CHRISTOPHER MILLS CONSERVATION SERVICES, LLC

John Ridout House Drawing Room

Drawing Room Conservation and Traditional Paint Application

The John Ridout house was built in 1765 and has remained in the Ridout family ever since. It is one of the most prominent Georgian homes in Annapolis, with deep connections to early American history. The house features ornate decorative plaster, woodwork, and furniture that has survived through generations, none more elaborate than the Drawing Room.

From November 2023 to February 2024, Christopher Mills Conservation Services' team removed layers of paint and limewash from the drawing room cornice, revealing years of water damage and inadequate repairs. The conservation work included consolidating friable plaster elements, repairing cracks and replacing broken or missing elements.

Later, from February to April 2025, the team returned to conserve and apply traditional finishes to the entire room. Paint failure was ubiquitous, and most of the woodwork detail was distorted with excessive paint buildup. Modern paint layers were removed to recover molding detail and provide a stable surface for traditional handmade paint. Failing paint layers were re-adhered, and inconsistencies flattened with wet sanding. Wainscot panels were released from their rails and stiles to allow free movement during natural expansion and contraction. Extensive dutchman repairs and fills were made with locally sourced in-kind wood.

The flaking paint on the walls was consolidated where possible, and the cracks in the plaster were repaired. Extensive plaster work was done in all the window pockets. Finally, the woodwork was painted with handmade linseed oil paint, and the walls were finished with handmade distemper.

Cornice before treatment: cracked and missing elements, and much obscured by paint

Replaced modillion

Comparison of unstripped and stripped cornice

Comparison of painted and unpainted cornice

135 high street
becket ma 01223

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Woodwork prior to paint removal

Woodwork prior to paint removal

During mechanical and chemical paint removal

Wood fill in progress

Wood fill in progress

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Application of distemper paint

Application of distemper

After revealing details and painting

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Final photos of room

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