

### SECTION III

## SACRAMENTO STATE CAPITOL RESTORATION

Sacramento, California

1976 - 1980

*It was my privilege to have recreated the original designs (circa 1880-1900) for the vast ceilings and friezes for the first floor of the state capitol building in Sacramento, California.*

*In the early 1970's the capitol building was deemed unsafe because of structural cracks caused by earthquakes. The dilemma was whether to tear down or restore the building to its original splendor. There were no surviving original plans, drawings, or records describing the design of the building. The building had been remodeled in the early 1900's and some of the original art work had been covered up and architectural elements such as staircases removed.*

*When I came on the job in 1976, they were debating whether or not to try to replicate the ornamental ceilings and friezes. Only fragments of the originals survived. As they began to dismantle the building they found sections of friezes (wall designs down from the ceiling about 3 to 4 feet wide and with dense ornament) that had been covered with sheet metal work when heating was installed in the building. The designs were revealed in their original colour which could be likened to a decorative carpet. This work had been done in a very crude manner by imported Italian workmen. They created their designs by combining a plaster and glue mixture and extruded it onto the ceiling using a cake decorating technique. (This technique is called "parget") Naturally the quality of workmanship varied from room to room relative to the skill of the worker. The design was traced onto the ceiling and had to be followed free-hand.*

*A man, Ray Girvigian, FAIA, dedicated to the true restoration of the capitol, combed the state archives, old newspaper records and uncovered much information that I was able to use in replicating the original work. The most interesting was a vague photograph of the governor's office from a 1931 office Christmas party. Because of the height of the Christmas tree they caught a significant part of the ceiling design. I knew the size of the room and from that was able to scale the design. Mr. Girvigian also found newspaper articles that stated the designs were taken from carpet designs. As you look at the drawings you can see the variety that takes you from an Aubison to a Persian carpet. Also it was stated that the California poppy was included in the designs. This appears in the archival ceiling and frieze.*

*Only a few of the historical designs were put back into the building. In an effort to preserve our California history I am including all of the original designs that were a part of my work. I started with the ceilings where most of the design survived and progressed to those where I had less information. As I progressed I learned the technique of the original artisans, their approach and design motifs. (Their favorites were the fleur de lis and fret work.) Several of the designs were put into the building after 1900 and its interesting to observe that the designs have an Oriental feeling and suggest the coming of the Art Deco period. As you look at the designs, remember that they were merely a half round relief outline of the form in parget, rather than a three dimensional form as the drawing would suggest. (The Wiltern theater in Los Angeles used the same technique. They outlined in half round an Art Deco design and then coloured in the outlined area.)*

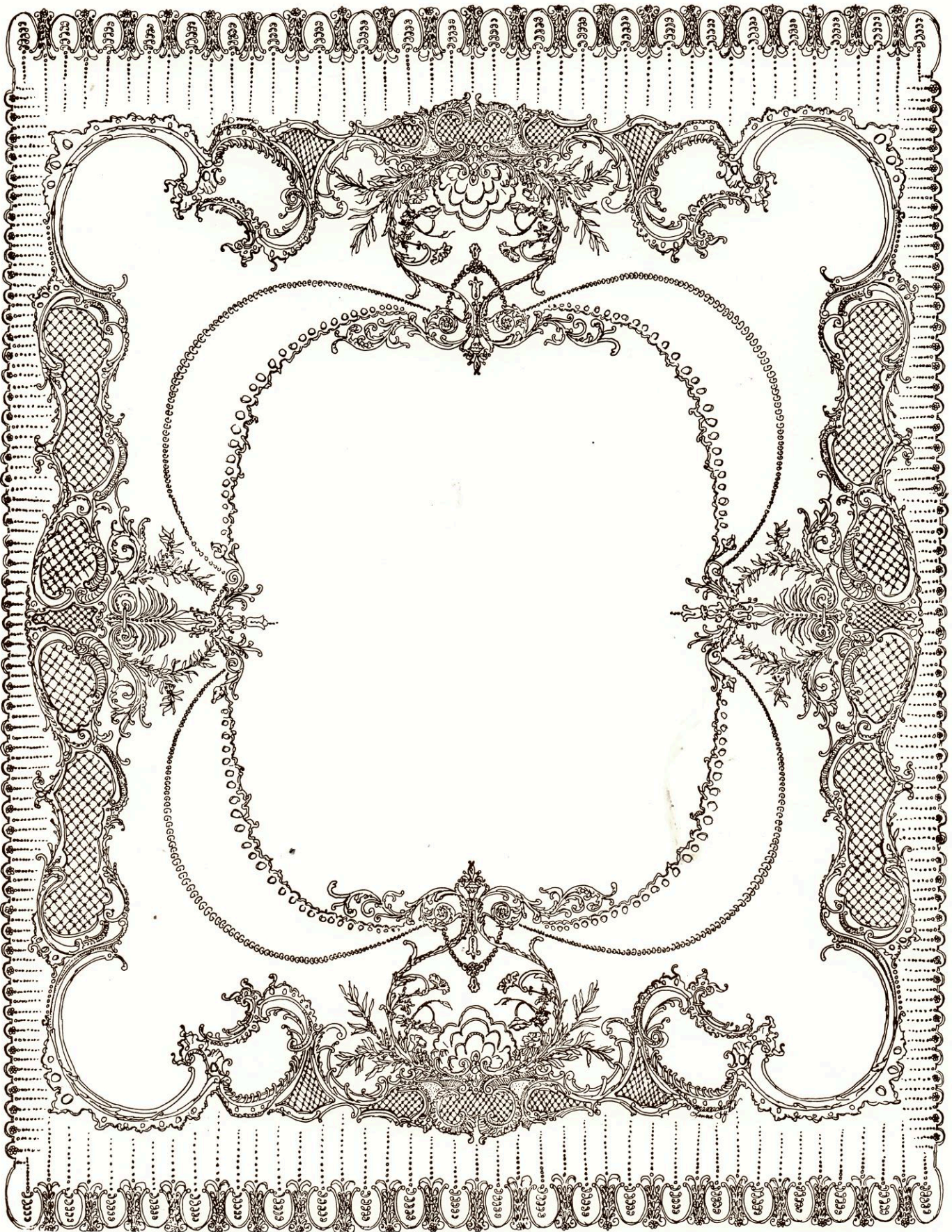
*For those not familiar with the project, this was more than a restoration. The building was*

in a state of complete neglect. The ceilings could not be saved. They had to be replicated. We made huge moulds of the  $\frac{1}{4}$ " relief to preserve the surviving designs. Then they began to dismantle the building. Everything that could be excised was taken out, including the mosaic tile floors, catalogued, and warehoused until they could be restored. The outside of the building was buttressed (walls supported) and the inside was completely removed from the basement through to the roof (like a bombed out building) and rebuilt. In the demolition they found pieces of the original ornamental plaster ceiling from the Senate and Legislative chambers. Mr. Girvigian was able to locate some of the original architectural pieces such as the missing staircase. After the reconstruction, the excised pieces were put back in their original place and the building was returned as close to its original splendor as was humanly possible. Many of us worked beyond any possible financial rewards to leave a legacy for the state of California that preserves one of our earliest and most sophisticated (for the California frontier) historical buildings.

As I left the building for the last time, my work done, I stood on the side portico, the sun shining brightly. I felt as if I was leaving behind a part of myself and I felt the honor to have been one in a century of time to have contributed to restoring the architectural beauty of the building. Was this building the reason for a God given talent?

Lenna Tyler Kast  
1985

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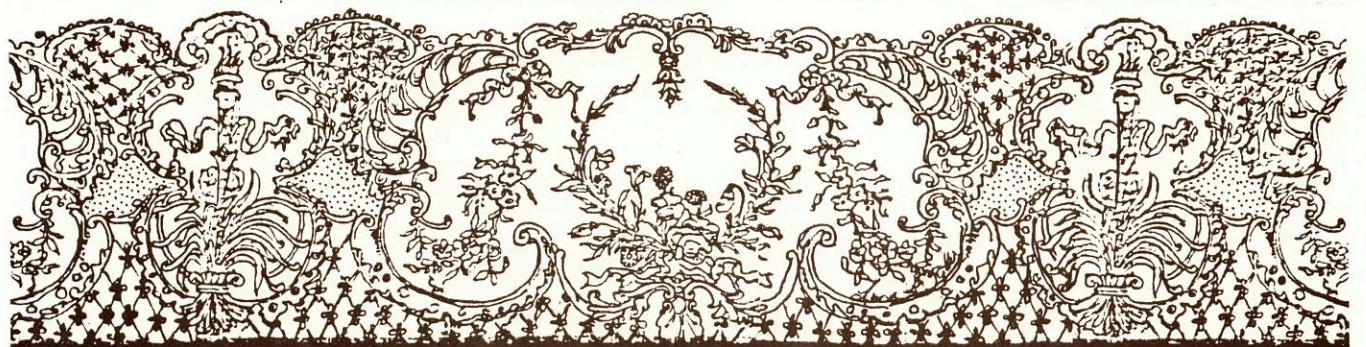
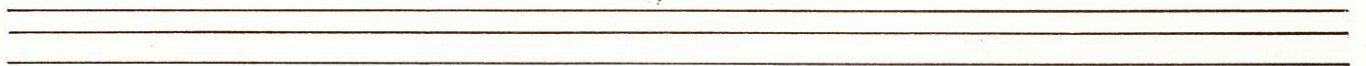
Archival Ceiling

This design was originally found in Room 1-24, North Wing. It was deemed to be the most sophisticated of the original designs and was returned to the Capitol building as the archival ceiling. In the cluster of flowers around the base of the column of the California State Capitol Building.

