a professional vocation. McClelland sought to emulate the professional reputation of the American Institute of Architects and elevate the American Institute of Decorators to a similar social standing. She worked tirelessly to do so, even serving as the first woman president of the American Institute of Decorators in 1941.⁶³ McClelland adamantly boasted that her work was the same as that of an architect (a traditionally male-dominated field) and she should thus be recognized as such.⁶⁴

Throughout her career, professional organizations recognized McClelland for her critical and influential work in wallpaper scholarship. In 1930, France awarded McClelland the “Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur” for her work in revitalizing the art of historic French wallpaper making.⁶⁵ Fourteen years later, in 1944, the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce also made McClelland a Fellow. Then in 1946, McClelland was the first winner of the Justin F. Allman award

⁶¹ Eugenia Sheppard, “French Scenic Wallpapers Are Exhibited Here: Nancy McClelland Displays Other Patterns Created in China in 17th Century,” *New York Herald Tribune* (1926-1962), *New York, New York*, May 28, 1947; “In Memory of a Pioneer: Nancy Vincent McClelland, 1877-1959.”

⁶² Sheppard, “French Scenic Wallpapers Are Exhibited Here.”

⁶³ May, “Nancy Vincent McClelland (1877-1959),” 65-67.

⁶⁴ McClelland, “Confessions of an Interior Decorator as Told to Norval Richardson,” 1.

⁶⁵ “Nancy McClelland First to Win Justin Allman Wallpaper Award. : Nancy McClelland Wins Wallpaper Award.” *New York Herald Tribune* (1926-1962); *New York, N.Y.* October 11, 1946.; The Chevalier da la Légion d’Honneur is a premier order awarded to a person who has made a contribution of general military or civil order that honors and promotes France.

from the Wallpaper Wholesaler's Association.⁶⁶ The Association praised "her contribution to and improvement of the wallpaper industry and for being instrumental in making wallpaper, an important decoration, recognized by the consumer" as the criterion for the award.⁶⁷ McClelland's numerous accolades for her work in wallpaper reinforce the notion that she was generally a well-respected and prominent woman in the wallpaper field. A representative from Allman & Kayser further elaborated as to why she was receiving the award stating,

*"Nancy McClelland alone among the decorating fraternity fought against the use of plain walls. She started to use fine old documentary papers and turned the tide back to good taste. She made the wallpaper industry lift itself by its boot straps."*⁶⁸

When considering other notable figures in the wallpaper field at the time such as wallpaper manufacturer Félix Follot or wallpaper scholar Henri Clouzot, McClelland truly was a standout figure in the primarily French male 'fraternity' of wallpaper scholars and connoisseurs.⁶⁹ Not only honored by wallpaper scholars, architects also celebrated McClelland's successes and contributions. In 1948, the Architectural League of New York awarded her the Michael Friedsam Medal in Industrial Art.⁷⁰ The annual award celebrates the person who made the "greatest contribution to art and industry by advancing the profession of design," showing admiration for McClelland's work spanned many fields.

⁶⁶ Justin F. Allman was a partner at Allman & Kayser, a Philadelphia based wallpaper company in the early twentieth century.

⁶⁷ "Nancy McClelland First to Win Justin Allman Wallpaper Award."

⁶⁸ "Nancy McClelland First to Win Justin Allman Wallpaper Award."

⁶⁹ Follot was a noted wallpaper manufacturer and collector in the 19th century. Clouzot was an early 20th c. wallpaper scholar.

⁷⁰ Michael Friedsam was an American art collector and philanthropist.

Nancy McClelland, Inc. Wallpaper

In addition to selling antique wallpapers, McClelland also printed her own wallpapers under her firm's name; these papers were either historic reproductions of eighteenth and nineteenth-century wallpapers or new, modern designs. Her firm's balance sheets indicate that McClelland's contemporary patterns were as popular as her antique wallpaper inventory and sales often were higher than her general antique inventory. By June 1949, her gross wallpaper profits, including modern French wallpapers, modern American wallpapers, and antique wallpapers totaled \$33,352.68 (just over \$380,000 today).⁷¹ Nancy McClelland, Inc. worked with Mauny, a French manufactory now owned by Zuber, to produce her reproduction wallpapers.⁷² McClelland's partnership with Mauny is significant for two reasons. First, Mauny printed its wallpapers using eighteenth-century standards. So while most of McClelland's competitors reproduced historic designs using modern machine-aided techniques, most of McClelland's wallpapers were block printed on joined sheets of paper just as wallpaper had been produced in the eighteenth century.⁷³ However, some of McClelland's wallpapers were also screen-printed papers and likely made in the United States. Nonetheless, when comparing original eighteenth or nineteenth-century fragments to McClelland's reproductions, there are few discernible differences other than age (Fig. 3, 4). Secondly, Mauny's owners Robert Caillard and André Mauny's wallpaper archive was likely an

⁷¹ "Nancy McClelland, Inc. Balance Sheets." August 1948. Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

⁷² Preston, "Decorating History, from Wanamaker's to the Metropolitan," 47.; Mauny was founded by Robert Caillard and André Mauny in 1935 as R. Caillard et A. Mauny. Following Caillard's death in December of 1936, Mauny and his son, Patrice, took control of the company and renamed it Mauny. Mauny continued to print wallpapers from Caillard's blocks as 'R C à Paris.'

⁷³ Gregory Herringshaw, "Nancy McClelland: Making Antique New" Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, June 9, 2016.

immense resource for her when sourcing wallpaper designs for projects as McClelland used wallpapers from Caillard's collection on a few occasions. Unfortunately, archival records from her business reveal few other details about this partnership. Finally, attribution on McClelland's reproduction wallpaper selvage varies. Some read "Made in France for Nancy McClelland" while others simply say "Nancy McClelland, Inc."

McClelland sent many wallpaper fragments and designs to Mauny for reproduction. Before sending designs to France, Nancy McClelland, Inc. employed designers to sketch the designs from samples found in situ, on bandboxes, or miscellaneous fragments (Figs. 5, 6).⁷⁴ Her wallpaper designers who sketched the reproductions are unknown, and it is unlikely that McClelland personally executed any of the design work herself. In addition to offering "documentary colors," McClelland reproductions were also available in alternative colorways or sometimes featured enlarged motifs that still suited colonial revival interiors.⁷⁵ This may have been done in an effort to promote nostalgia or to maintain a traditional style in her interiors, yet also appealed to modern consumers interested in historic wallpaper designs. In period decorating projects in historic homes, it enabled McClelland to capture the spirit of a historic wallpaper while also applying her sense of a proper color palette to the wallpaper.

When working with Electra Havemeyer Webb of Shelburne, Vermont, McClelland reproduced a few wallpapers from fragments on Webb's collection of nineteenth-century bandboxes. Bandboxes were originally used for collar band storage

⁷⁴ William Baldwin and Edna Woolman Chase, "Living: Notes on Decoration," *Vogue*; Condé Nast New York, 1946, 195.

⁷⁵ Preston, "Decorating History, from Wanamaker's to the Metropolitan," 52.

but by the 1820s could store anything ranging from travel memorabilia to hats. The boxes were often covered with colorful wallpapers; wallpaper sellers sometimes even advertised papers suitable for bandboxes.⁷⁶ At least three bandboxes can be linked to McClelland reproductions. *Gay Gardens*, *Providence House*, and *Forget-me-not* were all wallpapers reproduced and sold by Nancy McClelland, Inc. and linked to Webb. The *Providence House* bandbox was found by Webb in the Old Market House in Providence, Rhode Island, and reproduced by McClelland in six different colorways.⁷⁷ In the back stair hall of the Brick House at Shelburne, *Forget-me-not* by Nancy McClelland, Inc. is hung. Coincidentally, the museum also owns a bandbox covered with the same paper, which is the presumed source for the reproduction.⁷⁸ McClelland's reproduction work at Shelburne coincides with her increasing interest in historic projects and she began reproducing wallpapers for numerous historic sites such as the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, the John Brown House in Rhode Island, and the Morris-Jumel House.

In addition to distributing Mauny wallpapers, Nancy McClelland, Inc. also distributed for other manufacturers. While McClelland and Mauny specialized in historic wallpapers, she also recognized the growing popularity of Modernism in America. She took on modern commissions in her decorating practice and had contemporary wallpapers that would suit those interiors. She responded to the popularity of Modernism yet never made it a focal point of her offerings. Her firm created Art Deco wallpapers that showed stylized motifs such as starfish, acanthus leaves, or trees (Fig. 7). She also

⁷⁶ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 292–93.

⁷⁷ Lilian Baker Carlisle, *Hat Boxes and Bandboxes at Shelburne Museum*, Museum Pamphlet Series; No. 4. Shelburne, Vermont., Shelburne Museum, 1960, 95.

⁷⁸ Kory Rogers, "Nancy McClelland Wallpaper at Shelburne" Email to Author, October 27, 2020.

distributed Art Deco wallpapers designed by René Crevel, a French writer and surrealist designer, who also designed wallpapers for the Isidore Leroy Company.⁷⁹ However, it was her traditional and historically inspired wallpapers that she used and sold the most.

Nancy McClelland, Inc. produced a few original wallpapers. *The Prelude to a Nation: the Story of Washington*, more commonly referred to as *The Inauguration of Washington*, was a scenic wallpaper designed by McClelland's firm depicting George Washington's inauguration in five tableaux.⁸⁰ The scenes began with Washington's "Arrival by Water" then moves on to "The Promenade to the President's House," then "The President's Mansion," "The Inaugural Procession," and ends with "Taking the Oath." Created in 1932 to coincide with the 200th anniversary of Washington's birth, McClelland herself noted the inauguration paper had the "quality and gaiety of eighteenth-century decorations."⁸¹ Nancy McClelland, Inc. produced only a few full runs of *The Inauguration of Washington* due to its high production cost. While she originally intended to block print the Washington paper, she decided it was too expensive an endeavor at the onset of the Great Depression. Instead, she enlisted unemployed American artists to make six stenciled alternatives in the United States. However, McClelland block printed one set of the paper in Paris, and she stored it at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.⁸² The entire scenic wallpaper consists of 34 strips, each

⁷⁹ "Sidewall Sample (France), ca. 1930 Background." Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Museum, Accessed September 23, 2021.

⁸⁰ This wallpaper can be found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the John Brown House in Providence, Rhode Island.

⁸¹ Nancy McClelland, Inc., "Papers Relating to The Prelude to a Nation: The Story of Washington." 1930-1940. Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

⁸² McClelland, "Letter to Mrs. Walter Brown, John Brown House," August 3, 1942. John Brown House, Rhode Island Historical Society.; The Metropolitan Museum of Art has 180 rolls of Nancy McClelland, Inc. wallpaper in their collection. It is possible that *The Inauguration of Washington* is included in that collection, however the specific contents of this collection are not cataloged.

18.75” wide and 10’3” high. When hung in its entirety, it covers approximately fifty-three feet of wall space.⁸³ This wallpaper was sold to the John Brown House in Providence, Rhode Island, where it still hangs today. It was also displayed at the costly and extravagant “Pageant of Old New York,” the annual Beaux Arts Ball organized by the Society of Beaux Arts Architects and held at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in January 1932, and at PEDAC in the newly completed RCA Victor Building at 570 Lexington Avenue, two prominent venues in New York City. PEDAC, The Permanent Exhibition of Decorative Arts & Crafts, Inc. was a wholesale and retail market for decorators, architects, and dealers. While it is unknown exactly when McClelland exhibited *The Inauguration of Washington* at PEDAC, she was exhibiting her other wallpapers there by 1934. A PEDAC exhibition brochure printed that year praised “the fineness of old papers” offered by McClelland and notes that wallpapers similar in quality or design could not be found anywhere else in America.⁸⁴

Decorating with Wallpaper in the Colonial Revival Style

As might be expected, McClelland promoted the use of wallpapers in all domestic interiors, believing there “scarcely is a room in the house for which a suitable paper is lacking, whether formality or informality is the purpose.”⁸⁵ Her writings often emphasized the importance of a room’s backdrop, a theme seen in the works and writings of nineteenth-century designer-decorators such as William Morris and A.J. Downing.⁸⁶ In *Wall-papers Old and New*, McClelland wrote “Nothing more useful in furnishing a room

⁸³ Nancy McClelland, Inc., “Papers Relating to The Prelude to a Nation: The Story of Washington.”

⁸⁴ “Permanent Exhibition of Decorative Products Rendering Service to All Wholesale Buyers of Decorative Merchandise and Their Clientele at the RCA Building at Rockefeller Center Exhibition Booklet,” 9.

⁸⁵ Nancy McClelland, *Wall-Papers Old and New: Exclusive Designs*, 3.

⁸⁶ McClelland, *Furnishing the Colonial and Federal House*, 84; Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 8.

has ever been invented than decorative paper in good design.”⁸⁷ For McClelland, “good design” in wallpaper typically referred to traditional styles from the French *ancien régime*, Georgian England, or from colonial and early America, rather than the more recent stylized patterns promoted by the Arts and Crafts or Aesthetic Movement designers. Her expertise and approach to decorating with wallpaper evolved over time; she was influenced by the growing Colonial Revival movement in the United States and likely by some of the collectors with whom she worked.

As wealthy and middle-class white Americans began to recognize the importance and value in their material history, interest in early American antiques skyrocketed. The Colonial Revival movement’s origins are linked to major, public-facing events such as the Philadelphia 1876 Centennial Exposition or the 1924 opening of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Women’s magazines and other publications also began publishing guides for the everyday homemaker to learn how to achieve a colonial look. Twentieth century scholars actively debated what types of wallpaper colonial Americans favored, wherein some experts recommended patterns that others disputed. In the late 1930s, *New York Times* journalist and author Walter Rendell Storey wrote that the general understanding of colonial interiors was already changing and evolving from only a few years earlier.⁸⁸ In her practice, McClelland did not seem to be as concerned with using historically accurate wallpaper as she was more concerned with overall effect. Like many other decorators, McClelland thought primarily about ‘good design’, referring

⁸⁷ McClelland, *Wall-Papers Old and New*, 3.

⁸⁸ Walter Rendell Storey, “Colonial Effects Achieve in Today’s Rooms.” *The New York Times*. November 7, 1937.

to traditional styles of the time which ranged from French and English styles to the colonial American styles.

In the early twentieth century, small floral motifs on pastel backgrounds were often appeared as popular wallpapers suitable for old, colonial interiors. Other popular classical motifs seen in Colonial Revival wallpapers included urns filled with fruit, rococo leaves, pendant tassels, or diamond trellises.⁸⁹ Popular Colonial Revival wallpapers include “medallion” papers, scenic wallpapers, or pillar and arch papers (Fig. 8).⁹⁰ Some sources argued that scenic wallpapers were the most popular in the colonial era. McClelland herself wrote about the popularity of scenic wallpapers in the northern states in the early nineteenth century and believed they were an appropriate background for colonial furniture.⁹¹ McClelland’s notes about decorating with *The Inauguration of Washington* affirms this belief. She wrote that the *Inauguration of Washington* wallpaper was “adaptable as a background for Colonial furniture.”⁹² Many wallpaper manufacturers, such as Thomas Strahan and M. H. Birge, created wallpapers specifically tailored to the growing movement. However, their wallpapers were machine-printed, not block printed as many of Nancy McClelland, Inc.’s were. Other than the *Inauguration of Washington*, McClelland only produced reproduction wallpapers for colonial interiors, not original colonial-inspired designs.

⁸⁹ Edith Weigle, “New Wallpapers of Colonial Design Make Charming Backgrounds for the American Home of Our Day: Many of the Patterns Are Sunfast and May Be Cleaned with a Sponge and Water.” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923-1963). March 26, 1933, sec. PART 6.

⁹⁰ Early reproductions sometimes omitted motifs from the originals, see: Richard C. Nylander et al., *Wallpaper in New England* (Boston (141 Cambridge St., Boston 02114): Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, 1986), 267-269.

⁹¹ McClelland, *Furnishing the Colonial and Federal House*, 89.

⁹² Nancy McClelland, Inc., “Papers Relating to The Prelude to a Nation: The Story of Washington.”

In addition to her period decorating projects, McClelland used museums and lectures to promote her work and wallpapers. She sold antique wallpapers to large encyclopedic museums such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago, all of whom were looking to build their collections of wallpapers to hang as backgrounds for early American period rooms in the first half of the twentieth century (For a complete list of public institutions where McClelland sold or donated her wallpapers, see “Appendix A”).⁹³ Unfortunately, many American museums reexamined and redecorated their period rooms during the twentieth century, leaving few traces of McClelland’s wallpapers in the twenty-first century. McClelland’s trips abroad continued throughout her career as she was known to travel to Europe to source wallpapers for museums and collectors.⁹⁴ Additionally, she offered lectures at institutions, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, about decorating with wallpapers. McClelland’s writings and speaking engagements continuously offered the public access to her expertise. Books published such as *Furnishing the Colonial and Federal House* offered readers an approachable education on how to create their own early American interiors. Further, her archive at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, contains numerous unpublished writings and manuscripts about her projects, specific decorating styles, and more. These unpublished papers show that McClelland thought critically about her work and wanted to use it to educate others. Visitors found inspiration in historic house museums and looked to them to learn about colonial design and interiors in the early twentieth century.⁹⁵ Thus, McClelland’s work for historic homes

⁹³ J.B. Lippincott Company, “Promotional Pamphlet for Historic Wall-Papers by Nancy McClelland.”

⁹⁴ “School Directory.” *Vassar Quarterly*, Vol. XXII., January 1937, 24.

⁹⁵ Bridget Ann May, “Aspects of Traditionalism and Progressivism in the Modern Colonial House, 1900-

added to her credibility as a source for period decorating. McClelland not only publicized her work through her scholarly writing, but also through ads and radios broadcasts targeting a wider, less specialized audience. To promote her work at the Morris Jumel Mansion, McClelland went on a radio broadcast to share some of the house's history and made a brief mention of her work there. The broadcast ended by the host suggesting listeners visit the museum if they want ideas for redecorating their home in a colonial fashion.⁹⁶ The host's suggestion reinforces that McClelland was a trusted source, and expert for private clients of any economic means, not just preservation societies and art museums.⁹⁷

1920," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Georgia, 1988) 117.

⁹⁶ American Broadcasting Company, Inc., "'Opportunity Time' with Nancy McClelland." March 2, 1946. Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

⁹⁷ "MISCELLANEOUS." *New York History* 28, no. 4 (October 1947): 520-525.

Chapter 3: Museums and the Museum-Minded

"Whenever it is possible to obtain an old set that has been taken off the walls of its original owner, the paper is eagerly seized upon by those who are recreating the spirit of olden times in their houses."- Nancy McClelland⁹⁸

Institutions and collectors valued McClelland's expertise to not only identify period-appropriate wallpaper choices, but also to provide high-quality options for purchase. McClelland's interest in redecorating historic buildings began in the 1920s.⁹⁹ By the end of her life, she was credited as a "pioneer in the restoration and preservation of historic American buildings and interiors."¹⁰⁰ A known American expert on wallpaper, she consulted with various collectors and house museums. McClelland's dedication to using eighteenth-century block printing appealed to public organizations, such as the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, looking for faithful reproductions. This was evidently a source of pride for her as she often emphasized or noted her production practices. In contrast, collectors like Electra Havemeyer Webb and Henry Francis du Pont looked to create the spirit of the past in their homes and wanted rare, original antique wallpapers for their interiors. For these commissions, McClelland would reproduce a wallpaper for her firm before offering the original to a collector to ensure the pattern's future sales and use.

Creating a Feeling

McClelland met Electra Havemeyer Webb prior to 1922 while she was still leading and managing Au Quatrième. McClelland's installations of American rooms in

⁹⁸ McClelland, "History and Use of Wallpaper, Working Paper," n.d. Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 13.

⁹⁹ Arlington House, the home of Robert E. Lee in Arlington, Virginia, enlisted her expertise in 1925 although there is no documentation about which wallpapers she suggested.

¹⁰⁰ "In Memory of a Pioneer: Nancy Vincent McClelland, 1877-1959," 168.

Au Quatrième reportedly influenced Webb's early collecting.¹⁰¹ Additionally, Webb was an early client of Nancy McClelland, Inc. as evidenced by McClelland's anecdote in *Confessions of a Decorator*.¹⁰² Around the same time, wallpaper became a special interest of Webb's. She began to purchase historic wallpapers for the Brick House, now part of the Shelburne Museum in Vermont, and her home in Westbury, Long Island. Webb did not aspire to create period rooms. Rather her rooms at the Brick House were whimsical, contemporary creations using antiques and were the foundation for the Shelburne Museum, which opened in 1947.¹⁰³ McClelland sold two French scenic wallpapers to Webb, both of which are also included in *Historic Wall-Papers*.¹⁰⁴ The earliest known wallpaper that Webb purchased from McClelland was a hand-painted c.1830 Dufour et Leroy paper titled *Napoleon at Arcola Bridge*.¹⁰⁵ The wallpaper, likely inspired by the French artist Horace Vernet's 1826 painting *La Bataille du Pont d'Arcole*, depicts Napoleon holding a torn national flag of France as he leads French soldiers. In 1922 Webb paid \$400 for three panels of this wallpaper (approximately \$6,600 today) and hung it in the formal living room of the Brick House at Shelburne (Fig. 9). McClelland sold another old French painted scenic wallpaper to Webb and provided a short, historical essay to her client.¹⁰⁶ This wallpaper depicts boats at sea and figures wearing liberty caps, which suggests the paper was produced around the time of the

¹⁰¹ Edwards, "The Brick House, the Vermont Country House of Electra Havemeyer Webb," *Magazine Antiques* 163, no. 1, (January 2003): 197.

¹⁰² McClelland, "Confessions of an Interior Decorator as Told to Norval Richardson," 30–31.; See page 12 for anecdote.

¹⁰³ Edwards, "The Brick House, the Vermont Country House of Electra Havemeyer Webb," 200.

¹⁰⁴ McClelland, *Historic Wall-Papers*, 209-210.

¹⁰⁵ Edwards, "The Brick House, the Vermont Country House of Electra Havemeyer Webb," 199.

¹⁰⁶ "Invoice for Mrs. J. Watson Webb from Nancy McClelland, Inc." September 19, 1922. Shelburne Museum.

French Revolution.¹⁰⁷ McClelland found this paper in the banquet hall on the upper floor of a café that had been owned by three generations of one family in Givry-en-Argonne, France. She even shared that a 75-year-old man had claimed this wallpaper was always on the wall in his lifetime.¹⁰⁸ To further validate the age of the wallpaper, McClelland shared that after examining the wallpaper in an adjoining room of the café, she found three layers of wallpaper. The lowest layer dated to just after the time of the French Revolution, thus she believed that these papers were likely hung at the same time and can be dated to the early nineteenth century.¹⁰⁹ Hand-painted landscape wallpapers are one-of-a-kind, making them appealing to collectors like Webb who valued rarity.

McClelland also sold reproduction and modern wallpapers to Webb.¹¹⁰ Today, Shelburne still displays an example of McClelland's contemporary work. Between 1936-1938, Nancy McClelland, Inc. created *Feathers* which hangs in the Entrance Hall of the Brick House. This Art Deco wallpaper replaced a 1919 Thomas Strahan and Company reproduction of a c. 1790 wallpaper titled *Pastoral*.¹¹¹ McClelland's firm independently designed *Feathers* and no existing documentation indicates what might have been its inspiration (Fig. 10). Today, the Shelburne Museum suggests that the abstract design recalls the swirled aesthetic of the hooked rugs throughout the house, possibly serving as the inspiration. Other wallpapers produced by Nancy McClelland, Inc. for Shelburne further reveal a dynamic relationship between Webb and McClelland. It seems that

¹⁰⁷ McClelland, *Historic Wall-Papers*, 209.

¹⁰⁸ Nancy McClelland, Inc. "History of Givry Paper." New York, c 1922. Shelburne Museum.; This may not be true as this man would have been born in 1847, about 17 years after the presumed date of creation.

¹⁰⁹ It is interesting to note that one of the wallpapers in the adjoining room was a political paper representing Louis Philippe as he made his escape to England.

¹¹⁰ Edwards, "The Brick House, the Vermont Country House of Electra Havemeyer Webb," 198.

¹¹¹ Edwards, "The Brick House, the Vermont Country House of Electra Havemeyer Webb," 198.

McClelland reproduced wallpapers for Webb based on wallpapers already in Webb's collection. It is not clear how exactly the two educated women decided which wallpapers from Webb's collection to reproduce or if Webb made the decision at her discretion. By 1924, Webb's collection included an eighteenth-century stenciled and hand-painted chinoiserie wallpaper, which McClelland published in *Historic Wall-Papers*. McClelland later used this wallpaper to reproduce just enough paper to fill Webb's bedroom.¹¹² Additionally, bandboxes collected by Webb were used for reproductions that McClelland's firm distributed as evidenced in the *Providence House* wallpaper. Webb clearly loved wallpaper and was known to have frequently changed out the wallpapers of the Brick House.¹¹³ This makes it difficult to assess exactly when and how many wallpapers McClelland sold to Webb. But McClelland's wallpapers can still be found throughout the Brick House whether it be *Forget-me-not* hanging in the back stair hall, or the dozens of rolls of extra wallpaper in the wallpaper closet.¹¹⁴

A visit to the Brick House inspired Henry Francis du Pont to begin collecting early American decorative arts, focusing his collecting on Winterthur, his family home in northern Delaware, in 1926.¹¹⁵ It is unknown exactly when McClelland met du Pont; it is just as likely that their paths crossed at Au Quatrième as it is that they met after McClelland opened her independent business. Letters between them indicate that du Pont visited McClelland's shop as early as 1923 and they continued to work together over the following three decades. Du Pont and McClelland's friendship grew throughout the years

¹¹² Edwards, "The Brick House, the Vermont Country House of Electra Havemeyer Webb," 200.

¹¹³ Rogers, "Nancy McClelland Wallpaper at Shelburne," October 27, 2020.

¹¹⁴ Kory Rogers, *The Brick House's Wallpaper Archives*. Shelburne, Vermont, 2020.

¹¹⁵ Jay E. Cantor, *Winterthur* (New York: Abrams, 1997), 121.

as evidenced in the familiar greetings between them. In a letter written to congratulate du Pont on his Honorary Membership to the American Institute of Decorators, she addressed him as “my dear Mr. du Pont.”¹¹⁶ Du Pont even purchased a copy of *Historic Wall-Papers* on its release day, which he kept close to hand for reference in his bedroom closet.¹¹⁷ Du Pont was a serious collector and cared deeply about authenticity; thus, unlike Webb, he would not have been as interested in many of McClelland’s reproduction wallpapers. A few years after he began collecting early American decorative arts, he designated his family’s ancestral home, Winterthur, to be the home for his growing collection. He collected all types of decorative arts ranging from furniture to interior architecture and created period room displays. It is important to note, however, that du Pont valued twentieth-century aesthetics and proper arrangement above all else. Therefore, he sometimes made decisions based on aesthetics before historical accuracy. Like McClelland, du Pont was self-educated in regard to art history and decorating. As his collection expanded during the 1920s, so did his ideas about opening a museum. However, Winterthur did not open to the public until 1951. While not an interior decorator by trade, historians commonly regard du Pont as a Colonial Revival decorator because of his renowned interiors at Winterthur.¹¹⁸

Du Pont’s development as a collector and decorator can be partly attributed to his relationship with the interior decorator, Henry Davis Sleeper (1878-1934). Sleeper was

¹¹⁶ McClelland, “To Mr. Henry F. Du Pont, Honorary Membership to AID,” October 23, 1941. Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library.; McClelland was President of A.I.D. at the time.

¹¹⁷ “Antique Books in Closet in Mr. Du Pont’s Bedroom,” July 26, 1933. Henry Francis du Pont Papers, Box 507, The Winterthur Archives, Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum.

¹¹⁸ “Du Pont the Designer,” *Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library* (blog), April 7, 2021, <https://www.winterthur.org/henry-the-designer/>.

both an early advisor to du Pont and a friend to McClelland. Similar to Webb, Sleeper created his own whimsical interiors at his home, Beauport, in Gloucester, Massachusetts. He collected antiques to use and ornament his home yet was not a scholarly decorator to the same degree as McClelland and du Pont both were.¹¹⁹ Sleeper appreciated “the quality and character of ancient things...yet was never enslaved by the letter of period design. Instead, he rifled the past to achieve new and often entrancing modern harmonies.”¹²⁰ References to his wallpaper choices indicate that he hung both modern mass-produced wallpapers and rare eighteenth-century wallpapers (Fig. 11).¹²¹ Sleeper’s approach to decorating with antiques bears a resemblance to McClelland’s approach in her period decorating. The relationships between and interiors of Sleeper, du Pont, Webb, and McClelland illuminates the similar visions and goals collectors and decorators had when referencing the American past in interiors. Webb and Sleeper both reflect a greater interest in creating whimsical interiors reminiscent of the past without an intention to recreate it. McClelland and du Pont are more scholarly decorators as they each valued documentation and used their knowledge of historic decorating practices.