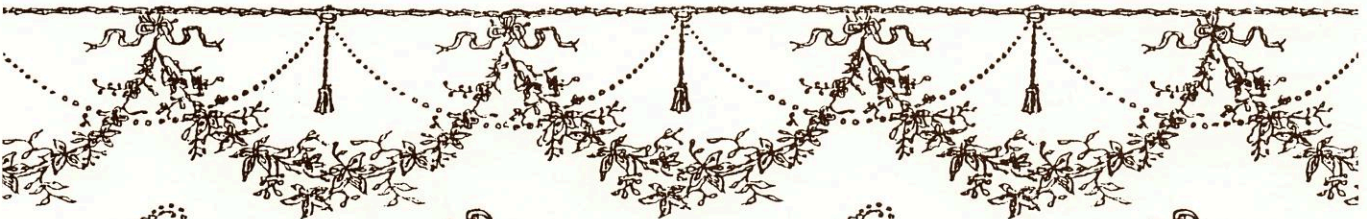
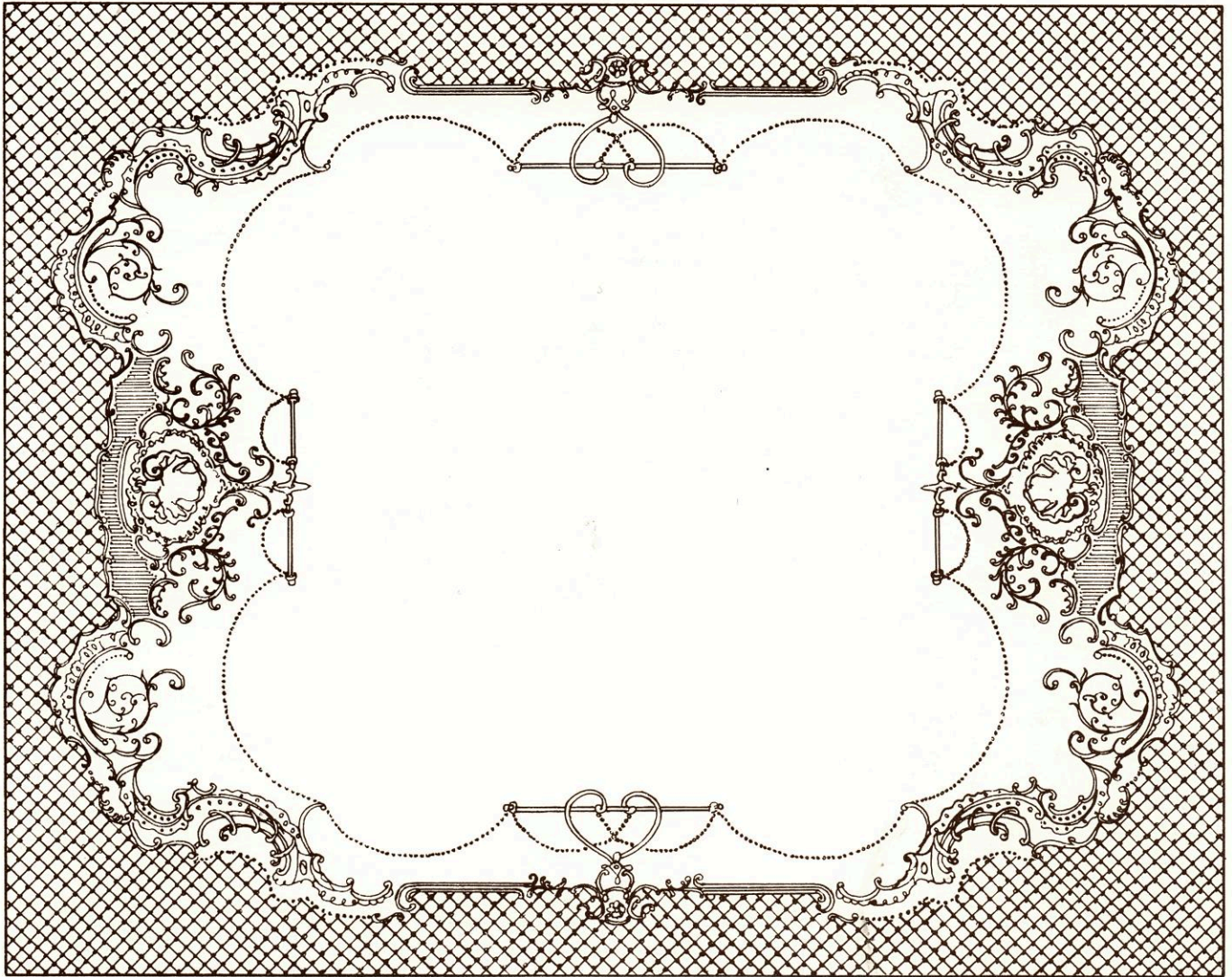
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Archival Ceiling - This is a large surviving sample showing the original craftsmanship and technique.



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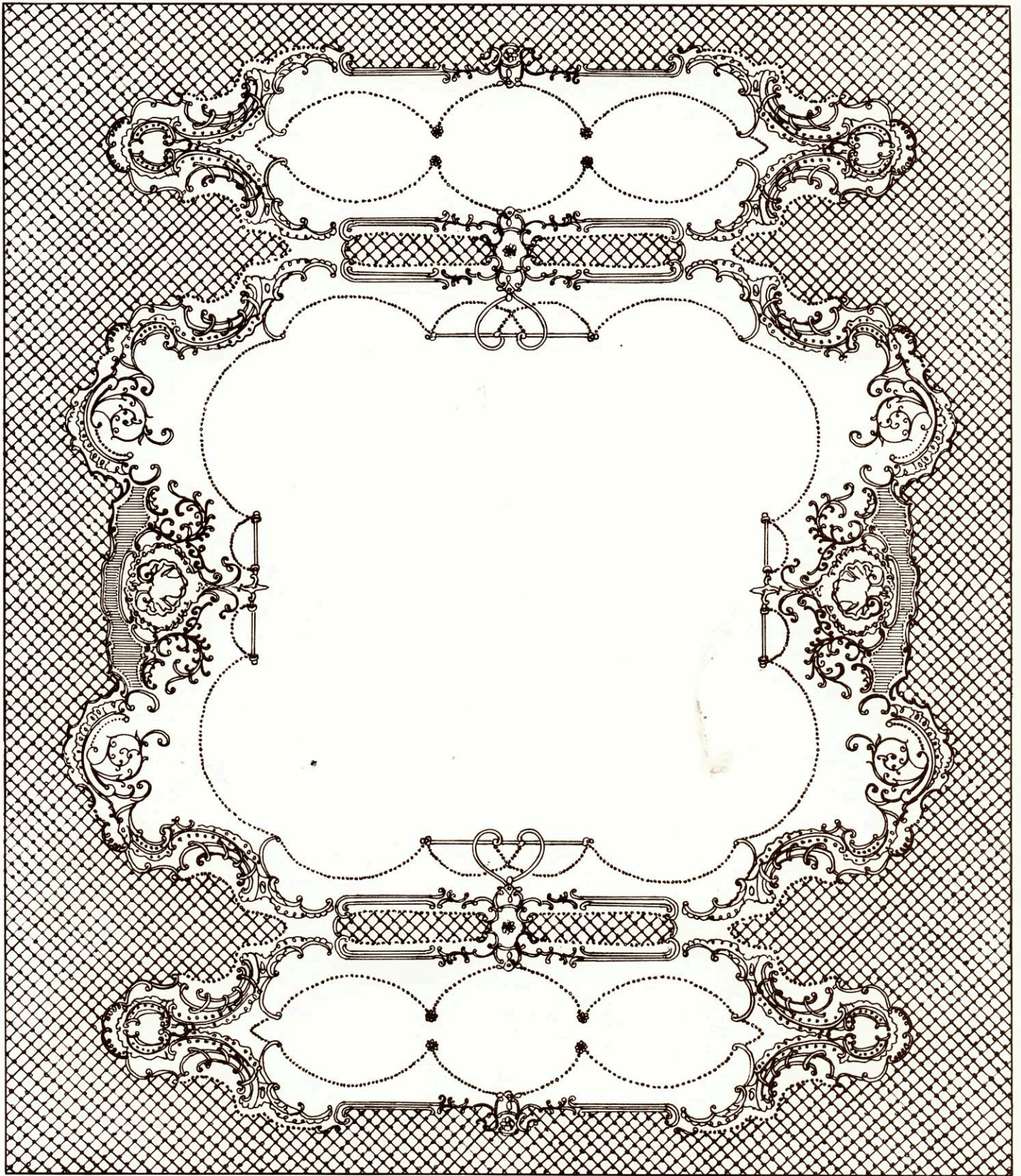
Room 1-25

Ceiling & Frieze

Adjutant General's Office

North Wing

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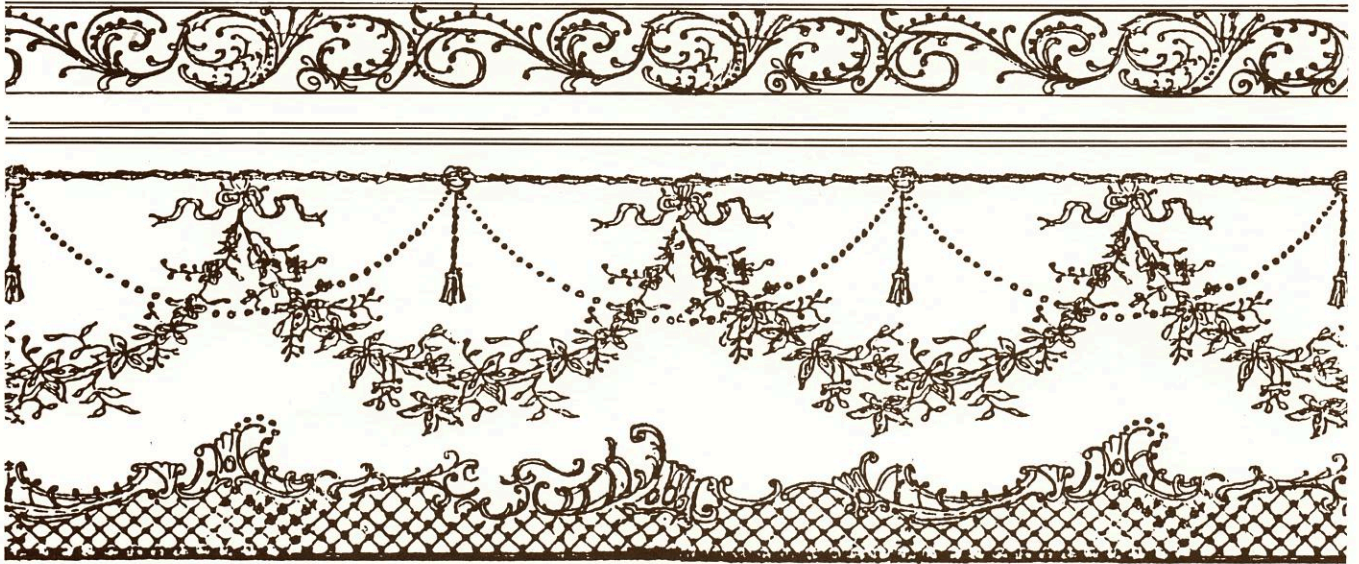


Extrapolation of 'Room 1-25

Ceiling Design

A wall was removed to create a larger room to meet today's needs. The original design is complete and centered between the two side walls. The present design is a modification of the original.

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Room 1-25 Frieze Design



*This is a photograph of one of the pre-cast plaster friezes that was installed in the building. A smooth plaster panel was made. Using individual pieces of composition ornament the original design was carefully emulated. A mould was made of the entire piece, including the mini-frieze, and the panels were cast with all of the fine relief decoration integral, later to be installed in the building.*