A British decorator, John Fowler, shows that this modality of thinking was not just an American phenomenon. The Historic House Trust in England employed Fowler from 1956 to 1976, to decorate various historic homes in their collection. Described as a historically-minded or scholarly decorator, Fowler combined contemporary decorating preferences with antiques in homes owned by the Historic House Trust. Fowler “strove

¹¹⁹ Elizabeth Stillinger, *The Antiquers*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1980, 225.

¹²⁰ Shax Riegler, “The Legacy of Henry Davis Sleeper,” *The Magazine Antiques*, December 10, 2009, <https://www.themagazineantiques.com/article/the-legacy-of-henry-davis-sleeper/>.

¹²¹ Christine Temin, “Gloucester’s Beauport: An Eclectic Affair,” *Boston Globe*, September 13, 2001, sec. H5.

for beauty within the limits of ... evidence rather than a strict reproduction” in his interiors.¹²² Fowler and McClelland’s work show a sensitivity to historicism while creating harmonious interiors, not period rooms, in historic homes. Above all, the decorators discussed herein valued aesthetics and show that McClelland was not alone in her methodology and practice.

Du Pont valued McClelland not only as a dealer but also as a historically-minded decorator. His letters to her ask for her opinion or her judgment regarding the best wallpapers for any given space at Winterthur.¹²³ Letters between the client and advisor indicate that du Pont informed McClelland to which rooms he wanted to hang wallpaper in or what types of wallpapers he wanted. McClelland sold at least eight wallpapers to du Pont, in addition to various other antiques, and he invited her to Winterthur to see her wallpapers in situ on a few occasions in the 1930s. The early correspondence between Nancy McClelland, Inc. and du Pont reveals that he began visiting her shop for antique wallpapers in 1923, however, he did not purchase any wallpaper from her until 1928.¹²⁴ Between that time, however, she sent him photographs of many wallpapers for which she thought he may be interested.

In 1928, McClelland sold an eighteenth-century, hand-painted Chinese wallpaper to du Pont through J.A. Lloyd Hyde for \$6,000 (close to \$95,000 today) (Fig. 12).¹²⁵ Hung in Winterthur’s Chinese Parlor, the famous wallpaper has come to be synonymous

¹²² Helen Hughes, *John Fowler: The Invention of the Country House-Style*, (Donhead Printing, Shaftsbury, Dorset, 2005), 30.

¹²³ “Correspondence between H.F. Du Pont and Nancy McClelland, Inc.”

¹²⁴ Nancy McClelland, “Letter to H.F. Dupont, Esq.,” December 14, 1923, Antique Dealer’s Correspondence, Winterthur Library.

¹²⁵ Hyde was an antique dealer who du Pont frequently used.

with Winterthur. Marking one of McClelland's best-known sales, she purchased the twenty-two unused rolls of wallpaper from her French agents, Monsieur and Madame Charles.¹²⁶ Unfortunately, McClelland did not know where the Huard's found the rare paper.¹²⁷ But its sale must have been exciting for McClelland due to the paper's rarity. In 1934, du Pont wrote to McClelland requesting additional documentation to support the age of the wallpaper. In response, McClelland shared her research with him, reaffirming that the wallpaper was indeed created around 1770 as was stated at the time of sale. She compared the Chinese wallpaper that she sold to du Pont to three other late eighteenth-century examples with known provenances, one of which belonged to Sleeper. Additionally, she provided a brief history of various types of Chinese wallpapers produced in the late eighteenth century.¹²⁸ Chinese landscape wallpapers were created for the western market in the late eighteenth century. Sequential scenes depicting rice cultivation or porcelain manufacturing were most commonly depicted on Chinese landscape papers. This makes the example at Winterthur even more rare as the buildings and figures depicted show aspects of erudite Chinese life during the Qing dynasty beginning in 1644.¹²⁹

An exceptionally fine paper, Nancy McClelland, Inc. found another Chinese wallpaper in 1929. McClelland presented the newly found wallpaper to du Pont and even offered to take back the original that she sold to him back. du Pont believed the new

¹²⁶ Diana P. Rowan, "Reading the Wallpaper of the Chinese Parlor at the Winterthur Museum," *Magazine Antiques*, 2002, 116. Charles Huard was an illustrator for Honoré de Balzac. Frances Wilson Huard coauthored *French Provincial Furniture* (1927) with Henri Longnon, however she was best known for her World War I memoirs.

¹²⁷ "Correspondence between H.F. Du Pont and Nancy McClelland, Inc."

¹²⁸ "Correspondence between H.F. Du Pont and Nancy McClelland, Inc."

¹²⁹ Rowan, "Reading the Wallpaper of the Chinese Parlor at the Winterthur Museum," 118.

wallpaper was an even finer paper than the one that he owned; however, it was not large enough for the space in which it was intended.¹³⁰ Their epistolary exchange demonstrates how much McClelland valued her relationship with du Pont and wanted to ensure that she presented all of her very best offerings to him. In September 1935, McClelland told du Pont exactly that:

*“I always like to let you know when any particularly lovely thing comes along and just today I found an enchanting panel of paper which really belongs in your house... I am rolling the panel up and tucking it away until you can see it, because I know it is just the kind of thing you would like to have to put in one of the small nooks of Winterthur.”*¹³¹

Letters between McClelland and du Pont reveal her long history of reserving costly and rare wallpapers for du Pont. On October 11, 1924, only eleven days after *Historic Wall-Papers* appeared in print, McClelland wrote to du Pont about a set of Dufour’s *Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* in the Ham House in Peabody, Massachusetts, coming up for sale; This wallpaper is specifically mentioned in *Historic Wall-Papers*.¹³² Since her collector clients valued known provenance and objects with published histories, McClelland carefully and deliberately considered with whom she would share such important finds. When abroad, McClelland sent telegrams and letters to du Pont about wallpapers that she found and once even arranged to meet him to review wallpapers when they were both in Paris.¹³³ She clearly valued him as a client and worked incessantly to ensure that she presented him with the best historic wallpapers she could.

¹³⁰ The Chinese wallpaper that she sold to du Pont in 1928 was not hung at Winterthur until 1936.

¹³¹ “Correspondence between H.F. Du Pont and Nancy McClelland, Inc.”

¹³² “Correspondence between H.F. Du Pont and Nancy McClelland, Inc.”, McClelland, *Historic Wall-papers*, 176, 366.

¹³³ “Correspondence between H.F. Du Pont and Nancy McClelland, Inc.”

When McClelland sold original wallpapers to collectors, she made it clear if she also reproduced it, as evidenced in correspondence between her and du Pont. In 1934, she sold one roll of a leopard-pattern wallpaper to du Pont for \$12. It dates to the late eighteenth century and bears a George I tax stamp (Fig. 13).¹³⁴ *Leopard* has a yellow ground with grey, white, and tan symmetrical curving vines framing a diamond pattern. Within each diamond, is a small green-grey flower meant to resemble a leopard spot. When McClelland sold this wallpaper to du Pont, it was clear that her firm was already reproducing it. A rare instance, a letter from du Pont indicates that he requested four sheets of the “new paper” after purchasing the antique paper in order to have enough wallpaper for a designated room.¹³⁵ McClelland also reproduced the leopard wallpaper and used it at Mount Vernon.¹³⁶ Over the next few decades, she continued to print *Leopard* in at least seven different colorways. Examples in the rich wallpaper collection of Historic New England show her firm printed the wallpaper in green, blue, and yellow colorways in addition to its original colors (Fig. 14).

Like the Chinese landscape wallpaper, French scenic wallpapers were popular among Colonial Revivalists and seem to also be a favorite of McClelland. She sold scenic wallpapers to collectors as well as many historic houses. In 1939, journalist Walter Rendell Storey wrote “Scenic wallpaper has all the decorative virtues. It is dignified without being informal, pleasing but not too ostentatious, and interesting but not

¹³⁴ “*Leopard*” *Wall Fragment, England*. 1765-1780. Wood blocked on laid paper, 15.875 x 6.5 in. (1969.1100.003 A- O) Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library.

¹³⁵ “Correspondence between H.F. Du Pont and Nancy McClelland, Inc.”

¹³⁶ Nancy McClelland, *Sidewall, Leopard Yellow*. Nancy McClelland, Inc. *Sidewall, Leopard Yellow*. 1922-1930. Block-printed paper, 69.5 x 60.5 cm. Gift of Mount Vernon Ladies' Association; 1946-54-4, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

insistent.”¹³⁷ McClelland agreed with most of these sentiments and even described scenic wallpapers as “arrested three-dimensional ‘movies’ which give perspective to a room.”¹³⁸ McClelland sold two scenic wallpapers to du Pont: eight panels of a c. 1815 Dufour *Monuments of Paris* for \$4,750 (almost \$95,000 today) and one panel of *The Chase* for \$475 (almost \$10,000 today). *Monuments of Paris* was hung in a hallway at Winterthur, which was an appropriate space in McClelland’s opinion as a decorator. She believed that scenic wallpapers belong in halls or dining rooms because those spaces had fewer pieces of tall furniture along their walls to disrupt the view of the wallpaper.¹³⁹ She thus would likely have disapproved of the placement of a tall case clock in front of the wallpaper (Fig. 15). Like Webb, du Pont enjoyed decorating with wallpaper and often hung wallpapers throughout the mansion, even small passages and alcoves transformed from their original mundane function as closets into exhibition spaces for his vast collection. Once Winterthur became a museum in 1951, du Pont moved some of the wallpapers from the museum to his new private residence, the so-called “cottage” opposite from the museum. He wrote to McClelland in 1952 sharing how pleased he was to have brought some of the wallpapers to his new home.¹⁴⁰ It is likely that *The Chase* is the scenic wallpaper that now hangs on the mezzanine level of the cottage house although it is not clear if it was ever hung in the museum.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Walter Rendell Storey, “Home Decoration: Transforming Old Rooms: Scenic Wallpaper Has Many Decorative Virtues.” *New York Times*, June 18, 1939.

¹³⁸ Nancy V. McClelland, “Partial Manuscript about 19th Century French Styles” (n.d.), Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 4.

¹³⁹ Nancy Vincent McClelland, “The Decorative Possibilities of Wall-Paper.” *The American Magazine of Art* 15, no. 8, 1924, 396–97.

¹⁴⁰ “Correspondence between H.F. Du Pont and Nancy McClelland, Inc.”

¹⁴¹ Emily Elizabeth Martin, “The Mansion House by the Bridge: An Account of the Henry Francis Du Pont Cottage at Winterthur,” (Thesis, Clemson University and The Graduate School of College of Charleston, 2009): 68.

McClelland sold four other wallpapers to du Pont between October 1934 and October 1935. Beginning in 1934, she sold “13 sheets of antique wallpaper, Louis XV” for \$200, one “lot Directoire wallpaper, blue with Hortensia, without border” for \$270, one “lot of old wallpaper border” for \$30, and a “panel of antique Directoire paper, blue background, with medallions” for \$450. The English blue Hortensia wallpaper seemed to have resonated with du Pont as he hung it where he would see it daily, in the hall between his bedroom and office.¹⁴² A letter from McClelland described the wallpaper as an “enchanting little Directoire paper [that] is in rags and tatters, but it can be put together again very easily.”¹⁴³ Collectors like du Pont still valued wallpapers even if not pristine whereas museums and historic houses tend to prefer reproduction wallpaper.

McClelland likely sent many more wallpapers to du Pont for review as he was known to ask for photographs of objects or to accept physical objects for review before purchase. Additionally, Nancy McClelland, Inc. reserved certain wallpapers that may interest du Pont such as Dufour’s famous Captain Cook wallpaper previously mentioned.¹⁴⁴ *Les Perles* is an example of a wallpaper that McClelland sent for review that du Pont did not accept. McClelland issued a hold ticket for the wallpaper ensuring it for du Pont had he wanted it.¹⁴⁵ No color photographs of this wallpaper are known thus

¹⁴² *Blue Hortensia, 1760-1790, England*. Woodblocked on laid paper. Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library (1969.1082.001).

¹⁴³ Nancy McClelland, “Letter to Henry Francis Du Pont about Blue Hortensia Wallpaper,” 1937. Antique Dealer’s Correspondence, Winterthur Library.

¹⁴⁴ Isabelle H. Barclay, Nancy McClelland, Inc., “Letter to H.F. Dupont Esq.,” September 12, 1924. Henry Francis du Pont Papers, Box 507, The Winterthur Archives, Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum.

¹⁴⁵ Nancy McClelland, Inc., “Hold Ticket, Number 269, Property of Mr. H.F. Du Pont, Winterthur, Delaware for Antique Wall-Paper ‘Les Perles.’” September 11, 1930. Antique Dealer’s Papers, Box AD 41, Winterthur Library.

only the design can be described. Its name derives from the strands of pearls that frame small floral bouquets forming a repeating teardrop pattern (Fig. 16).

Selling to Historic Homes and Museums

The early twentieth century saw the growth and development of the historic house museum in the United States. Americana collectors like du Pont and Webb were influenced not only by the period rooms in large institutions, like the 1924 opening of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but also by smaller historic houses. Du Pont even acquired a historic house, the ca. 1744 Corbit House, from his cousin in 1958, now owned by the Historic Odessa Foundation.¹⁴⁶ In 1923, the famed industrialist Henry Ford purchased the early eighteenth-century Wayside Inn in South Sudbury, Massachusetts, to preserve it from destruction. Ford emerged as a premiere collector of Americana in the following decade, helping to popularize American decorative arts.¹⁴⁷ Early women preservationists also organized to protect important homes as monuments to America's past. For example, a group of patriotic women who sought to save Mount Vernon from destruction formed the Mount Vernon Ladies Association in 1853. Catherine Beecher likened the parlor to a "cultural podium" where women could display moral and political values through decoration.¹⁴⁸ Women were often involved with saving

¹⁴⁶ H. Donnan Sharp, "Chairman's Message," in *Independence and Perpetuity: Campaign for Endowment* (Odessa, Delaware: Historic Odessa Foundation),

<https://www.historicodessa.org/sites/default/files/campaign-e-book/files/basic-html/page3.html>.

¹⁴⁷ "Henry Ford: Collector," The Henry Ford, accessed November 13, 2021, <https://www.thehenryford.org/history-and-mission/henry-ford-collector/>; "Wayside Inn Saved: Longfellow Shrine Bought by Henry Ford, 300-Year-Old Tavern Rich in Memories of Other Days, Long in Single Family Howes Opened and Ran Hostelry for Generations - Will Become a Museum Now," *The New York Times*, July 22, 1923.

¹⁴⁸ Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington [D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), 2.

historic homes in America, and it was often framed as their “civic responsibility.”

Historic house museums, after their restoration, become tourist destinations. Thus the women who led the efforts at historic houses exercised control over the social or political narratives presented.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, historic houses became representations of the country’s virtuous past.¹⁴⁹ Historian Patricia West argues that historic house museum founders were “unclassifiable as either politically detached antiquarians or blue blooded proponents of social control.”¹⁵⁰ Southerner Ann Pamela Cunningham, founder of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, enlisted the aid of other wealthy, white southern antebellum women to preserve Mount Vernon, all of whom acted as political agents. Motivated by nostalgia, nineteenth-century southern preservationist groups created shrines to America’s founders while simultaneously erasing the site’s history of enslavement.¹⁵¹ Early twentieth-century preservationists continued to be wealthy, white men and women, motivated by growing xenophobic fears.¹⁵² McClelland was not overtly politically or socially motivated; her involvement at historic houses was a way for her to display what she believed to be good taste through decoration. However, her ideas of good taste appealed to and referenced the taste of wealthy, white patrons throughout American history as she too omitted the histories of other Americans.

As many historic homes and museums redecorated and renovated in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, McClelland was called in to provide wallpapers. Before she began

¹⁴⁹ West, *Domesticating History*, 2-4.

¹⁵⁰ West, *Domesticating History*, xii.

¹⁵¹ West, *Domesticating History*, 8.

¹⁵² West, *Domesticating History*, 161.

leading historic decorating projects herself, she provided her firm's reproduction wallpapers to more than a dozen different historic projects.¹⁵³ Since 1926, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation has been an established center for colonial and early American studies. In 1937, McClelland supplied wallpapers for the newly opened Williamsburg Inn, today recognized as a National Historic Landmark and appearing on the National Register of Historic Places. She also engaged in talks with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation about licensing her wallpapers.¹⁵⁴ She exhibited the wallpapers created specifically for Williamsburg at the Antiques and Decorative Arts Exposition in Chicago in April 1937 and ran an ad in the *New Yorker* about her involvement (Fig. 17).¹⁵⁵ McClelland aligned her business with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation thereby bolstering her reputation as a credible source for reproduction wallpaper. As additional important historic sites began redecorating in the mid-twentieth century, McClelland emerged as a trusted authority to provide appropriate wallpapers.

Like the historic interiors of structure preserved by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the museum staff managed by the Mount Vernon Ladies Association redecorated the mansion's interiors multiple times throughout the early twentieth century. McClelland initially began providing reproduction wallpapers for the Mount Vernon Ladies Association in 1926, and the site continued to be an interest throughout her career as records show she was engaged with the Mount Vernon Ladies Association through the

¹⁵³ See Appendix A for a comprehensive list, including the houses listed on Nancy McClelland, Inc. "List of Historic Houses Where Our Wallpapers Have Been Used (in Restorations)," Early 20th c., Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

¹⁵⁴ Sarah Nerney, Associate Archivist at John Dr. Rockefeller Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. "Nancy McClelland Wallpapers at the Williamsburg Inn," Email to Author, September 13, 2021.

¹⁵⁵ Martin, "The Mansion House by the Bridge," 68.

1950s.¹⁵⁶ The full extent of her engagement is not known, and the volume of her work likely fluctuated. The bulk of her work, however, was in 1940 when the Mount Vernon Ladies Association hired McClelland to consult regarding the wallpaper choices in the bedrooms of the historic home. She mostly chose to use either her firm's own wallpapers or collector and former co-owner of Mauny Robert Caillard's wallpapers purchased from Mauny in Paris. However, other American wallpaper manufacturers, Nevius & Haviland and M.H. Birge & Sons, also provided papers. McClelland's engagement at Mount Vernon reinforces that she was aware of current primary source documentation and strove towards providing the most appropriate wallpaper selection possible. McClelland knew Washington decorated with wallpaper, even once writing that Washington loved wallpapers.¹⁵⁷ She was aware of letters and receipts that indicated when and from where Washington purchased his wallpapers. She thus used these records to inform her wallpaper selections. For example, a 1757 invoice to Washington describing six wallpapers that he ordered for Mount Vernon guided McClelland's choices for the bedrooms in the 1940s. Washington purchased "blue emboss paper", "green emboss paper", "yellow emboss paper", "India figured paper", "chintz paper", and a "crimson emboss paper."¹⁵⁸ "Emboss" was an eighteenth-century term that typically referred to

¹⁵⁶ Preston, "Decorating History, from Wanamaker's to the Metropolitan," 61.

¹⁵⁷ Nancy McClelland, "Mount Vernon Wallpapers," c 1952. Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 1.

¹⁵⁸ Deering Davis, Stephen P. Dorsey, Ralph Cole Hall, and Nancy McClelland, "Mount Vernon Wall-Papers," in *Alexandria Houses, 1750-1830*, New York: Architectural Book Pub. Co., 1946, 1; The Mount Vernon Ladies Association has shared more recent scholarship regarding the wallpapers that Washington chose, see: Deborah Farthing, "MVLAE Early Refurnishing Efforts: The Yellow Room," George Washington's Mount Vernon, <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/mvla-early-refurnishing-efforts-the-yellow-room/>; "High Fashion for the Blue Room: French Wallpaper," George Washington's Mount Vernon, <https://www.mountvernon.org/blog/2017/07/high-fashion-for-the-blue-room-french-wallpaper>.

flocked wallpapers. Asian wallpapers were a luxury commodity in the late eighteenth century and the receipt indicates that Washington owned at least two. The ‘chintz’ Washington purchased refers to the popular Indian export printed-cotton textiles. Chinese wallpapers were misnomered “Indian” in the eighteenth century.¹⁵⁹ Records known of today also indicate that Washington also ordered “plain papers” for Mount Vernon.¹⁶⁰ Whether or not McClelland was aware of this, she chose only wallpapers with designs for Mount Vernon. McClelland worked for the Mount Vernon Ladies Association throughout the 1940s and took meticulous care to ensure that all the wallpaper she provided were eighteenth-century designs and would be appropriate to when Washington lived there.¹⁶¹

Throughout her involvement at Mount Vernon, McClelland changed wallpapers to be more period-accurate when new scholarship called for it. By 1934 she was already changing her choices from 1926.¹⁶² In the 1940s, she worked with Herbert A. Claibore, an architect specializing in eighteenth-century restorations to examine paint and wallpaper layers.¹⁶³ These early paint analyses were instrumental in determining wallpaper colors for each room. While McClelland could not be sure of the exact wallpapers used by Washington, she knew the dates, colors, and room locations. She did have to make judgments, however. The paint-chip analysis revealed that the Yellow Room, in fact, had green paint on its woodwork leading her to assume that given the room’s name, the rest of the room, and therefore the wallpaper, was mostly yellow.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 101.

¹⁶⁰ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 125.

¹⁶¹ Davis et al., “Mount Vernon Wall-Papers,” 66.

¹⁶² Preston, “Decorating History, from Wanamaker’s to the Metropolitan,” 61.

¹⁶³ McClelland, “Mount Vernon Wallpapers,” 2.

¹⁶⁴ McClelland, “Mount Vernon Wallpapers,” 2.

Washington wrote in his diary on September 7, 1786, about hanging an English wallpaper in the Yellow Room. Thus, McClelland used a fragment of the *Leopard Yellow* with the George III tax stamp to carefully reproduce for the Yellow Bedroom (Fig. 18).¹⁶⁵ This fragment appears to be the same design as the leopard wallpaper she sold to du Pont a few years earlier. McClelland's decision to use *Leopard* at Mount Vernon was however not solely based on its historical appropriateness. McClelland's eye as a decorator influenced the choice as she wrote that she believed the yellow, gray, and greens in the wallpaper "harmonized delightfully with the green woodwork."¹⁶⁶ This is a common theme seen in her future work at the Morris Jumel Mansion and Brompton when McClelland led the redecoration projects.

In the Blue Bedroom, Nancy McClelland, Inc. reproduced a wallpaper following the suggestion of Annie Jennings, a Vice-Regent of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association (Fig. 20). Jennings was also a board member of the Glebe House Museum, restored in 1923 and opening to the public in 1925, in Southbury, Connecticut, which owned a fragment of eighteenth-century wallpaper, found above a doorway.¹⁶⁷ Later strategically dubbed *Mount Vernon* to stimulate further sales, the selvage of this wallpaper also attributes the design to the Glebe House. Nancy McClelland, Inc. reproduced various wallpapers based on fragments found in similar New England homes of the colonial era, many of which are featured in *Re-creating Old American Designs in Wall Paper*. The *Mount Vernon* wallpaper simulates stencil work, with equal width salmon-colored stripes of alternating designs on a cream ground. One strip has a small

¹⁶⁵ Davis et al., "Mount Vernon Wall-Papers," 66.

¹⁶⁶ McClelland, "Mount Vernon Wallpapers," 2.

¹⁶⁷ McClelland, "Mount Vernon Wallpapers," 3-4.

design with squares and dots while the other features a large pineapple and foliage drop repeat pattern with a lace-like border. The decision to hang this particular wallpaper was not solely McClelland's idea, yet it still was an appropriate choice for evoking the style of an eighteenth-century room. McClelland chose another reproduction wallpaper from her firm for the Lafayette Bedroom, *Cenelle* (Figs. 21, 22). This paper features medallions with floral clusters.¹⁶⁸ The medallions alternate between circles or oblong shapes mimicking eighteenth-century scrollwork. A small white geometric design fills the ground between the medallions.

McClelland used two Robert Caillard wallpapers at Mount Vernon, likely from the archive owned by Mauny. Like McClelland, Caillard collected wallpaper fragments for his personal archive and sometimes used them for reproductions.¹⁶⁹ In George Washington Parke Custis' room, McClelland chose a French hand-blocked paper called *Pillement*, likely meant to reference Washington's "India figured paper" (Fig. 23). "India figures" could be used to reference any chinoiserie design during the eighteenth century.¹⁷⁰ This c.1928 wallpaper was made by Caillard and distributed in the United States by McClelland. Eighteenth-century French designer Jean-Baptiste Pillement was known for his chinoiserie designs, which share his name today. This example of a Pillement design differs from a typical Pillement design which shows latticework garden structures surrounded by dragonflies, peacocks, and flowers. In *Wallpapers Old and New*, McClelland describes *Pillement* as "made with delicate flower and leaf designs on gray-

¹⁶⁸ *Sidewall, Cenelle, 1922–30*; Manufactured by Nancy McClelland (American, b. 1877–1959); France; Block-Printed Paper; 68.5 x 61 Cm (26 15/16 x 24 in.); Gift of Mount Vernon Ladies' Association; 1946-54-3 n.d., Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

¹⁶⁹ Mauny continued to print Caillard's wallpapers after his death in 1936.

¹⁷⁰ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 103.

green or pale blue ground. Good deal of rose in the flowers.”¹⁷¹ Caillard’s *Pillement* has a cream ground with green, salmon, lavender, and brown floral bunches. In a second child’s bedroom, McClelland sought to hang an example of the ‘crimson emboss paper’. She thus chose *Carnation* to be hung in Nellie Custis’ room (Fig. 24). *Carnation* has a similar color palette to *Pillement*.¹⁷² With a cream ground, the paper has a tree of life motif adorned with pink carnations along with other purple and blue flowers. Reproduced from a printed textile, McClelland noted that the paper was partly hand-blocked and partly colored by hand with a brush.¹⁷³

Following the installation of new wallpapers for the bedrooms, McClelland pointed out that two wallpapers on the first floor, one in the room where Washington died and the other in the entrance hall, were styles that dated to after Washington’s time. A 1947 letter to Worth Bailey of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association even referenced the “terrible paper” in the entrance hall.¹⁷⁴ McClelland often made suggestions to historic homes following her formal engagement there. A handwritten note by McClelland on this letter reads “Mrs Coolidge purchased 100 rolls of Providence Paper,” suggesting the Mount Vernon Ladies Association purchased *Providence* as a replacement. However, it is not known if that paper was ever actually used by the Mount Vernon Ladies Association and there is no photographic evidence of it.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ McClelland, *Wall-Papers Old and New*, 32.

¹⁷² *Sidewall, Carnation*, 1922–30; Manufactured by Nancy McClelland (American, b. 1877–1959); France; Block-Printed Paper; 103 x 76 Cm (40 9/16 x 29 15/16 in.); Gift of Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association; 1946-54-7, n.d., Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

¹⁷³ Davis et al., “Mount Vernon Wall-Papers,” 66.

¹⁷⁴ Nancy McClelland, “Letter to Mr. Worth Bailey, The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, of the Union, Mount Vernon, Virginia,” July 16, 1947. Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

¹⁷⁵ McClelland, “Letter to Mr. Worth Bailey”

Collectors and Museums

Preferences between antique papers and modern reproductions are the primary differences between what McClelland sold to collectors in contrast to the Mount Vernon Ladies Association. McClelland's collector clients inherently cared about displaying original antique wallpapers. And yet, both Webb and du Pont used some of McClelland's reproductions, a testament to the high quality of her firm's reproduction work.

McClelland's reproduction wallpapers evoked the past with an authenticity derived from the eighteenth-century printing techniques. Her work with collectors like Webb and du Pont who were trying to recreate "the spirit of olden times in their houses", offered a different challenge as they were not always referencing a specific history. The museums that she worked with, on the other hand, attempted to recreate specific moments in time. Further, she knew her association with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation bolstered her reputation as an authoritative source for historic reproductions and she ensured that her work was advertised. Her choice to display the Williamsburg reproduction wallpapers at the Chicago exhibit also reinforces that she was eager to offer historic styles to the general public. Finally, her work for the Mount Vernon Ladies Association shows how she acknowledged historic documentation when it was available to her. As chapter four explains, most of McClelland's period decorating projects, however, compelled her to rely on her general knowledge of historic decorating as no primary sources were presented to her.