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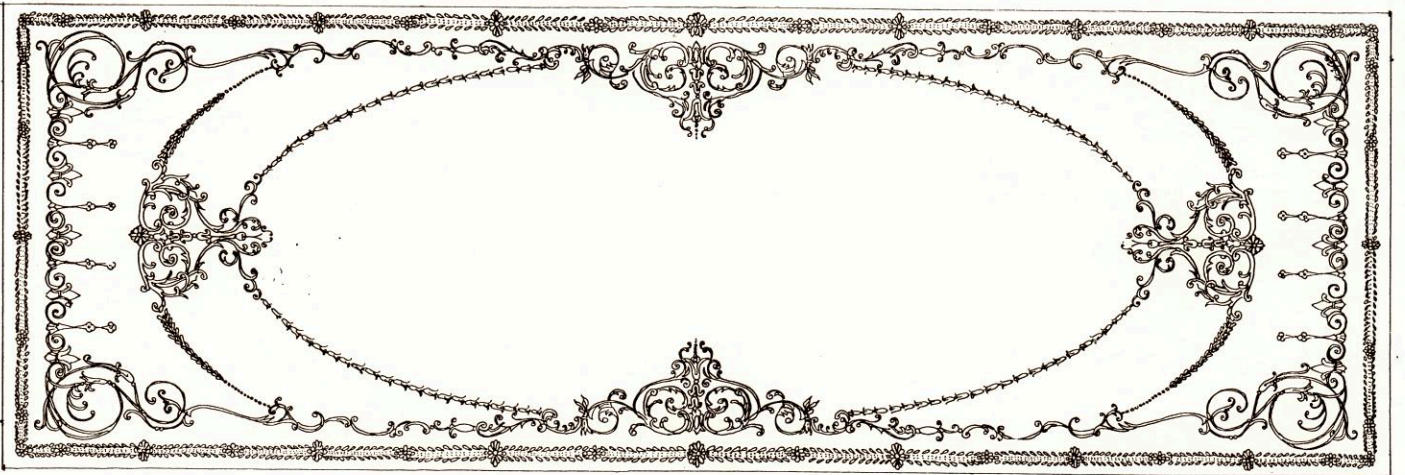
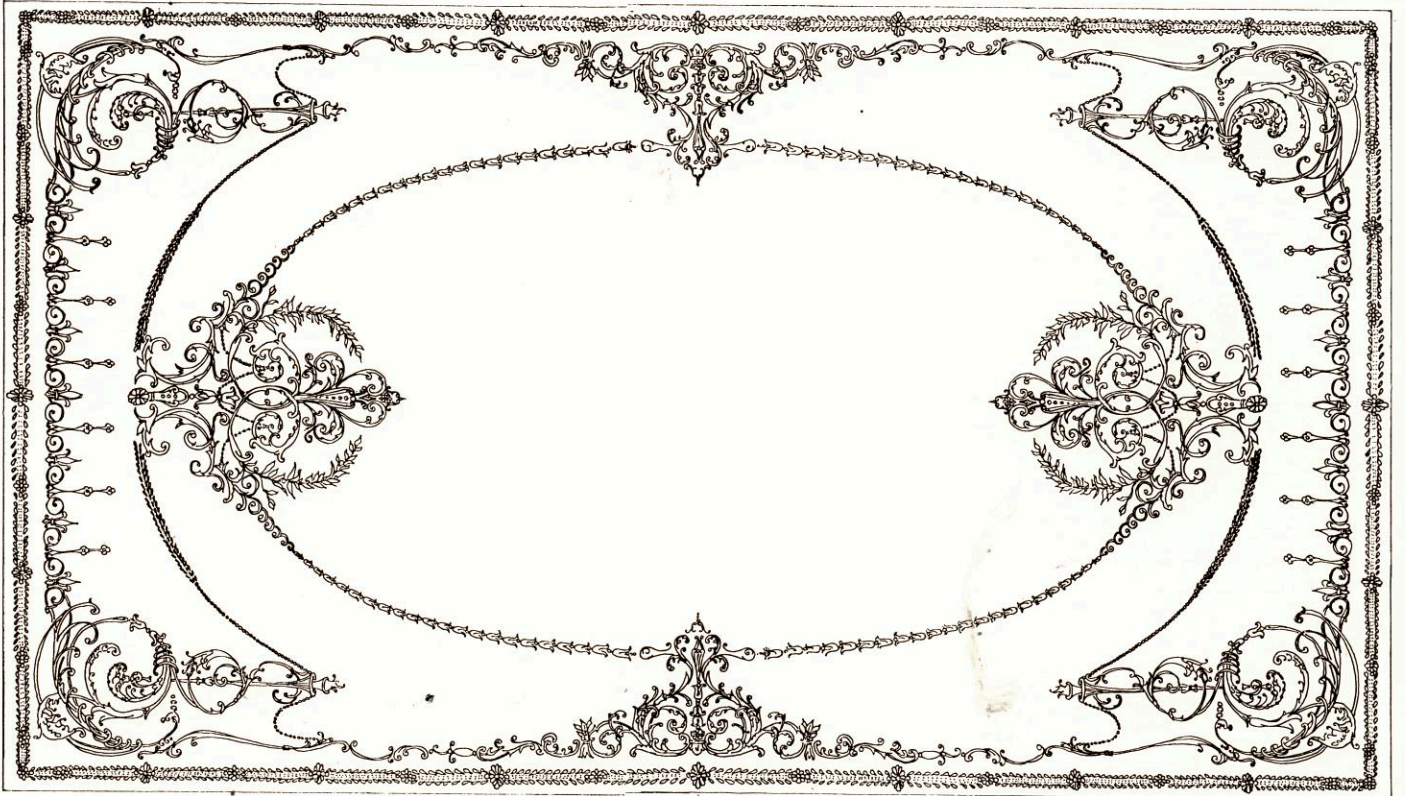
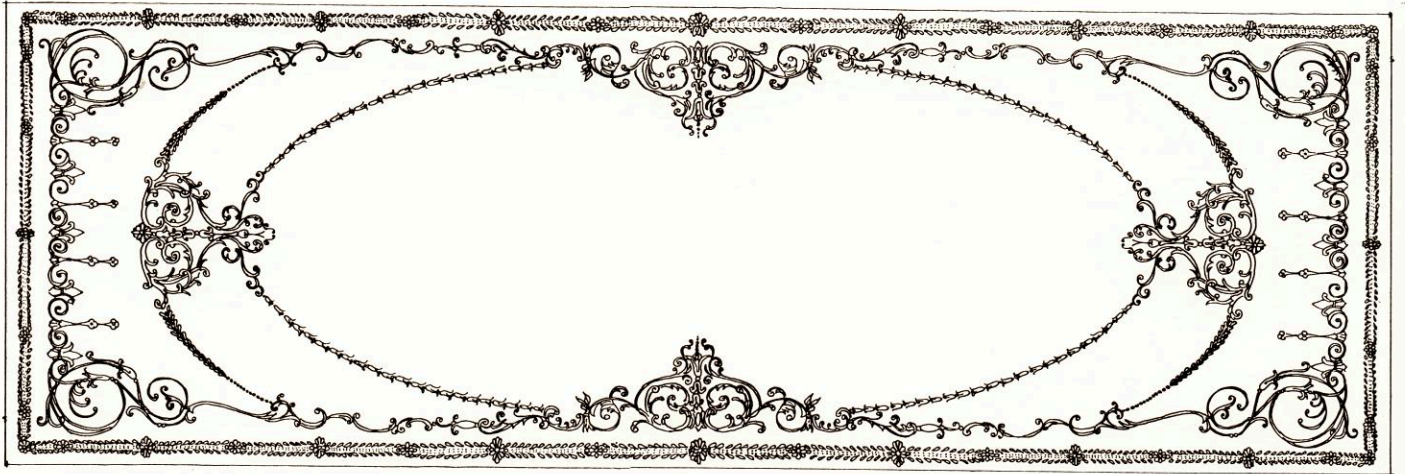


Room 1-25 Frieze Design

*This is a photograph of the surviving original work (1975). The picture demonstrates the relationship between the mini-frieze and the main frieze and its location to the large cornice moulding. Note the*



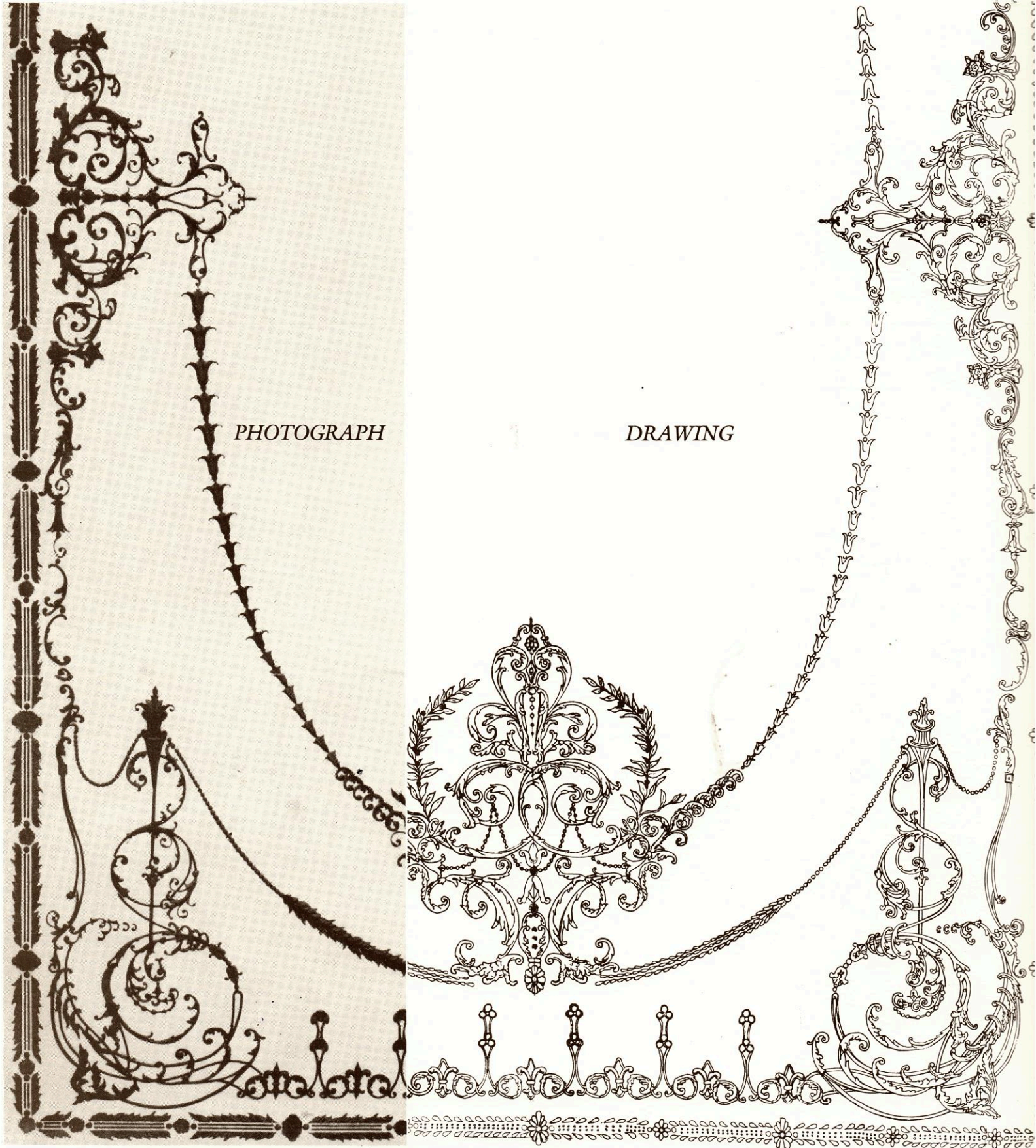
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Ceiling Design Room 1-60 South Wing

*This design is an extrapolation of the original which appears in the center panel, unchanged.*

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PHOTOGRAPH

DRAWING

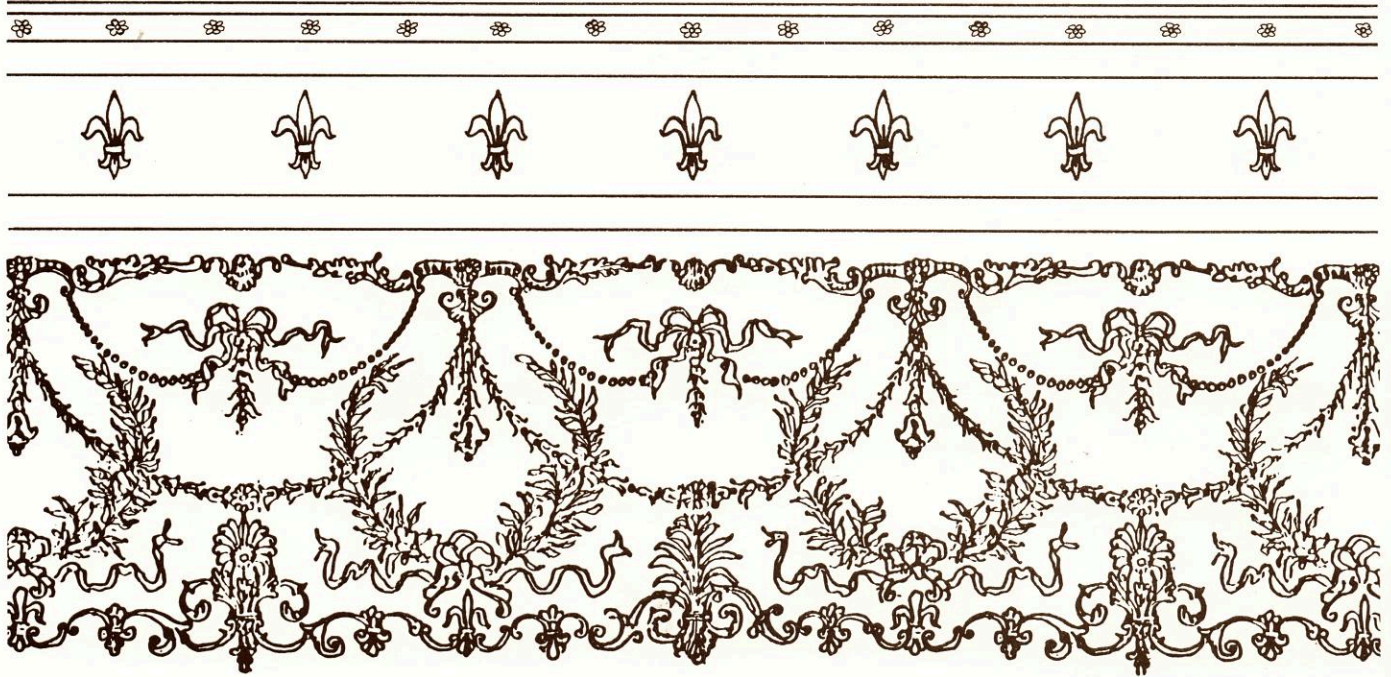
Room 1-60

Ceiling size approximately 12'x 26'

South Wing

This is an overlay of a photograph taken during installation over our original drawing. The full sized drawing was

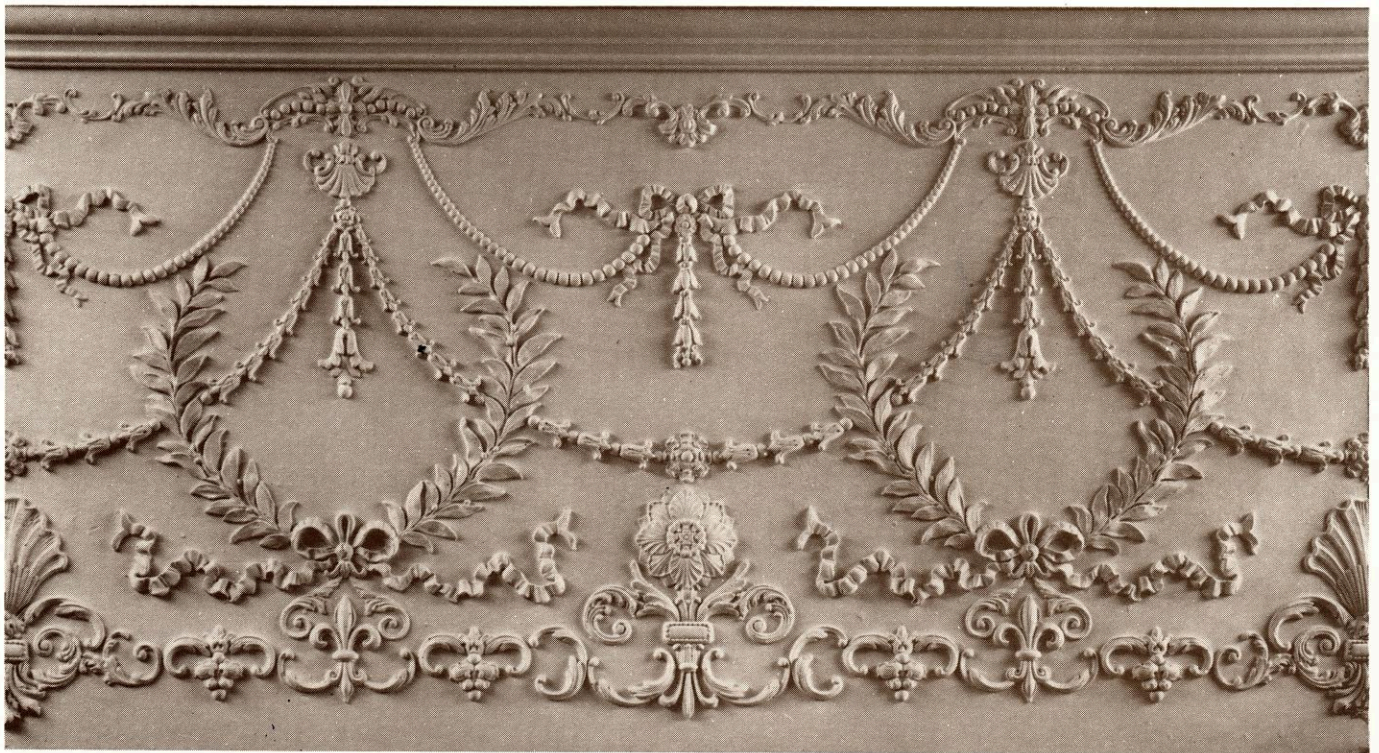
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Room 1-60

Drawing of the original frieze.

South Wing



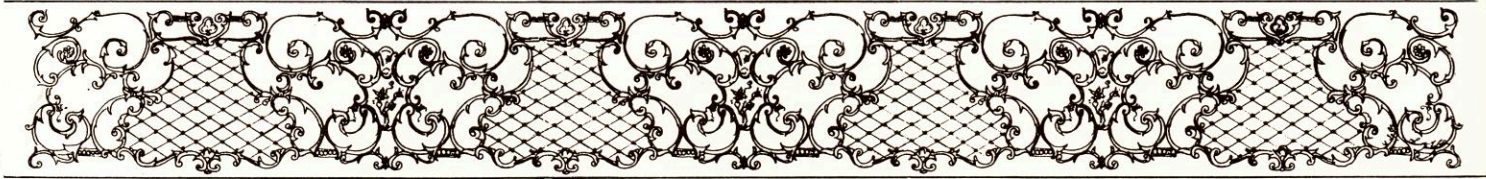
Room 1-60

Photograph of replicated frieze.

South Wing

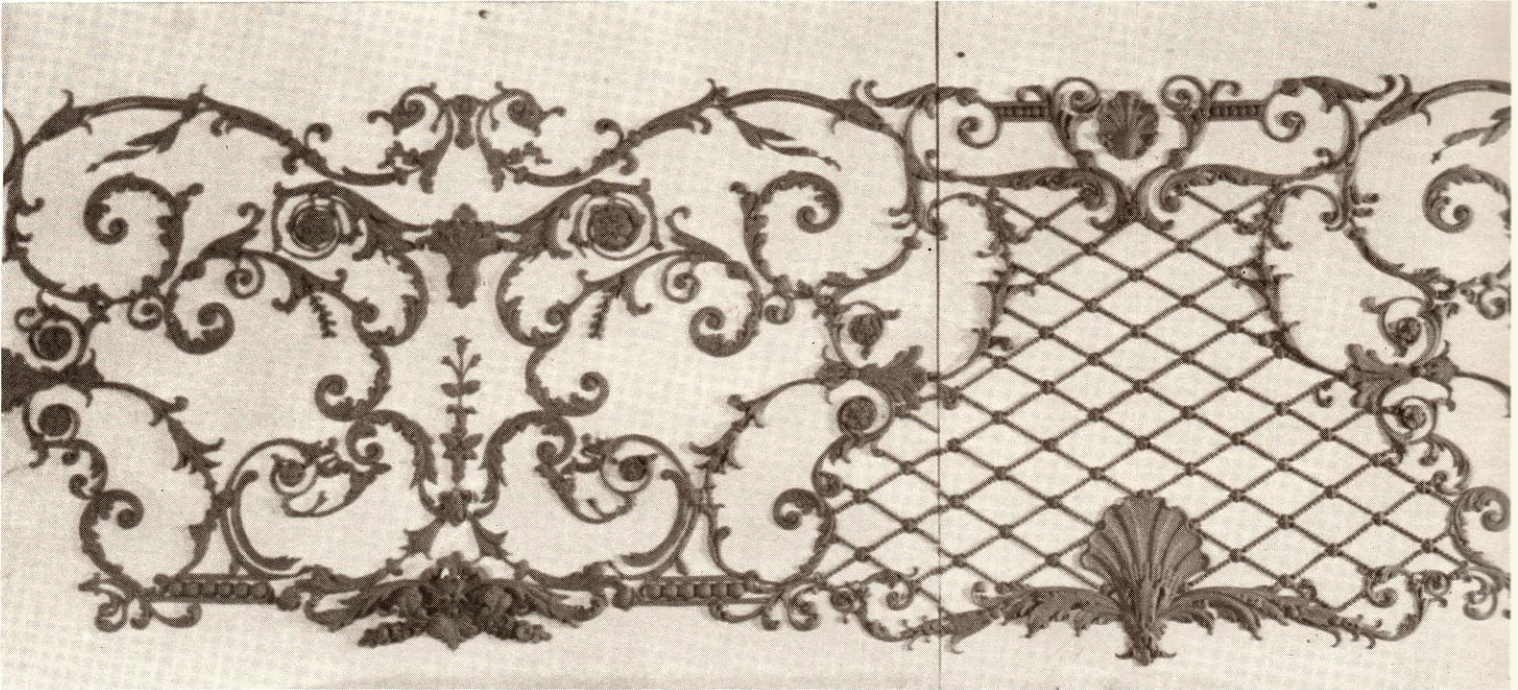
The replicated frieze was created by pouring a plaster slab. Next the design was drawn on the slab. The composition ornaments were carefully laid to complete one repeat. A mould was made of the decorated slab and castings were made of the entire unit. This is the technique we use when many repeats of a complex ornamental layout are required. The ornament is integral with its backing; there will never be any separation as with the original ceilings where the target ornament separated in time

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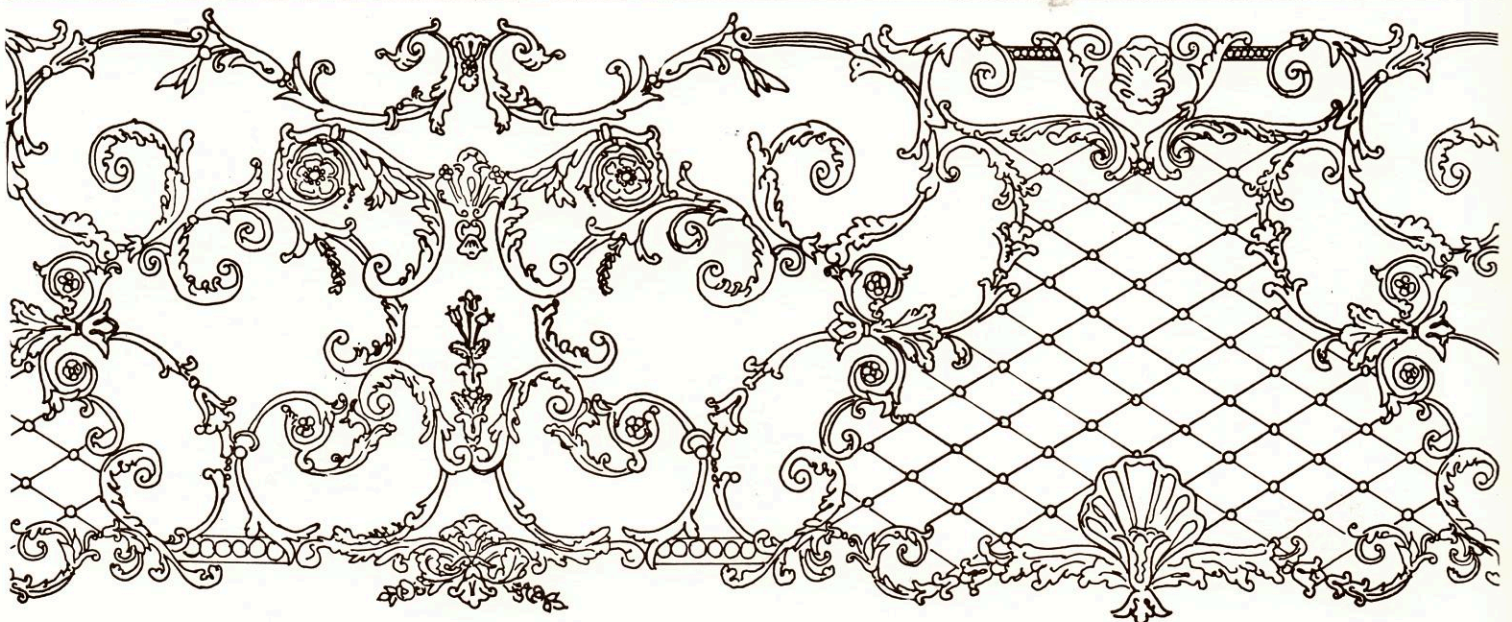
Room 1-8 Frieze Governor's Office

Drawing shows scale to the full size panel (below).