Chapter 4: Historic Decorating Projects

In the mid-1940s, McClelland led the redecorating projects of two public historic homes. In 1945, the Morris Jumel Mansion in New York City, enlisted McClelland to redecorate the two-story, eighteenth-century house, today a public museum managed by the Historic House Trust of New York. The following year, 1946, the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia, engaged McClelland to redecorate Brompton, an early nineteenth-century home now serving as the University President's primary residence. Each project presented McClelland with a unique set of decorating challenges. While she was concerned with historicism at each site, McClelland ultimately sought to decorate and furnish the homes using modern decorating standards.

McClelland's work within the realm of historic restoration and decorating reveals her as a product of her time. It would be decades before scholars articulated an awareness that Colonial Revival interiors were in fact a twentieth-century interpretation of eighteenth-century spaces. This is important to understand when considering McClelland's use of wallpaper in her period decorating projects as the concept and tenets of historic restoration were different from today's standards. She used the little archival evidence that was available about the home she was decorating, as seen at Mount Vernon, however, letters, inventories, and other period sources were often scant. This resulted in decorating rooms so that they had the "air" of the eighteenth or nineteenth century. Primary source documents from the Nancy McClelland Archive at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, and her published writings about her projects are both

integral to understanding why and how McClelland used historic and reproduction wallpapers in the Morris Jumel Mansion and Brompton.

Morris Jumel Mansion History

Completed in 1765 as a summer house for British Colonel Roger Morris and his American wife Mary Philipse, the Morris-Jumel Mansion was known among contemporary locals as “Mount Morris.” Sitting on the highest point in Manhattan, Mount Morris offered views of New Jersey, Connecticut, and New York Harbor. Approximately 135 acres at the time, the estate stretched from the Harlem to Hudson Rivers (now 155th and 165th streets). Morris came to colonial America from England at the age of 18 with a Captaincy commission in the British army.¹⁷⁶ A member of the prominent Philipse family of colonial New York, McClelland described Mary as “fabulously wealthy” and “the great heiress of the Hudson River.”¹⁷⁷ Little is known about how the Morrises decorated Mount Morris during their residency. Additionally, Mount Morris was only the couple’s summer home, maintaining a permanent residence eleven miles away on the fashionable Whitehall Street in New York City. Because of Morris’ English upbringing and Philipse’s wealth, the house was likely furnished with many imported English goods.

The Morrises fled the colonies for England in 1776 after occupying the home for only ten years.¹⁷⁸ The house sat abandoned for only a few months before George Washington and his officers set up headquarters at Mount Morris from September 14 - October 21, 1776. Following the American Revolution, the mansion traded hands

¹⁷⁶ John Kent Tilton, “Roger Morris Jumel Mansion,” Department of Parks, City of New York 1949, 4.

¹⁷⁷ American Broadcasting Company, Inc., “‘Opportunity Time’ with Nancy McClelland.”

¹⁷⁸ American Broadcasting Company, Inc., “‘Opportunity Time’ with Nancy McClelland.”

multiple times following until 1810, when Eliza and Stephen Jumel purchased Mount Morris for \$10,000 with plans to restore and redecorate the house. Stephen was a merchant who came to New York from the south of France. He married Eliza, a poor woman from Rhode Island once described as a “beautiful, devastating woman.”¹⁷⁹ Many people in New York society believed Eliza did not mourn her first husband long enough before remarrying; this caused a reluctance amongst society members to accept Eliza.¹⁸⁰ The Jumels became infamous in New York society as they sought to restore the grand house; they hoped that their stately, grand house would entice society members to visit. Using her own money, Eliza updated the home in the latest fashions of the early nineteenth century.¹⁸¹ Stephen also actively corresponded with French merchants about importing goods for the house, allegedly even sending a fragment of wallpaper found in Washington’s council chamber to be reproduced in France.¹⁸²

Throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the house, again, traded hands multiple times. In 1903 the City of New York purchased the mansion for \$235,000. The city intended to tear down the home but “a group of patriotic women,” led by Mrs. Samuel J. Kramer, petitioned to save the house.¹⁸³ Four local chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution formed the Washington Headquarters’ Association and requested to maintain it as the Roger Morris-Jumel Mansion, opening as a historic house museum in 1907.¹⁸⁴ The house has served as an important and celebrated landmark in the

¹⁷⁹ American Broadcasting Company, Inc., “‘Opportunity Time’ with Nancy McClelland.”

¹⁸⁰ Mary Mendendall Perkins, “Where Washington Loved---and Lost: The Morris-Jumel Mansion, the Most Historic House in New York City.” *Los Angeles Times*. February 22, 1925, sec. K4.

¹⁸¹ Tilton, “Roger Morris Jumel Mansion,” 8.

¹⁸² “Morris Jumel History Booklet.” Undated revised edition of a booklet 1908. Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

¹⁸³ Tilton, “Roger Morris Jumel Mansion,” 10.

¹⁸⁴ American Broadcasting Company, Inc., “‘Opportunity Time’ with Nancy McClelland.”

Harlem neighborhood. Duke Ellington once referred to the home as “the jewel in the crown of Sugar Hill.” In 1966, the house was added to the National Register of Historic Places then in 1967, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designated it as an Individual Landmark and Interior Landmark.¹⁸⁵

McClelland’s Restoration

After the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) acquired the mansion, McClelland led the restoration over a six-month period from 1945-1946. In a lecture given to the National Council for Historic Preservation, McClelland said she was brought on to the project because of its complexity and the DAR’s inability to “cope with its complicated background.”¹⁸⁶ After its completion, she recalled, “it was the most fascinating and interesting job I’ve ever done in my whole life.”¹⁸⁷ The 1945-1946 “Report of the Board of the Directors to the Members of the Washington Headquarters Association” details McClelland’s work. Stating the goal of the restoration was “to tell the story of this stately Georgian Mansion and the people who lived there,” McClelland worked with the Board of Directors to create a plan.¹⁸⁸ This was a difficult task because, as McClelland remarked, restoring homes with multiple owners were “so crowded with different personalities that it is almost impossible to restore them so that they will mirror faithfully the life they have led.”¹⁸⁹ In order to dedicate space to the mansion’s various

¹⁸⁵ Morris-Jumel Mansion. “History of the Morris- Jumel Mansion.” Accessed March 2, 2021. <https://www.morrisjumel.org/history>.

¹⁸⁶ Nancy McClelland, “Notes for Speech at Dinner in Washington of National Council for Historic Preservation.” November 4, 1948. Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

¹⁸⁷ American Broadcasting Company, Inc., “‘Opportunity Time’ with Nancy McClelland.”

¹⁸⁸ “The Report of the Board of Directors to the Members of The Washington Headquarters Association,” 1945- 1946. Morris-Jumel Mansion.

¹⁸⁹ “Nancy McClelland Speech Given in Washington,” n.d. Nancy McClelland Archives, 2.

residents, she chose to assign the first floor to the Morrises and the second floor to the Jumels.¹⁹⁰ Later, she remarked that she “felt as if we were besieged by the ghosts of all the various people who had lived there, when we started work.”¹⁹¹

The division of the house also dictated the appropriate furnishing styles for each floor.¹⁹² The first floor represented colonial and early America (1765-1800). It was furnished with the types of objects the Philipses may have owned before fleeing the colonies. It also included a room dedicated to Washington’s stay at the mansion. A painting of Eliza Jumel hung above the staircase, leading visitors to the second level representing a post-revolutionary America (1810-1865). The decor upstairs is Empire-style; The strong French influence reflects Eliza’s transformation of the house. McClelland tried to capture the spirit of the Morrises and the Jumels through her restoration, and she acknowledged that she did not know specifically how the Morrises or Jumels decorated.¹⁹³

McClelland’s Wallpapers at the Morris Jumel Mansion

An undated document in the Morris-Jumel Mansion’s archive lists gifts given to the museum during McClelland’s redecoration. Probably created prior to the project’s completion, it includes three of the wallpapers that McClelland donated to the mansion. All printed by Nancy McClelland, Inc., they hung in the Entry Hall, the Toy Room, and Madame Jumel’s Bedroom. Interestingly, all three wallpapers were screen-printed, not

¹⁹⁰ American Broadcasting Company, Inc., “‘Opportunity Time’ with Nancy McClelland.”

¹⁹¹ “Nancy McClelland Speech Given in Washington.”

¹⁹² Eugenia Sheppard, “Jumel Mansion Displays Newly Edited Rooms: Redecorating, Still Going On, Shown to Public at the Annual May Party Fine Old Home Regains Its Beauty.” *New York Herald Tribune* (1926-1962). June 26, 1945.

¹⁹³ McClelland, “Notes for Speech at Dinner in Washington of National Council for Historic Preservation.”

block-printed like the majority of Nancy McClelland, Inc. wallpaper. This may have been done as a cost-saving effort. The Hall wallpaper, titled *L'Ecureuil*, is based on a French wallpaper.¹⁹⁴ McClelland's example is a grey neoclassical arabesque wallpaper featuring brown urns, fauna, and floral motifs (Fig. 25).¹⁹⁵ *Wall-papers Old and New* included *L'Ecureuil* and Nancy McClelland, Inc. offered it in two additional colorways: rose on a cream ground, or mulberry on a pale greenish ground. Its name comes from the French word for squirrels, l'ecureuil, which are depicted sitting on the branches.¹⁹⁶ Additionally, in *Wall-papers Old and New*, *L'Ecureuil* is presented as having a border around each panel which is not seen in the Morris Jumel example.¹⁹⁷ This wallpaper choice is meant to reflect a common colonial wallpaper that the Morrises could have used. However, the Morrises likely would have chosen an English wallpaper due to their loyalist ties, and to the reigning popularity of English wallpapers in the colonies through the 1780s.¹⁹⁸ While a twenty-first century historian might ascribe this as an ill-informed choice, McClelland often used French and English decorative arts interchangeably in her practice leading her to see this as a suitable wallpaper pattern.

Unlike *L'Ecureuil*, McClelland's choice for the Toy Room does not seem to have been a historically informed decision, the room's title itself an anachronistic application adopted by the DAR and McClelland. McClelland chose a wallpaper titled *Chanson Vieux Temps*, produced in partnership with Impressions du Landy between 1930-1937.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ McClelland, "Partial Manuscript about 19th Century French Styles," 2.

¹⁹⁵ Nancy McClelland, Inc. Ecurcuil, Sidewall. 1945-1950. Wallpaper, 96.5x76.5 cm. Gift of Morris-Jumel Mansion; Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

¹⁹⁶ McClelland, *Wall-Papers Old and New*, 11.

¹⁹⁷ McClelland, *Wall-Papers Old and New*, 11.

¹⁹⁸ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 89.

¹⁹⁹ Impressions du Landy, France. Sidewall, Chansons Vieux Temps. 1937 1930. Printed from engraved metal plates, 80 x 83.5 cm (31 1/2 x 32 7/8 in.). Gift of Nancy McClelland; 1946-20-5, Cooper Hewitt,

Printed using engraved metal plates on a yellow-cream-colored background, this wallpaper features fanciful scenes from French nursery stories. The figures and buildings are printed in black, light blue, or salmon, and show children playing in the French countryside, riders on horses, and townspeople dancing (Fig. 26). Nursery rhyme phrases interspersed throughout the imagery include playful descriptions such as “On the Avignon Bridge, we dance, we dance,” or “There was a Sheppardess [sic] who keeps her sheep.” Wallpapers featuring many small scenes were popular in the nineteenth century, however, there are no documentary or physical records that the Jumels ever had wallpaper like this in the mansion.²⁰⁰ Further, nursery wallpapers were introduced to the market in the 1850s but did not gain popularity until the end of the nineteenth century.²⁰¹ Childhood was perceived differently prior to the Victorian era, and it was not common to have decorative objects such as nursery wallpapers, dedicated for child use. The earliest nursery wallpapers often showed groups of figures with captions resembling an illustrated children’s book, similar to *Chanson Vieux Temps*.²⁰² By the 1940s, the market for children’s wallpaper had grown with a vast array of offerings. McClelland’s choice in wallpaper for the Toy Room is therefore a more of a reflection of a child’s bedroom in the 1940s (as Figure 26 reveals) and not representative of anything that the Jumels may have even had, despite one contemporary critic citing it as an “authentic backing.”²⁰³ It is apparent that this wallpaper resonated with contemporary audiences and trends, however,

Smithsonian Design Museum.

²⁰⁰ Zoë Hendon, *Wallpaper*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018, 15.; Shiloh Holley, Conversation about the Morris Jumel Mansion, Zoom, June 22, 2021.

²⁰¹ Colin White, *The World of the Nursery*, New York: Dutton, 1984, 60–65.

²⁰² White, *The World of the Nursery*, 60.

²⁰³ Eugenia Sheppard, “Jumel Mansion Completes Its Re-Editing Job: After 180 Years of Ups and Downs, House Achieves New Heights of Beauty ... Mansion Restored to Its Old Elegance,” *New York Herald Tribune (1926-1962)*, October 9, 1945.

it is unclear why McClelland chose this wallpaper. She authored *The Young Decorators*, a book for children which offered ideas about how one might decorate their own bedroom. She also did an interview with *The Girl's Youth Companion* in 1929, where she offered recommendations for how to choose new decorations on a budget. She did not suggest nursery wallpapers in either of those instances, but rather specifically suggested wallpaper in a "cheerful design."²⁰⁴ *Chansons Vieux Temps* is an example of a wallpaper that McClelland may have chosen to use in her practice when designing a room for a child. But, no examples of nursery wallpaper printed exclusively by Nancy McClelland, Inc. are known, and this appears to be the only wallpaper her firm produced with Impression du Landy.