Room 1-8 Frieze Governor's Office

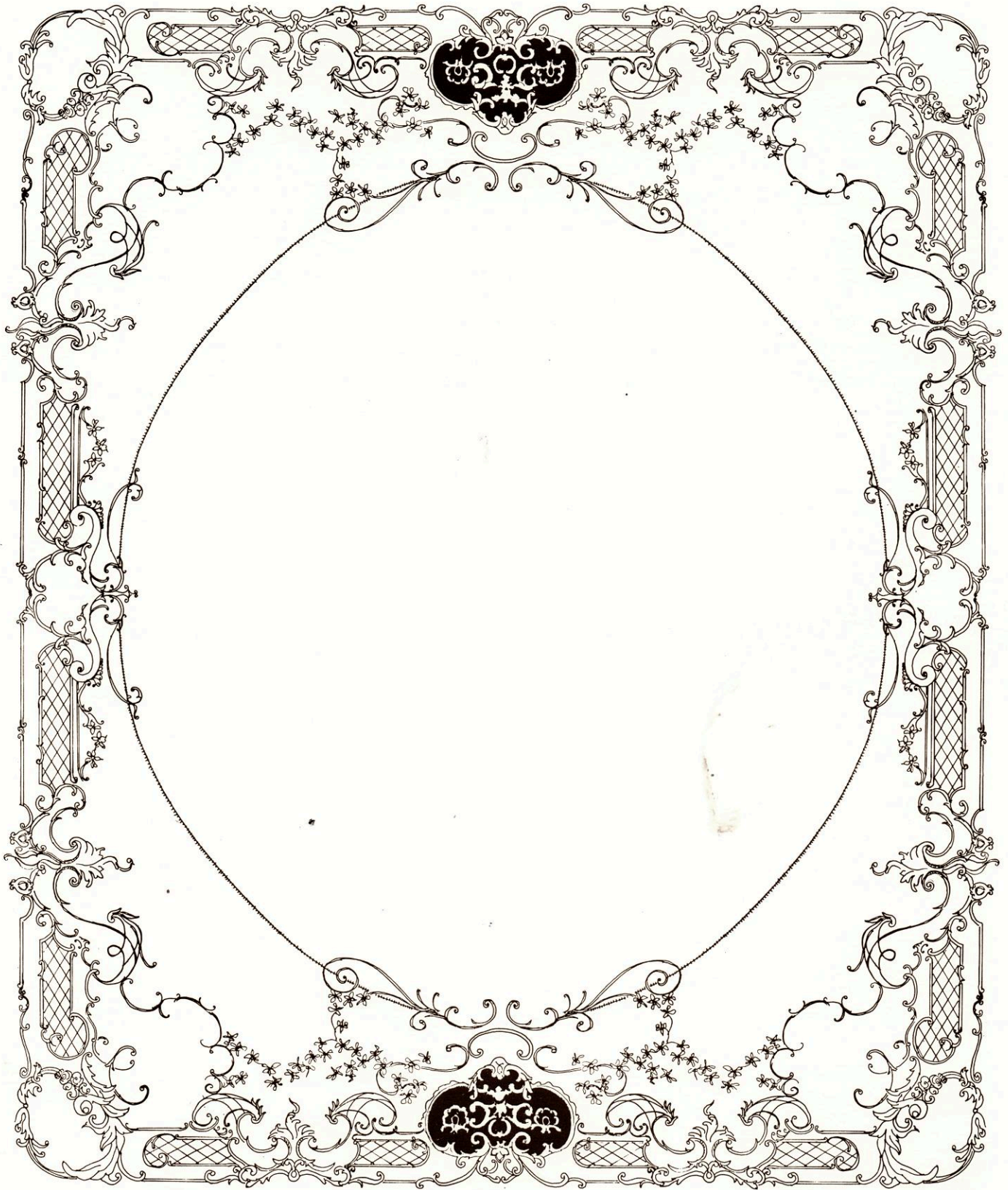
Replicated panel photographed just after laying the ornament.



Room 1-8 Frieze Governor's Office

Detail drawing shows the relationship to the replicated panel.

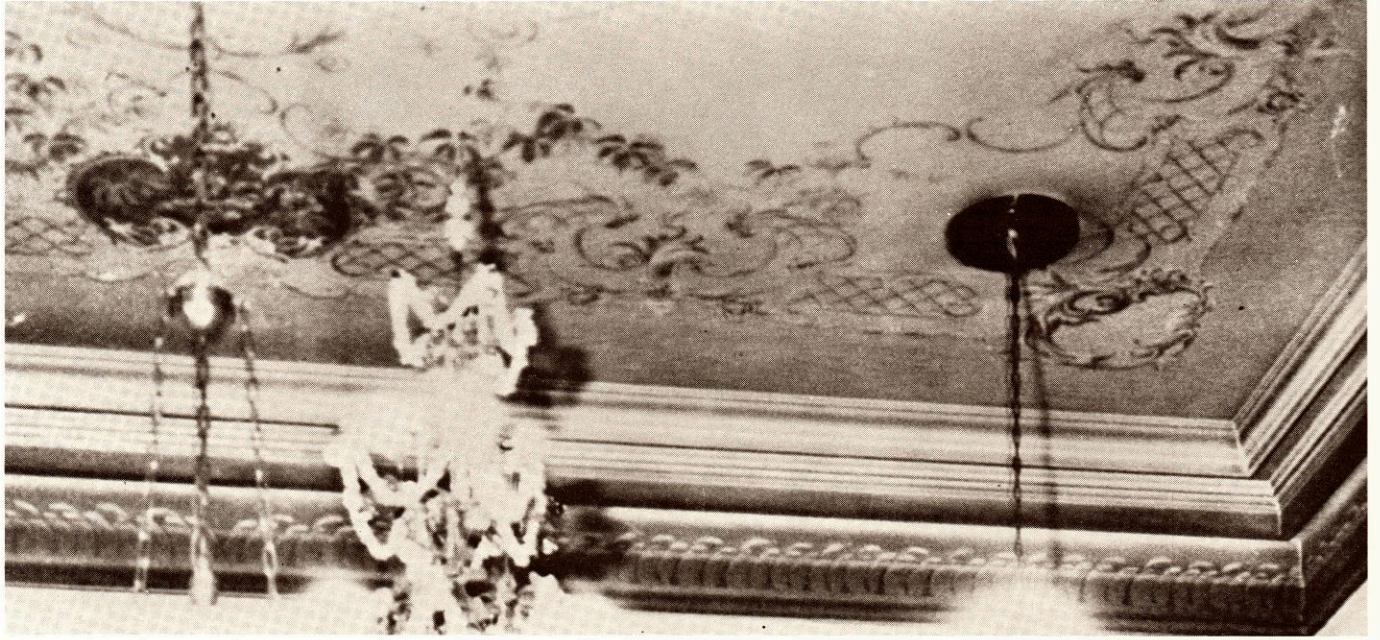
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Room 1-8 Ceiling Design Governor's Office

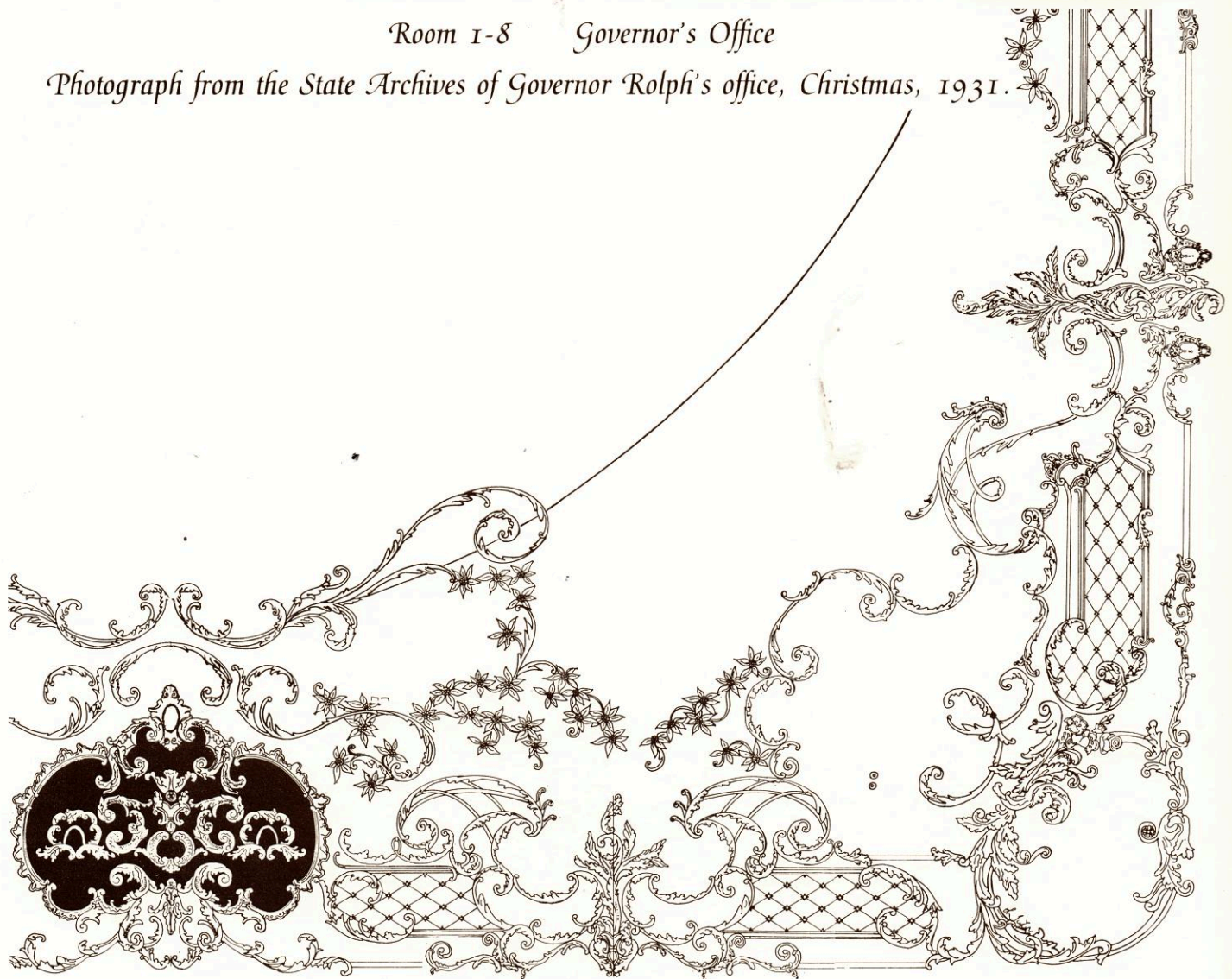
*During the restoration there was a great deal of debate as to whether this ceiling was merely a painted design or whether it had been done in parget as were all the others. With no conclusive evidence it was replaced with paint only.*

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Room 1-8 Governor's Office

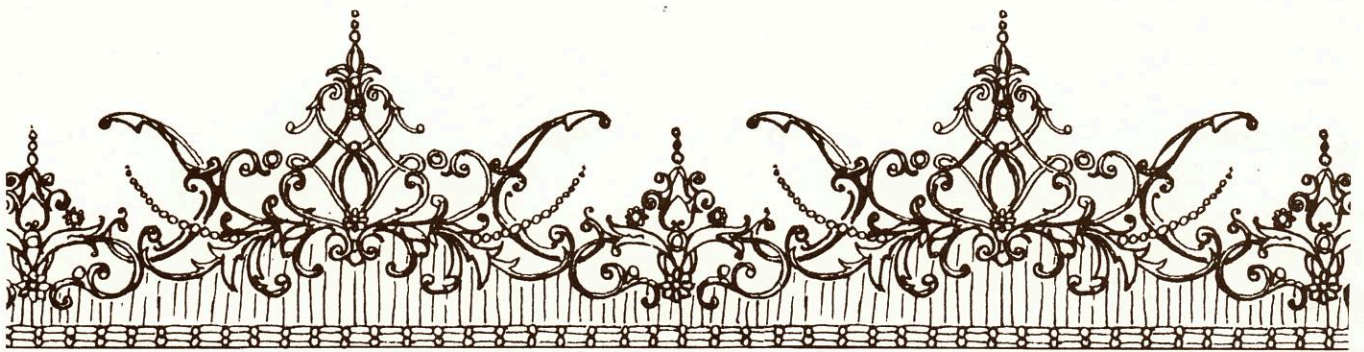
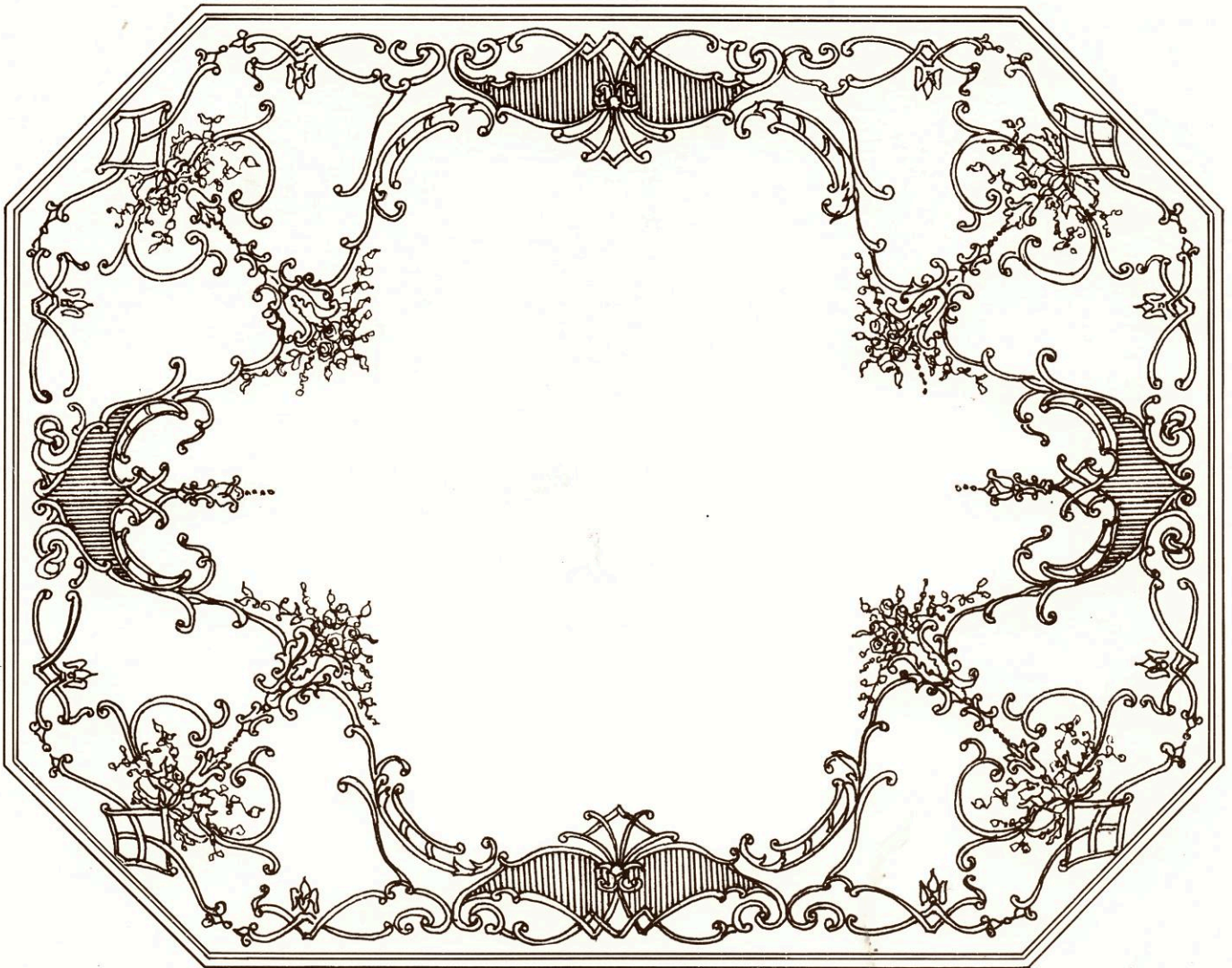
Photograph from the State Archives of Governor Rolphi's office, Christmas, 1931.



Room 1-8 Ceiling Detail Governor's Office

The only information we had as to the design for this room was the photograph (above) taken in 1931.

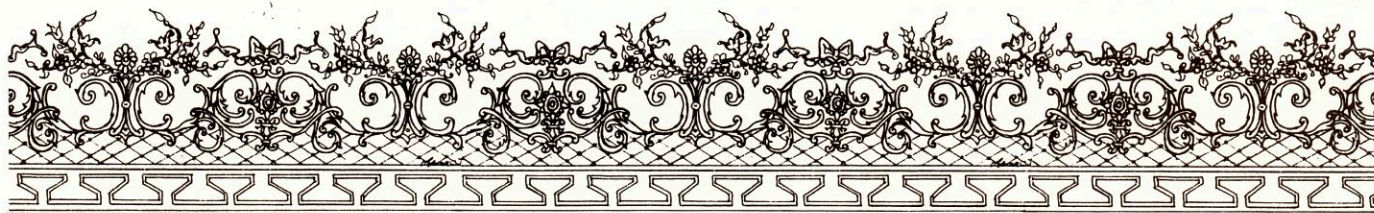
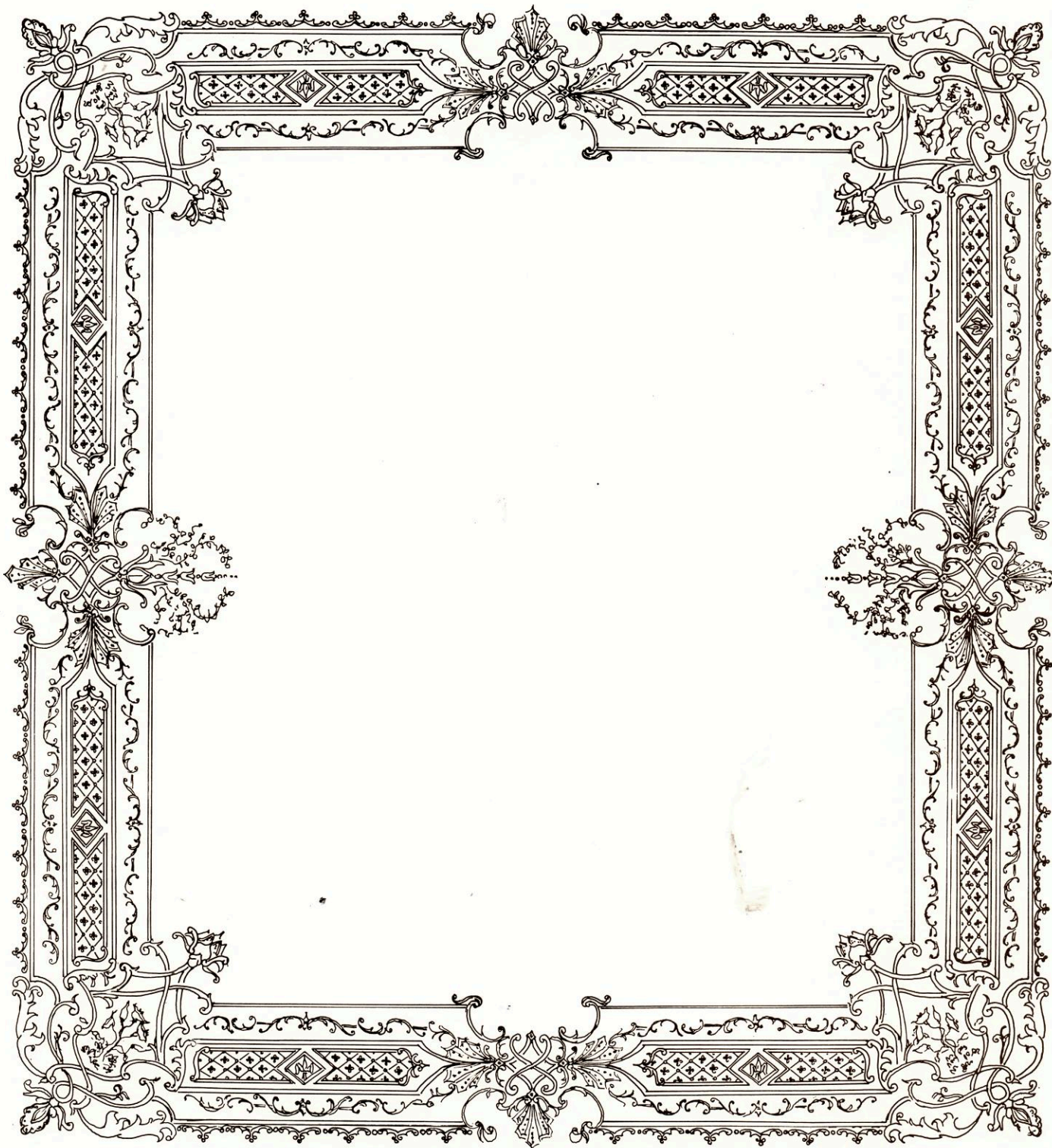
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Room 1-9 Ceiling & Frieze Governor's Private Office

This was a small office adjacent to the Governor's Office, Room 1-8. Neither of these designs was replaced.