Madame Jumel's bedroom better captures the spirit of how the Jumel's would have decorated as it reflects her Francophile interests and aspirations. The room is filled with French furniture complemented by an Empire-style drapery wallpaper, a style popularized by Napoleon. McClelland's firm reproduced this wallpaper, *Josephine*, from a nineteenth-century Dufour et Cie. example that McClelland found, likely during one of her trips to Europe (Fig. 27). Why McClelland decided to change the colors of this wallpaper from its original pink colorway is unknown. Identical wallpapers in the Cooper Hewitt's collection show the wallpaper in its original pink colorway as well as brown.²⁰⁵ The example in Madame Jumel's bedroom has a light grey-violet background with ivory

²⁰⁴ "The G.Y.C.: Making a Room to Live In An Interview with Nancy McClelland Budgets and Lists What Kind of Wall Paper? Keep the Floors Dark," *The Youth's Companion* (1827-1929); Boston (Boston, United States, Boston: Perry Mason Co., March 1929).

²⁰⁵ *Sidewall, Josephine*. 1800-1810. Block printed on handmade paper. Gift of The Museum at The Fashion Institute of Technology; 1998-75-95. Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.; *Sidewall, Josephine*. 1820-1840. Block printed on handmade paper. Gift of Ronald S. Kane; 1978-162-2-a/g. Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

lace and a green band border trimmed with black lace.²⁰⁶ A sample of this wallpaper and its matching border can be found in the Cooper Hewitt's collection today.²⁰⁷ French wallpapers became increasingly popular in the early nineteenth century as French manufacturing entered into the golden age of French wallpaper.²⁰⁸ McClelland chose the wallpaper since it is typical of a Napoleonic-era wallpaper and it is possible that the Jumels could have chosen a wallpaper similar to *Josephine*.²⁰⁹

A fourth Nancy McClelland, Inc. wallpaper, not included in the list of gifts previously mentioned, was also hung in the mansion during her redecoration. In 1949, John Kent Tilton, former Director of the Scalamandré Museum of Textiles, published a pamphlet about the mansion and its 1946 restoration, though he does not name McClelland.²¹⁰ Through examining the wallpapers photographed and described by Tilton, then cross-referencing with wallpaper samples in the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum's collection, one additional wallpaper called *Roses* from Nancy McClelland, Inc. was identified. This wallpaper was also noted by McClelland in an undated expense list.²¹¹ Inspired by a Louis XV painted canvas, McClelland created this gray-blue wallpaper with salmon and mauve roses connected by green foliage and hung it in the octagonal drawing room on the first floor.²¹² A period-appropriate choice for the first

²⁰⁶ Tilton, "Roger Morris Jumel Mansion," 17.

²⁰⁷ Nancy McClelland, Inc. Sidewall, Josephine. 1940. Screen-printed paper, 53 x 56 cm (20 7/8 x 22 1/16 in.). Gift of Miss Nancy V. McClelland; 1946-20-2, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

²⁰⁸ Richard Nylander, *Wallpapers for Historic Buildings: A Guide to Selecting Reproduction Wallpapers*. Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1983, 34.

²⁰⁹ McClelland, "Partial Manuscript about 19th Century French Styles," 2.

²¹⁰ "Textile Designs Traced to Yore." *The New York Times*, October 8, 1956, sec. Archives.

²¹¹ "Expenses - Restoration Jumel Mansion." n.d. Nancy McClelland File, Morris-Jumel Mansion Archives.

²¹² Tilton, "Roger Morris Jumel Mansion," 14; McClelland, "Partial Manuscript about 19th Century French Styles." *Sidewall, Roses*. 1945-1950. Screen printed, 165 x 76 cm (64 15/16 x 29 15/16 in.). Gift of Morris-Jumel Mansion, 1999-37-1. Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

floor of the mansion, this wallpaper is similar in design to a Brunschwigs & Fils wallpaper, *Bagatelle*, suggested for interiors ranging from 1780 to 1840 in Richard Nylander's *Wallpapers for Historic Buildings*.²¹³ McClelland may have chosen this wallpaper simply because it was period-appropriate and she liked it. She even used it in her commercial decorating work (Fig. 28). An image of a Jacquemart wallpaper found in McClelland's study folder for Chapter V of *The Practical Book of Decorative Wall Treatments* is also very similar in design to *Roses*. While this wallpaper did not make it into the final copy of the book, a note on the back of the image calls the wallpaper "one of the most beautiful of Jacquemart."²¹⁴ Not an exact match for McClelland's *Roses*, it clearly appealed to McClelland and could have served as inspiration.

Other Wallpapers During McClelland's Restoration

In addition to her firm's own wallpapers, McClelland used gifts from other benefactors. Hobe Erwin, a contemporary wallpaper manufacturer, donated a blue morning glory border paper for the northwest bedroom on the second floor of the mansion used by the Jumel's adopted daughter, Mary Eliza. This wallpaper is a reproduction of a known wallpaper used by Stephen Jumel in 1810 (Fig. 29).²¹⁵ A remnant of Jumel's wallpaper found in the hall was used in the reproduction of the blue morning glories.²¹⁶ Records also indicate Brompton purchased wallpaper for the Council Room for \$90.²¹⁷ Due to a lack of photographic documentation or other records, little is

²¹³ Nylander, *Wallpapers for Historic Buildings*, 35.

²¹⁴ "Image Folder for Chapter V Stencil + Plaster Ornamentation, Decorative Wall Treatment." n.d. Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

²¹⁵ "The Report of the Board of Directors to the Members of The Washington Headquarters Association."

²¹⁶ Tilton, "Roger Morris Jumel Mansion," 18.

²¹⁷ "Expenses - Restoration Jumel Mansion."

known about this wallpaper. Finally, McClelland removed wallpaper from the stairway and upper hall and replaced it with plain off-white walls.²¹⁸ Tilton identified one panel of wallpaper hanging in the staircase, although it is unknown if it was hung during McClelland's redecoration or shortly after. This panel was a fragment of a wallpaper brought over from Paris by the Jumels.²¹⁹ In 1952, Gladys Clark, then head of the Washington Headquarters Association, Daughters of the American Revolution, donated a wallpaper matching this description to the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.²²⁰

Morris Jumel After McClelland

Following the completion of the project, McClelland wrote a letter to Clark praising the mansion's appearance and highlighting how much she enjoyed the project. As McClelland's work was limited by the museum's available funds, she included recommendations for further work once the mansion was able to financially do so. Recommendations include a Waterford glass chandelier for the dining room, a sideboard for the pantry alcove, and furniture for the "tearoom."²²¹ While these recommendations do not mention any additional wallpapers, it gives further insight into how McClelland approached her work. She warned Clark to be judicious while making future changes. "I want to accent the last two words 'right things.' Such additions cannot be just anything. They must be chosen with judgement and knowledge of the suitability."²²² Her plea for

²¹⁸ "The Report of the Board of Directors to the Members of The Washington Headquarters Association."

²¹⁹ Tilton, "Roger Morris Jumel Mansion," 16.

²²⁰ *Sidewall (France)*. 1800-1810. Block printed on joined sheets, 212.5 x 62 cm (83 11/16 x 24 7/16 in.). Gift of Gladys Voorhees Clark; 1952-70-1, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

²²¹ Nancy McClelland, "Letter to Ms. Gladys V. Clark Regarding the Morris-Jumel Mansion Restoration," October 24, 1945, Morris-Jumel Mansion, 2.

²²² McClelland, "Letter to Ms. Gladys V. Clark", 2.

thoughtful and suitable choices reflects the careful judgment McClelland brought to every endeavor. She truly believed that every wallpaper she chose for the mansion was the right choice. She clearly used the resources she had access to and rather than make concessions due to cost, she used her influence to source loans for the project from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the New York Historical Society, Museum of the City of New York, Brooklyn Museum, antique dealers Ginsburg & Levy, and more.²²³ In the years following McClelland's renovation, the Morris Jumel Mansion has undergone multiple further redecorations and revisions as new scholarship emerges. Using primary source documents to inform how spaces were furnished, museum staff and researchers have found that none of McClelland's wallpapers reflected what either the Jumels or the Morrises owned. Thus, none of McClelland's wallpapers remain in the mansion today.²²⁴

Brompton

Like the Morris Jumel Mansion, Brompton's various historic residents presented a challenge for its redecoration. In 1937, the National Park Service boasted that "no other house on the American continent is more important, or better known, in connection with American history" than Brompton, a historic home in Fredericksburg, Virginia.²²⁵ While very few historians would concur today, Brompton's illustrious past was the reason for its preservation. The University of Mary Washington acquired it in 1946 for \$71,000.²²⁶ Soon after, the school engaged McClelland to decorate and restore it as an antebellum

²²³ "Jumel Mansion Loans." n.d. Nancy McClelland File, Morris-Jumel Mansion.

²²⁴ Holley, Conversation about the Morris Jumel Mansion.

²²⁵ John W. Ball, "Old Virginia Mansion A Cocoon of History." *The Washington Post* (1923-1954). June 22, 1947, sec. Current Events National and Foreign Editorial Commentators.

²²⁶ Formerly known as the Mary Washington College, the institution was part of the University of Virginia until 1972.

mansion. Letters between McClelland and other scholars, such as the architectural historian and museum curator Fiske Kimball, indicate she was skeptical about solely viewing Brompton through its Civil War-era lens because of its long history.²²⁷ Fielding Lewis, George Washington's brother-in-law, owned the land as early as the 1730s and likely built the original four-room structure.²²⁸ Washington's tutor, Reverend James Marye purchased the land in 1821 and began expanding Brompton, adding two first-floor rooms around the time of purchase. The entrance hall and a room above it, and one-story end wings on both sides of the house were added in 1840. Shortly after, a flat roof portico was added, creating a classical Greek Revival style mansion.²²⁹ During the Civil War, the Marye family fled and the property was occupied first by Union General Ambrose Burnside, and then Confederate General Robert E. Lee when the Battle of Fredericksburg took place on Brompton's front lawn. McClelland thus believed that Brompton should be decorated as an eighteenth-century Georgian house, not a Civil War-era classical revival home as the university wanted.²³⁰ This belief is suggested through some of her wallpaper choices.

Despite a diligent search, little documentation can be found about Brompton's interiors before its 1940s restoration. Yet, the Maryes offered some inspiration for

²²⁷ Fiske Kimball (1888-1955) was an American architect, architectural historian, and director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He also led restorations of Monticello and Stratford Hall in Virginia. For more about Kimball, see Joseph Dye Lahendro, "Fiske Kimball, American Renaissance Historian" (Master of Architectural History Thesis, Charlottesville, Virginia, University of Virginia, 1982).

²²⁸ "Brompton," *Bulletin of Mary Washington College of the University of Virginia*, October 1946, 18; *Virtual Tour of Brompton*. University of Mary Washington, 2020.

²²⁹ University of Mary Washington, "Brompton," *Mary Washington College Bulletin*, no. Winter (1969-1970), 10.

²³⁰ Nancy McClelland, "Letter to Mr. Fiske Kimball," December 22, 1947, Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

McClelland despite the little documentation about their residency.²³¹ Reverend Marye's son, John Lawrence Marye, was the longest resident at Brompton in the Marye clan. He was the Mayor of Fredericksburg in 1852, a member of the Virginia State Legislature in 1860-1861, and Lieutenant Governor from 1870- 1873.²³² The positions he held in addition to owning a profitable flour mill indicate that Marye was a wealthy man. Thus, Marye likely furnished Brompton with fashionable pieces. Family records support this referencing Marye purchasing Italian marble fireplaces that the White House had rejected and importing black ivy from Westminster Abbey.²³³ The Maryes evacuated during the Civil War while the house was centerstage to battles, leaving Brompton in a precarious position.²³⁴ Its exact condition following the war is unknown, however, records indicate the house was damaged. Before the war, the estate was valued at \$20,000. Then in 1865, Marye wrote to President Andrew Johnson to petition for partial repayment as he estimated the damages from the war totaled to at least \$8,000.²³⁵ Brompton's interiors never truly recovered until McClelland came along and there is no evidence that McClelland had any records of how exactly the Maryes decorated. Complying with the wishes of the university's Board of Directors, McClelland's project aimed to reflect antebellum grandeur, while also creating a residence fit for a university president.

Before visiting the house, McClelland began working with the university President to create a furnishing plan for Brompton that had to be submitted to the

²³¹ Ball, "Old Virginia Mansion A Cocoon of History."

²³² Virginia House of Delegates Clerk's Office, "John L. Lawrence Marye Jr." House History.

²³³ Edith Whitcraft Eberhart, *The Maryes of Virginia, 1730-1985 : 1995 Supplement*. Baltimore : Gateway Press, 1995, 16.

²³⁴ Eberhart, *The Maryes of Virginia, 1730-1985*, 16.

²³⁵ Eberhart, *The Maryes of Virginia, 1730-1985*, 31.

university's Board of Directors.²³⁶ While the board considered her changes, she instructed her work crew to begin painting the walls and she started considering possible wall treatments. She consulted with respected scholars in the field such as Kimball, Joseph Downs, and R.H. Halsey to determine which wall treatments would be appropriate.²³⁷ She ultimately decided to add wallpaper to the entrance hall, the library, and the rear traverse hall. McClelland sent samples of both wallpapers for review before donating the full sets. She used *L'Ecureuil* in the rear traverse hall and *Providence House* for the library (Fig. 30).²³⁸ *Providence House*, inspired by the bandbox at Shelburne, was printed in green and beige (Fig. 31). In the Morris Jumel Mansion, *L'Ecureuil* was used in a space interpreting pre-Revolutionary America. McClelland used her wallpaper choices to balance her ideas with the Board of Directors' wishes. Thus these choices seem to be in keeping with McClelland's desire to decorate Brompton as an eighteenth-century Georgian era home instead of an antebellum one.

Her decorating expertise was evident throughout the project as she rejected ideas that she did not agree with. The Board of Directors suggested she cover the walls of both first-floor parlors with either wallpaper or textiles. McClelland however wanted to hang a long panel of a scenic wallpaper titled *Les Rives de Bosphore, or The Banks of the Bosphorus*, and she believed hanging wallpaper in all three spaces would disrupt the

²³⁶ Correspondence indicates McClelland had visited prior to 1947 but she stated she did not remember anything specific of the house.

²³⁷ Joseph Downs was an American decorative arts curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Winterthur Museum. R.H. Halsey was a noted collector and a founder of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. For an overview of Downs, see Henry Francis Du Pont, *Joseph Downs: An Appreciation and a Bibliography of His Publications*. (Portland, Maine: Athoensen Press, 1955); For an overview about Halsey and his role at the American Wing, see Peter M. Kenny, "R. T. H. Halsey: American Wing Founder and Champion of Duncan Phyfe," *Antiques (U.S.A.)* 157, no. 1 (2000): 186–91.