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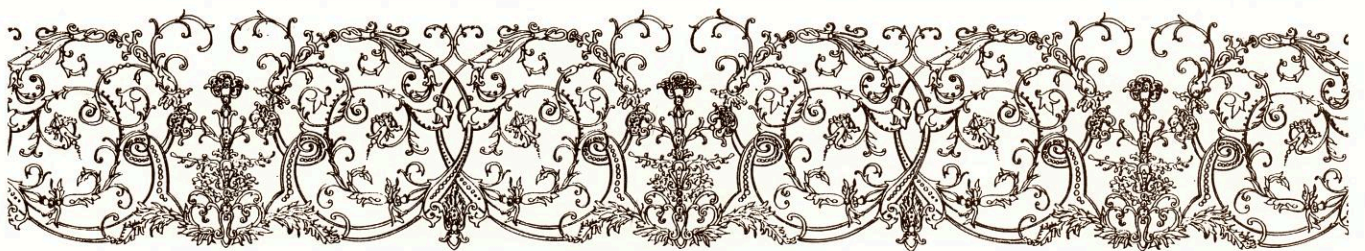
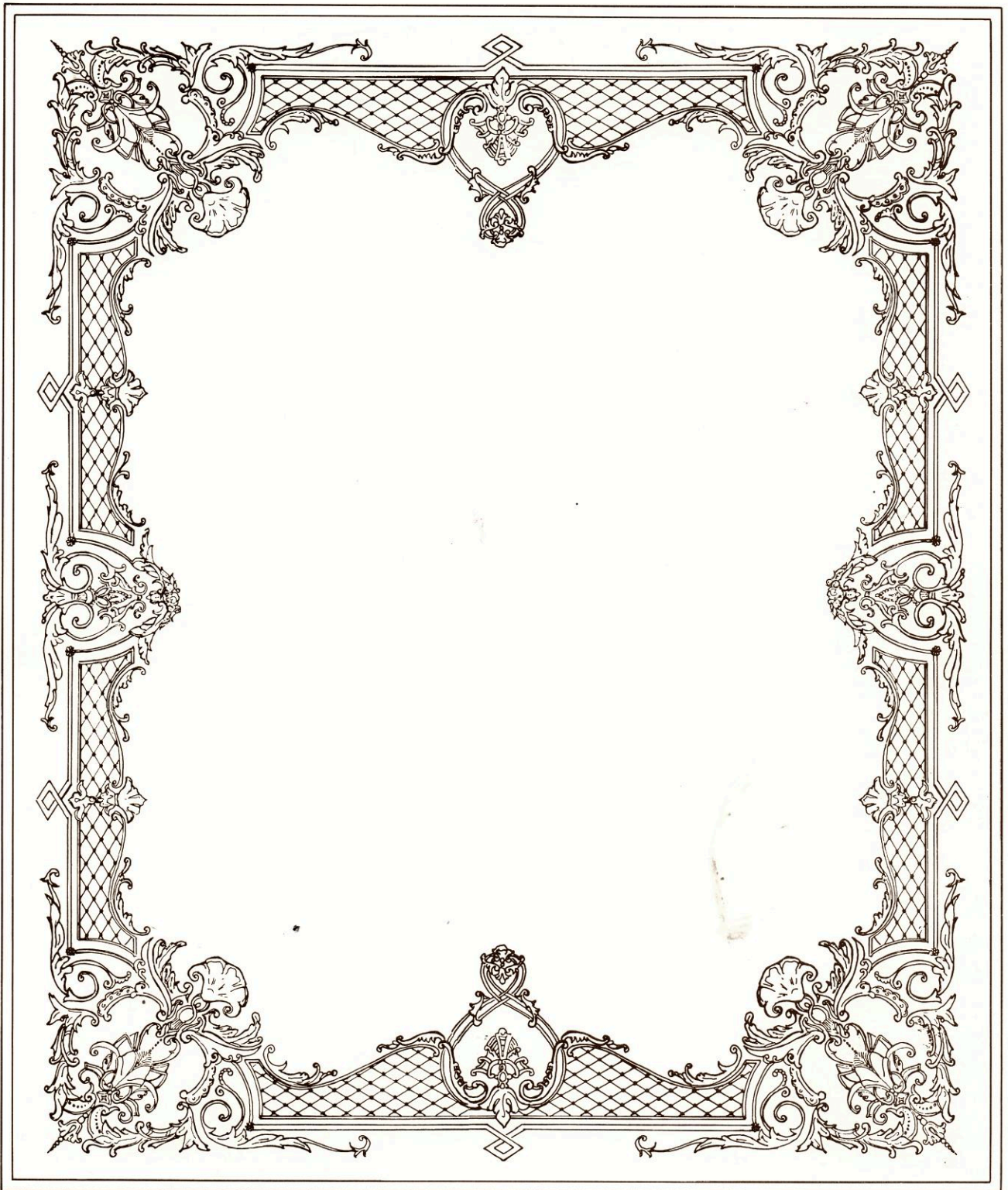


Room I-II Ceiling & Frieze Secretary of State

*This design was replicated from a photograph in the State Archives dated 1899. Neither of these*



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Room 1-7 Ceiling & Frieze

This frieze design was discovered in the dismantling of the building (see other side) in Room 1-28. It

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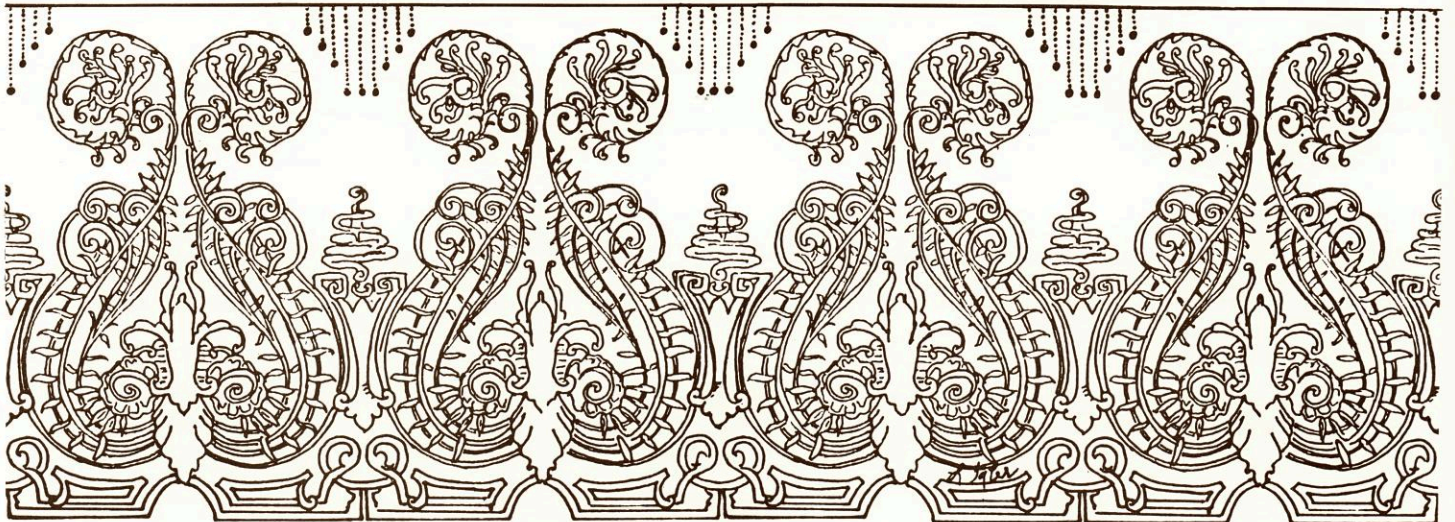
*As the Capitol Building was being dismantled this frieze was discovered under what had been a vent that had been installed around the turn of the century. Fortunately it was installed right over the original art work, preserving the design and original colour.*



Room 1-28 Frieze

*This drawing shows how the design was replicated. The original link that tied the design repeat together was missing. The line flow that remained was followed through, and using the knowledge*

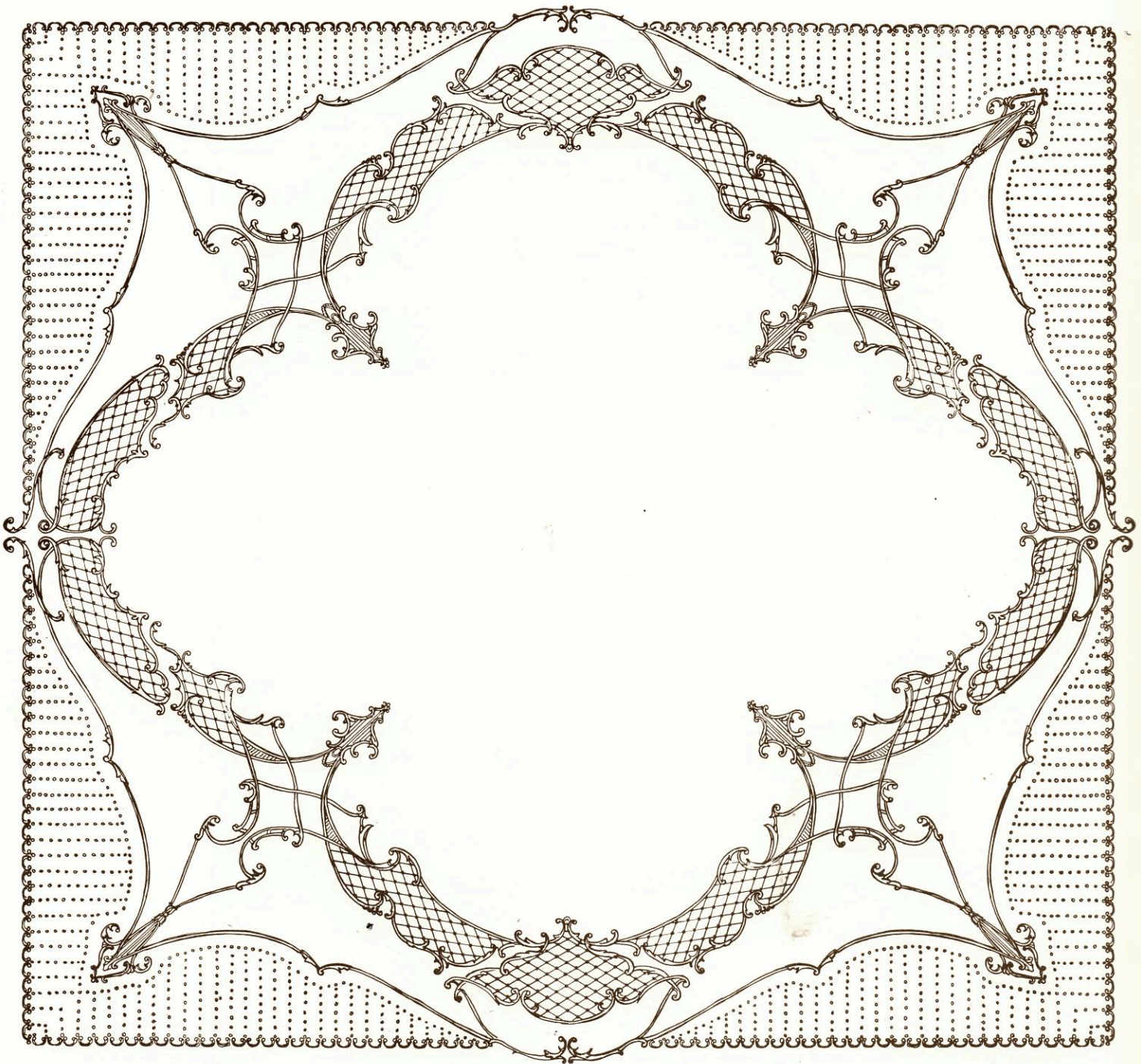
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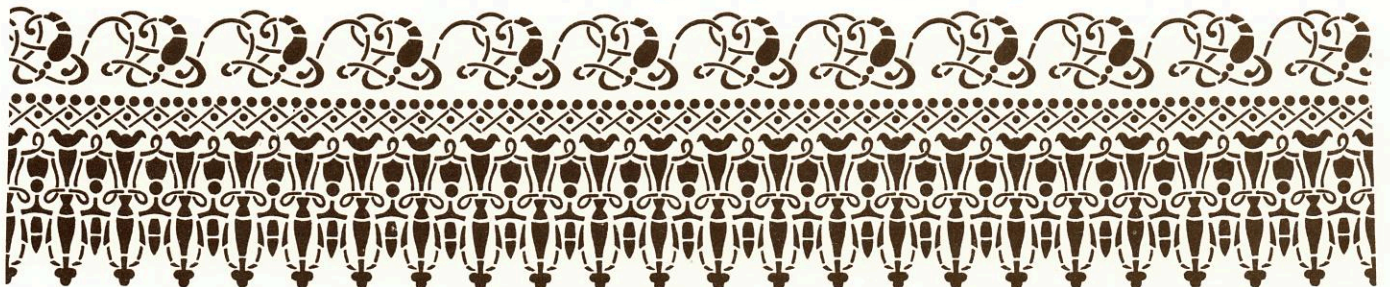
*South Wing Frieze*