²³⁸ Nancy McClelland Inc., "Planning Documents for Brompton." c. 1946. Nancy McClelland Archives, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

harmony of the house (Fig. 32).²³⁹ Supporting her belief in Georgian interior decoration at Brompton, McClelland donated *Les Rives de Bosphore*, along with the two others.

While McClelland's reasoning for choosing this particular scenic wallpaper is unknown, there are some clues. Scenic wallpapers were printed in early nineteenth-century France, and Americans quickly began importing them. *Les Rives du Bosphore* was available in the United States by 1817 so it is possible that the Maryes could have owned this wallpaper or something similar. However, there is no archival, material, or visual documentation to suggest this. Further, in *Historic Wall-Papers*, McClelland had argued that scenic wallpapers were not very popular in the American antebellum South, a commonly held belief among American antiquarians and historians at the time. She noted six homes with this specific wallpaper, all of which were located in the northeast. In *Wallpaper in America*, Catherine Lynn disputed this and offered evidence that scenic wallpapers were, in fact, available in cities up and down the east coast, including Norfolk and Richmond, Virginia.²⁴⁰

Printed by Dufour et Cie. c.1816, the scenic wallpaper depicts scenes along the Bosphorus River in Istanbul, Turkey. The scenes depicted on the wallpaper would have been exotic to many Americans and westerners in the second quarter of the nineteenth-century. The section of *Les Rives de Bosphore* hung at Brompton shows water arriving via aqueduct at the city fountain.²⁴¹ The unfamiliar Islamic architecture in the background, the camels in the foreground, and the caique fishing boats on the river all

²³⁹ Nancy McClelland Inc., "Planning Documents for Brompton."

²⁴⁰ Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, 215.

²⁴¹ Denys Prache and Veronique de Bruignac-La Hougue, *Joseph Dufour: Genie Des Papier Peints*. Mare et Martin Arts, 2016, 189.

offered a fascinating glimpse into a faraway land. Joseph Dufour, owner of Dufour et Cie., published a promotional pamphlet for his first scenic wallpaper, *Les Sauvages des la Mer Pacifique*, where he disclosed who his target audience was. He intended for his wallpapers to serve a didactic purpose, to be used by mothers to teach their children history or geography. Alternatively, scenic wallpapers could be hung by a “cultivated man” who wanted decor to reflect his travels.²⁴² McClelland was well aware of Dufour’s intentions as she included a translation of this pamphlet in *Historic Wall-Papers*. Thus, she may have intentionally chosen an erudite scenic wallpaper that would reflect Brompton’s new home in a public educational institution. However, it is unknown if McClelland sought to use this particular scenic wallpaper or if she chose it because it was already in her inventory.

Wallpaper in Public View

While she was concerned with historical accuracy, McClelland tended to rely on her own knowledge of historical decorating. There is little evidence that McClelland conducted formal research prior to embarking on either of her historic decorating projects. McClelland redecorated historic properties with special concern given to capturing the spirit of the past. All of the elements chosen were only meant to create interiors that would invoke a historic feeling while still meeting the needs and expectations of a modern lifestyle. Her interiors were not historically accurate period rooms. McClelland, however, was not alone in this and others did the same. Just as du

²⁴² Joseph Dufour et compagnie, *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique, Tableau pour Décoration en Papier Peint*. Macon, France: De l’Imprimerie de Moiroux, rue Franche, 1804.; See page 403 of *Historic Wall-Papers* for McClelland’s translation of the text.

Pont was known for not letting historical accuracy disrupt a “good” interior, McClelland seems to have also done the same in some circumstances. McClelland was foremost a decorator with a strong background in antiques. While she sometimes seemed aware of primary source documentation, her choices were largely that of a decorator seeking to build her reputation and business. Other decorators such as John Fowler support the notion that this was a common practice for scholarly decorators using antiques.²⁴³

True to her belief, McClelland found most rooms suitable for wallpapering.²⁴⁴ This led to her creating an atmosphere in the Morris Jumel Mansion that was more faithful to her understanding of period decorating, albeit incorrect by today’s standards. Her wallpaper decisions at Morris Jumel reflect her decorating inclinations as she often used French and English decorative objects interchangeably. While she said the Morris Jumel Mansion presented itself as one of her most challenging commissions, Brompton seems to have presented her with issues of equal weight.

McClelland’s wallpaper choices at Brompton show her trying to capture the spirit of the past with less precision than at the Morris Jumel Mansion. This is in keeping with the wishes of the university’s Board of Directors and the fact that Brompton would be the home of the university’s president. Coupled with her belief that southern homes did not decorate with wallpaper as frequently as northern homes did in the nineteenth century, she only hung three wallpapers at Brompton. Additionally, at the Morris Jumel Mansion, McClelland appears to have had more agency in her decisions as there are no references

²⁴³ Hughes, *John Fowler: The Invention of the Country House-Style*, 30.

²⁴⁴ McClelland, *Wall-Papers Old and New*, 3.

of members from the DAR or the museum's Board of Trustees dictating any of her decisions.

Ultimately, both projects offered McClelland new ways to promote her ideas of proper decorating with wallpapers. Public tours at the Morris Jumel Mansion were instructional as visitors could see McClelland's wallpaper in a variety of spaces ranging from a drawing room to a lady's bedroom or a child's bedroom. Brompton, on the other hand, was intended to be used as a private home. Visitors to Brompton would have been limited to university students or guests of the university's president, rather than the general public. Today, both institutions are still publicly accessible however McClelland's wallpapers have been removed from the Morris Jumel Mansion and visitors will only find her wallpapers remaining at Brompton.

Conclusion

Nancy McClelland believed that the walls of a room served an important role in creating the overall atmosphere. This belief carried her through all of her work from decorating to dealing. She sold and donated wallpapers to collectors and museums, clients who sought to recreate the past, though with different objectives, budgets, aesthetic motivations, and ultimately uses in mind. Her influence and legacy may best be described in a letter from Henry Francis du Pont. In 1946 he wrote, “I never pass by my charming little hallways, not to speak the Chinese Wallpaper, without thinking of you. It really made all the difference in the character of Winterthur.”²⁴⁵ It was precisely the character of a space, or the spirit of the past, that McClelland aimed to create. As attitudes surrounding historic interiors changed throughout the twentieth century, McClelland steadfastly looked to “recreate the spirit of olden times.” This began while she staged and created interiors to stimulate sales at Au Quatrième, believing that seeing antique furniture in its proper setting would help customers visualize it in their own homes. Au Quatrième’s clients valued her aesthetic advice when choosing furnishings for their homes, which led to her establishing her own decorating firm. Once established, McClelland consistently put her wallpapers, both old and new, at the forefront of her business. She rarely missed an opportunity to advertise whether it be in books, lectures, newspapers, magazine articles, or radio broadcasts. Promotional marketing booklets like *Wall-Papers Old and New: Exclusive Designs*, simultaneously gave her the opportunity to advertise and offer decorating advice for using wallpaper.

²⁴⁵ “Correspondence between H.F. Du Pont and Nancy McClelland, Inc.”

Her scholarly pursuit of the production history and use of eighteenth-century wallpaper enriched how she used them in her practice particularly in both the homes of collectors and historic house museums. McClelland's scholarship and practical application of wallpaper raised its status to that of 'art' objects, thereby elevating its commercial and aesthetic value. She believed that "the art of using wall-paper is a special study" and one to which she devoted her life.²⁴⁶ At the time of its release, she knew that *Historic Wall-Papers* (1924) was an authoritative study on the history of wallpaper production and use in England, France, and America. Spending three years researching and writing for *Historic Wall-Papers*, her travels and the hundreds of photographs of wallpapers that she amassed are a testament to her dedication to the special study for which she was recognized by her peers across various fields.

When McClelland began her creative leadership and management of Au Quatrième, American consumers considered French and English styles the most popular. Recognizing its potential appeal to consumers, she also included colonial American displays at Au Quatrième by 1918, part of a growing effort to strengthen the reputation of early American styles consisting of English Georgian and post-Revolutionary Federal era and Empire style decorative arts. Her interest in early American interiors and wallpapers appears to have grown and developed throughout her career as she also responded to market demands. Her creation of *The Inauguration of Washington* wallpaper for the two-hundredth anniversary of Washington's birth and its subsequent display in museums and commercial exhibitions promoted her work and interest. *Re-Creating Old American Designs in Wall Paper* (1941) specifically highlighted her early American reproductions

²⁴⁶ McClelland, *Wall-Papers Old and New*, 3.

and made a plea for their continued use. She wrote that these wallpapers were “good in our grand-mother’s day, and they will be good for generations to come.”²⁴⁷ McClelland’s published works established her as an authority on wallpaper, making her an appealing dealer for collectors.

Wealthy male and female collectors in the 1920s turned to McClelland as a source for historic wallpapers to be hung as backgrounds to their burgeoning collections of early American decorative arts. Her reputation and expertise were likely why collectors chose to work with her. She worked with Electra Havemeyer Webb, a collector who created modern yet whimsical spaces using American antiques, not period rooms, in her home. McClelland provided both historic wallpapers and reproductions that would suit Webb’s historically-inspired rooms. Similarly, at Brompton McClelland used historic furnishings to create livable spaces that were reminiscent of the past, not strict period rooms.

Alternatively, McClelland responded to the higher degree of historical attention and accuracy demanded by Henry Francis du Pont, the Regents of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, and the DAR Chapter operating the Morris Jumel Mansion. As many collectors value historical documentation, McClelland produced background histories and provenances about some of the wallpapers that she found for Webb and du Pont. Du Pont proved to be the most discerning client as he created his own version of idealized period rooms at Winterthur. McClelland became a trusted dealer and consultant for him, and he valued her opinion in many instances regarding appropriate wallpaper use. Aware of spaces where he wanted to hang wallpaper, she suggested wallpapers that would be both aesthetically and historically appropriate and of a high-enough caliber to suit du Pont’s

²⁴⁷ Nancy McClelland, Inc., *Re-Creating Old American Designs in Wall Paper*, 1941, 1.

preferences. McClelland's relationship with Webb also reveals another way that McClelland worked with collectors. While it is unknown if Webb or McClelland made the suggestions, McClelland used bandboxes in Webb's collection as inspiration for her firm's reproductions. Later, she used some of those reproductions in historic homes.

Historic homes looking to redecorate in the early twentieth century also turned to McClelland for her reproduction wallpapers. Similar to what she wrote about her findings in *Historic Wall-Papers*, McClelland's work with the clients preserving and interpreting historic homes is often a reflection of what she found, and what she failed to find.²⁴⁸

McClelland decorated both Mount Vernon and the Morris Jumel Mansion to reference specific moments in their histories. At Mount Vernon McClelland made decorating choices based on documentation that the museum provided at the time about the wallpapers Washington had purchased in the eighteenth century. However, neither the Morris Jumel Mansion nor Brompton provided primary sources to McClelland and there is no evidence that she sought out such documentary evidence about what any historic residents of the respective homes chose to purchase or display. At the Morris Jumel Mansion and at Brompton, McClelland relied solely on her self-taught expertise and knowledge of decorating and used reproduction wallpapers to create the backdrops of colonial, early republic, and Civil War-era interiors. This resulted in instances of her using the same wallpapers at the Morris Jumel Mansion and Brompton despite each site representing different periods in history. Specifically, a wallpaper like *L'Ecureuil* represented a Revolutionary-era, eighteenth-century space at the Morris Jumel Mansion and a mid-nineteenth-century space at Brompton. McClelland's choices at Brompton

²⁴⁸ McClelland, *Historic Wall-Papers*, 14.

reflect her smallest adherence to historical accuracy and she even disregarded findings from her own research, as seen in her installation of the *Les Rives de Bosphore* in Brompton's entry hall.

All of these projects illuminate different ways McClelland could use wallpapers in period decorating. She built relationships with prominent and well-connected collectors that influenced how she provided her expertise in later projects and fueled future sales. As a dealer, she could provide provenances and make suggestions for coveted rare and thus costly wallpapers to her most wealthy private clients. In her period decorating, she used wallpapers to create spaces that were reminiscent of the past using her knowledge of historic interiors. Yet, no role ever surpassed her role as a decorator. Instead, her work as a dealer and historian influenced her work as a decorator. McClelland's decisions in her period decorating projects and as a dealer show that her role as a decorator eclipsed any other role when choosing wallpapers.

Nancy McClelland is a pioneering, inimitable historical figure. In the first half of the twentieth century, she emerged as a successful woman entrepreneur who flourished due to her intrinsic curiosity and passion for wallpaper history and historic interiors; her focus and inquisitiveness led to her authoring an influential study of wallpaper history praised by other experts, all while securing long-term relationships with wealthy clients. She was a collector of historic wallpapers as evidenced by her large personal collection. She was a scholar of historic wallpaper, period decorating practices, and early American furniture as evidenced by her articles, books, and decorating practice. Simultaneously, she applied her studies to commercial use at Au Quatrième and then her own firm, Nancy McClelland, Inc. Collectors, museums, architects, and decorators all recognized

McClelland's talent and contributions to many fields. It, therefore, is impossible to look at McClelland as anything other than a multifaceted professional. Above all, her experience as an informally trained decorator seems to have informed most of her decisions. She worked tirelessly throughout her entire life, retiring at age 79, to promote and elevate the use and study of wallpaper. Her work was impactful as scholars today still regard her writing as an authoritative source and the interiors she created are a representation of some of the best decorating practices and Colonial Revival spaces of the first half of the twentieth century. McClelland is remembered today for her contributions across many fields, as there is no other decorator with a comparable legacy.

Figures



Figure 1. Nancy Vincent McClelland. Undated photograph. Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Wallpaper Department Research Files.



Figure 2. Wallpaper Showroom at Nancy McClelland, Inc (New York City, New York), undated. Photographed by General Photographic Service, New York. Photos © Nancy McClelland Archive, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.



Figure 4. "Old Peck Homestead" sidewall 1952. Manufactured by Nancy McClelland, Inc., New York, NY, 1952, screen-printed on paper; H 27 3/16 x W 21 5/8 in. Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. Gift of Thomas Strahan Company; 1976-46-45.



Figure 5. Sidewall (American), ca. 1800; block printed on handmade paper, H 12 3/16 x W 24 in. Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. Gift of The Museum at The Fashion Institute of Technology, acc. No. 1998-75-144



Figure 6. George Washington In Masonic Triangle, 1930-1950. Nancy McClelland, Inc. Screen-print on paper. 23 1/4 x 22 in. Historic New England.

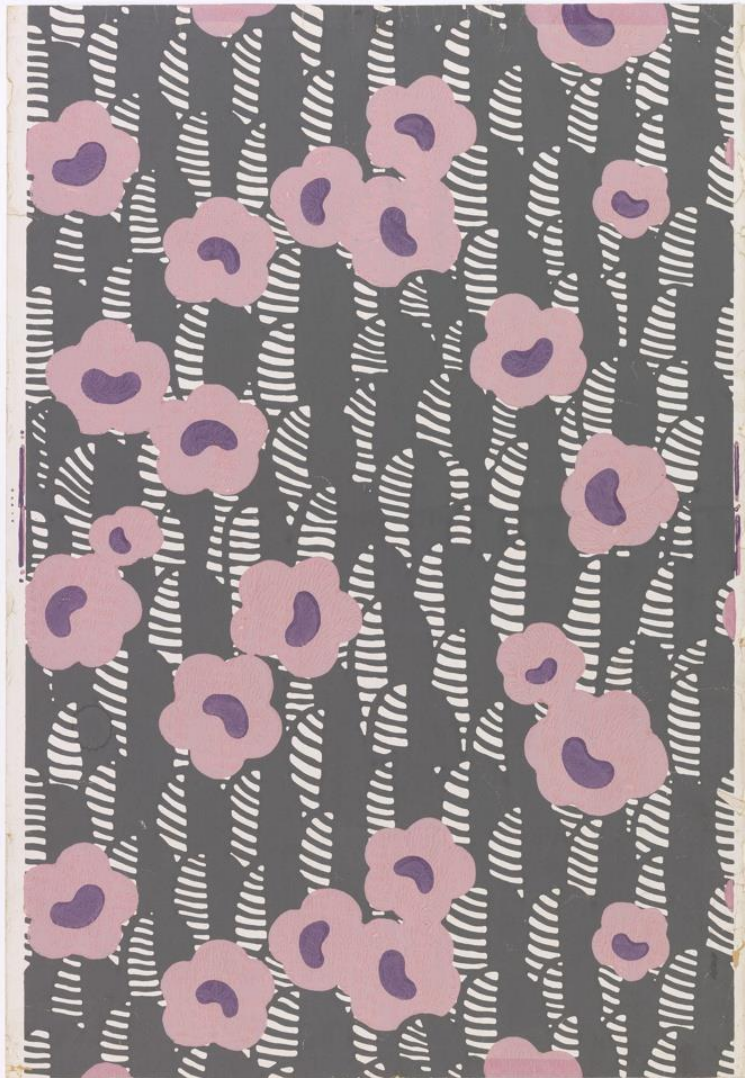


Figure 7. Sidewall, Designed by René Crevel (French, 1900–1935), distributed by Nancy McClelland, Inc.; block-printed paper; H 28 9/16 x W 19 11/16 in. Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, Gift of Nancy McClelland; 1945-3-4.



Figure 8. "Colonial Medallion" Sidewall. Produced by M.H. Birge & Sons Co. (American) ca. 1920, machine-printed. H 31 1/8 x W 19 1/2 in. Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, acc No. 1945-12-21.



Figure 9. "Napoleon at Arcola Bridge" wallpaper pattern , manufactured by Dufour et Leroy, Paris, France, ca. 1830. Retailed by Nancy McClelland, Inc., New York, NY, in 1922 and installed in the formal living room of the Brick House at Shelburne Museum in Shelburne, Vermont. Courtesy of Shelburne Museum



Figure 10. “Feathers” wallpaper pattern, manufactured and retailed by Nancy McClelland, Inc., 1936- 1938 and installed in the Entrance Hall of the Brick House. 21st century photograph. Image courtesy of Shelburne Museum.



Figure 11. Eighteenth-century Chinese Export Wallpaper in the China Trade Room of Beauport. David Bohl, Beauport, Gloucester, Massachusetts. Courtesy of Historic New England Properties Photographic Collection.



Figure 12. Stereograph of the Chinese wallpaper in the Chinese Parlor at the Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library. Robert Frost, 1938. Courtesy, The Winterthur Archives.



Figure 13. "Leopard" wall fragment. Printed in England, 1765- 1780, wood-blocked on laid paper, H 15.875 x W 6.5 in. Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, acc No. 1969.1100.003.



Figure 14. "Leopard" Sidewall. Designed and retailed by Nancy McClelland, Inc, 1922-1930. Block-printed paper, H 69.5 x W 60.5 cm. Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, Gift of Nancy McClelland, acc No. 1947-76-1.



Figure 15. Stereograph *Monuments of Paris* in the Library Cross Hall at the Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library. Robert Frost, 1938. Courtesy of The Winterthur Archives.



Figure 16. *The Perles* Wallpaper sample sent to Henry Francis du Pont for review by Nancy McClelland, inc. Photos © Nancy McClelland Archive, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.



Figure 17. "Blue Hortensia" wallpaper pattern, printed in England, 1760-1790, wood-blocked on laid paper. Retailed by Nancy McClelland, Inc., in 1934 and installed in Cecil Hall of Winterthur, in Winterthur, Delaware. 1760-1790, England. Image courtesy of Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, acc. no. 1969.1082.001.



Figure 18. Regency Wallpapers Specifically Reproduced from Old Documents for the New “Williamsburgh Inn” by Nancy McClelland, Inc. Exhibited at the Arts and Decoration Exposition in Chicago, April 1937. Nancy McClelland Archive, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

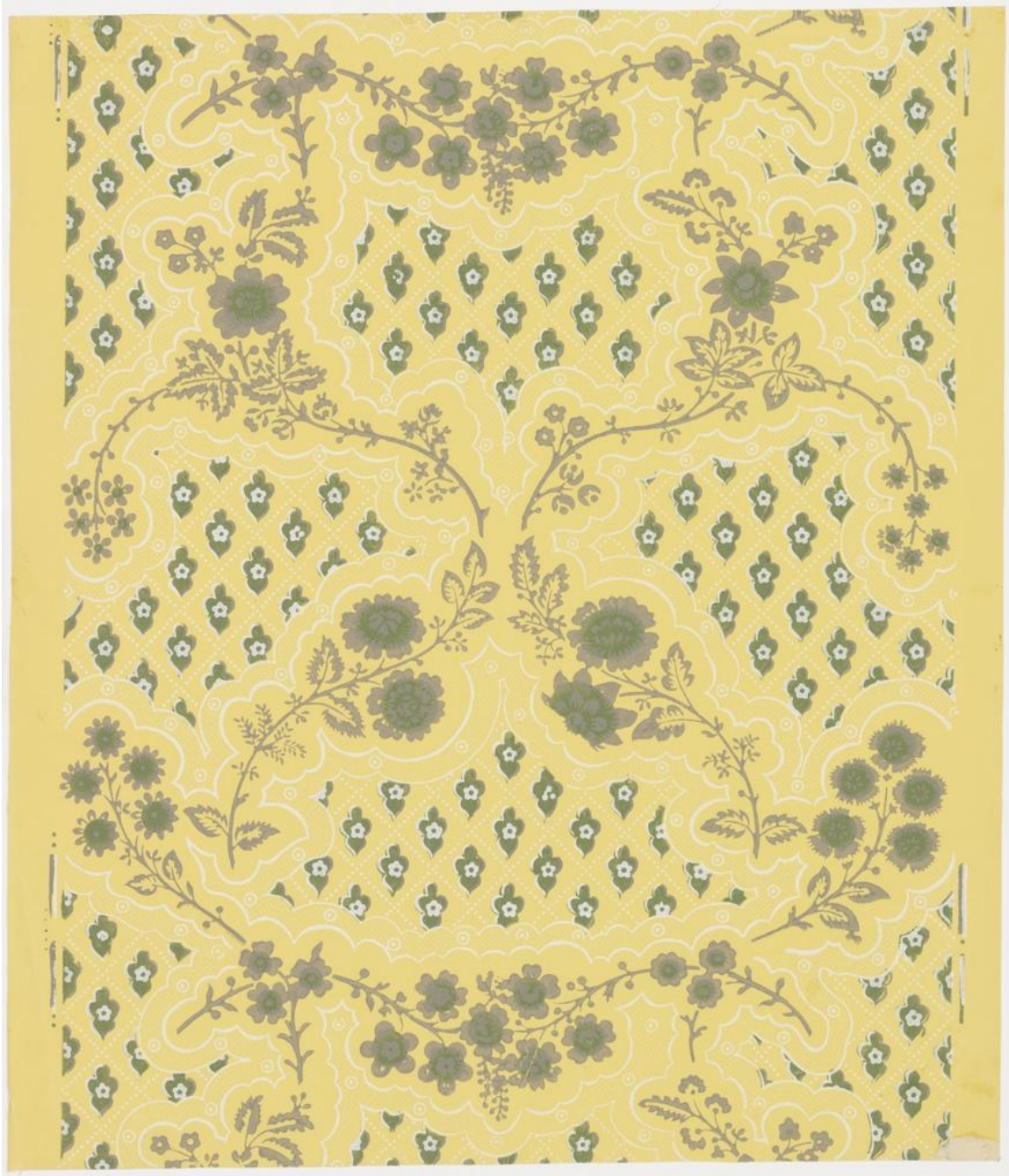


Figure 19. Nancy McClelland, Inc. *Sidewall, Leopard Yellow*. 1922- 1930. Block-printed paper, 69.5 x 60.5 cm. Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.



Figure 20. “Glebe House” wallpaper, manufactured and retailed by Nancy McClelland, Inc., c. 1940 in Blue Bedroom of Mount Vernon Mansion. Black and white photograph by Samuel V. Chamberlain, 1946. Historical Photograph Collection, The Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon



Figure 21. “Cenelle” Wallpaper in Lafayette Room at Mount Vernon Mansion. Color film transparency, photographed by Samuel V. Chamberlain, 1955. Historical Photograph Collection, The Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon.



Figure 22. "Cenelle" sidewall, manufactured by Nancy McClelland, Inc., France block-printed on laid paper in France. H 26 15/16 x W 24 in. Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, Gift of Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, acc No. 946-54-3.



Figure 23. “Pillement” sidewall, distributed by Nancy McClelland, ca. 1928. France; block-printed on laid paper. Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum Gift of The Museum at The Fashion Institute of Technology, acc No. 1998-75-12.



Figure 24. “Carnation” wallpaper, manufactured and retailed by Nancy McClelland, Inc., c. 1940s, in the Chintz Room, Mount Vernon Mansion. Black and white photograph by Samuel V. Chamberlain, 1952-1959. Historical Photograph Collection, The Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon.



Figure 25. "L'Ecureuil" sidewall, Manufactured and retailed by Nancy McClelland, Inc., 1945-1950, screen printed, likely on modern paper. H 38 x W 30 1/8 in. Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, Gift of Morris-Jumel Mansion, acc No. 1999-37-2.



Figure 26. Undated Photograph of Girl in the Toy Room Posing in Front of the *Chansons Vieux Temps* Wallpaper. Courtesy of the Morris Jumel Mansion.



Figure 27. Undated sample photograph of nineteenth-century drapery paper made by French manufacturer Dufour et Cie., later reproduced by Nancy McClelland, Inc. Verso reads “Drapery paper made by Joseph Dufour of Paris. The drapery is in the tones of pink with highlights of white and shadows of deep red./ 33 ½” long by 22 ½” wide/ French, 19th Century”. Photos © Nancy McClelland Archive, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.



Figure 28. Parlor of Mrs. Thomas Barnes, Gladwyne, Pennsylvania featuring Nancy McClelland, Inc. *Roses* Wallpaper. Photographed by The Gray Studio, New York. Photos © Nancy McClelland Archive, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.



Figure 29. *Morning Glory* wallpaper border reproduced by Hobe Erwin Editions from a c.1810 wallpaper fragment found in the Morris Jumel Mansion. Photos © Nancy McClelland Archive, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.



Figure 30. Unknown library, likely in Virginia, featuring Nancy McClelland, Inc. *Providence House* Wallpaper. Photographed by Colonial Studio, Richmond, Virginia. Photos © Nancy McClelland Archive, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.



Figure 31. "Providence House" wallpaper Manufactured by Nancy McClelland, Inc. c. 1950, screen-printed on modern paper. Courtesy of HannahsTreasures.com.



Figure 32. "Les Rives de Bosphore" Wallpaper by Dufour et Cie., c. 1816, block-printed on laid paper. Distributed by Nancy McClelland, Inc., hung in the Front Hall of Brompton, Fredericksburg, Virginia. Photos © Nancy McClelland Archive, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

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Appendix A

Public Institutions with Nancy McClelland, Inc. Wallpaper Partially compiled from a Nancy McClelland, Inc. list, denoted by *

1. Arlington House, Arlington, Virginia*
2. Barrett House, New Ipswich, New Hampshire
3. Blair House, Washington, D.C.*
4. Brompton, Fredericksburg, Virginia
5. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Various interiors, Williamsburg, Virginia
6. Connecticut Valley Historical Society, the William Pynchon Memorial Building, Springfield, Massachusetts*
7. Continental Hall, Washington D.C. For Texas Room of the Daughters of the American Revolution*
8. Folsom Tavern, Exeter Inn, Exeter, New Hampshire*
9. Gore Place, Waltham, Massachusetts*
10. John Brown House, Providence, Rhode Island
11. Lyman Estate, Waltham, Massachusetts
12. Mount Vernon, Alexandria, Virginia*
13. Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont
14. Stanton Hall, Natchez, Mississippi, Headquarters of Natchez Garden Club for its annual tours of famous old homes*
15. the Governor Lucas House, Plum Grove, Iowa City, Iowa (Home of the first Governor of Iowa)*
16. the Metropolitan Museum of Art, American Wing, New York City, New York
17. the Morris Jumel Mansion, New York, New York*
18. Vanderpoel House of History, Kinderhook, New York
19. Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut*
20. Wadsworth-Longfellow House, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine*
21. Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Delaware

Appendix B

Comprehensive List of All Nancy McClelland Publications and Unpublished Manuscripts

Published Works

Davis, Deering, Stephen P Dorsey, Ralph Cole Hall, and Nancy McClelland. "Mount Vernon Wall-Papers." In *Alexandria Houses, 1750-1830*, 6. New York: Architectural Book Pub. Co., 1946.

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Unpublished Manuscripts

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