*This is another frieze design that was discovered in the demolition of the building. This was a dramatically coloured polychromatic design with very low relief, half round outlining. From a distance*

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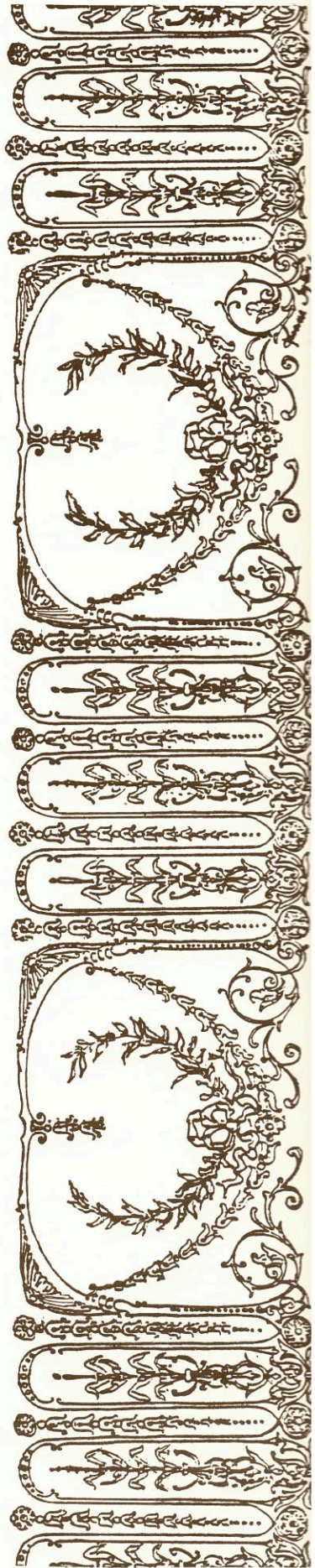
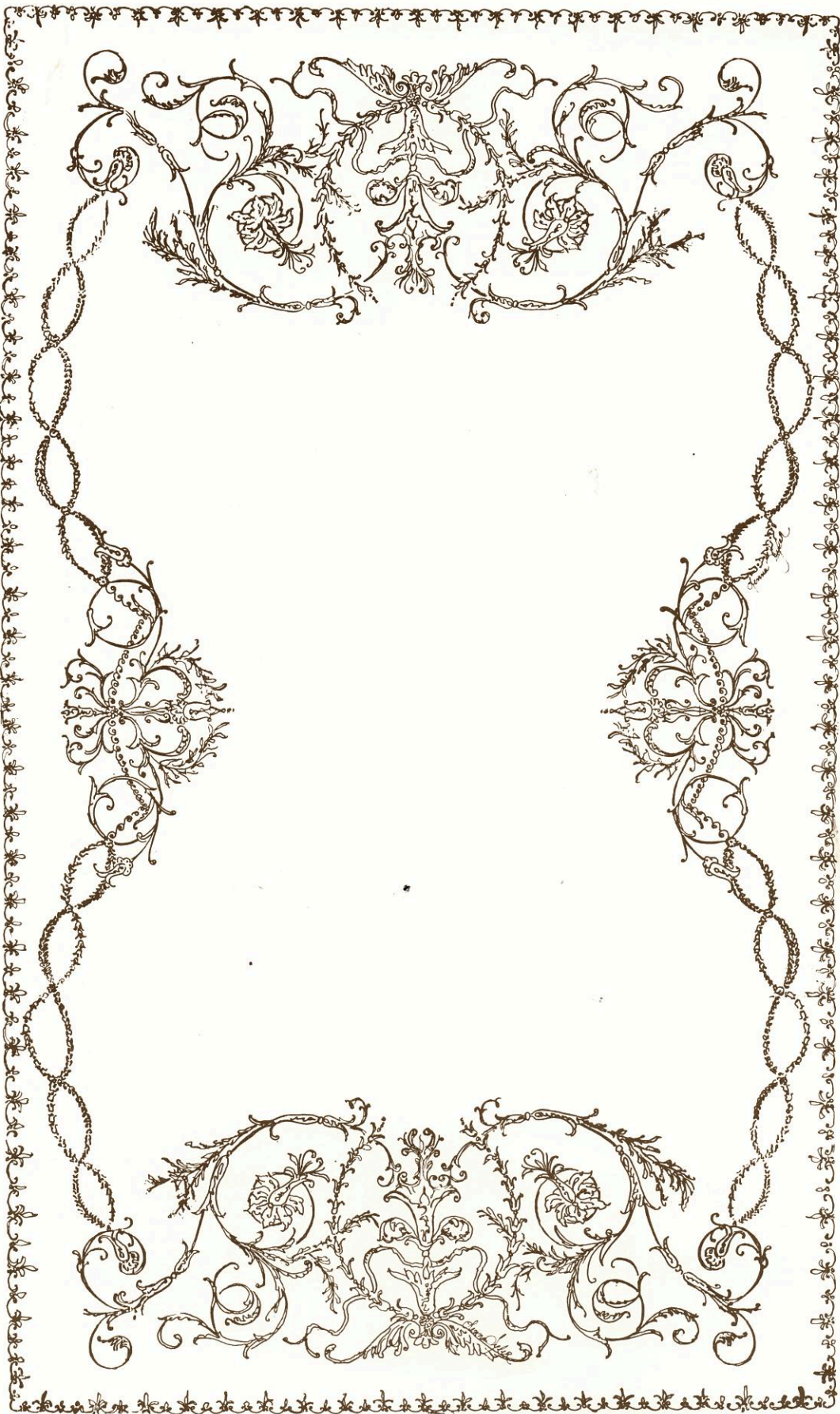


Room 1-10 Ceiling Design South Wing

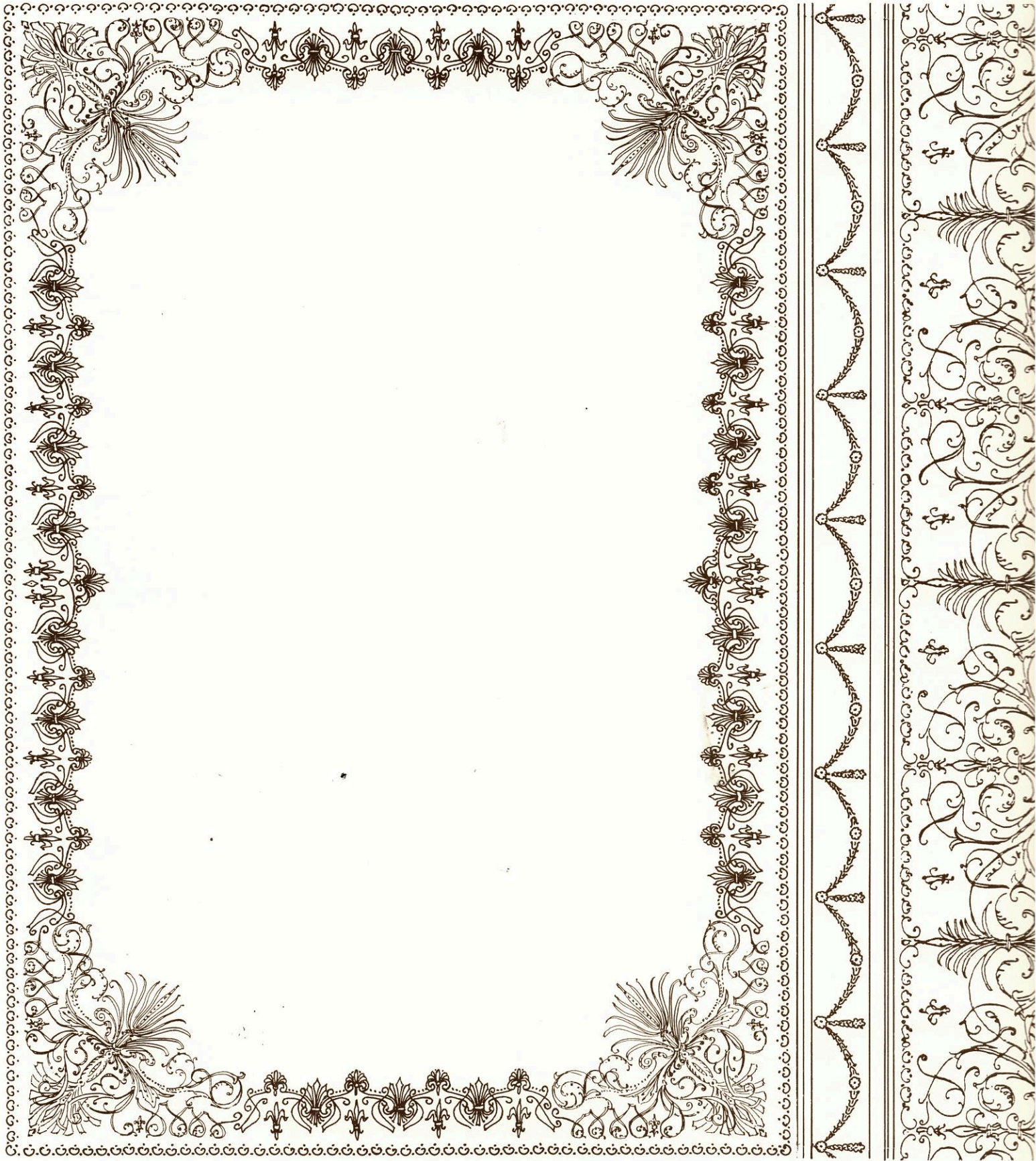


Stencil design discovered in its original colour. It was located below the frieze design of the opposite page. Note: By 1975, at the very beginning of the restoration, all the ceilings and friezes had been painted white. All of the original colourings were gone. There were only vague references to paint purchased in the Legislative records in the late 1800's. When the vents were taken out of the various rooms small areas of the original colours were revealed. They were nonchromatic and reflective of

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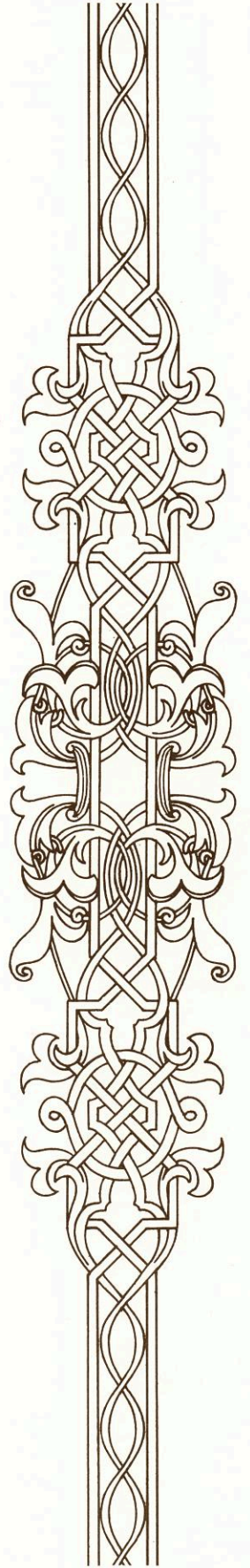
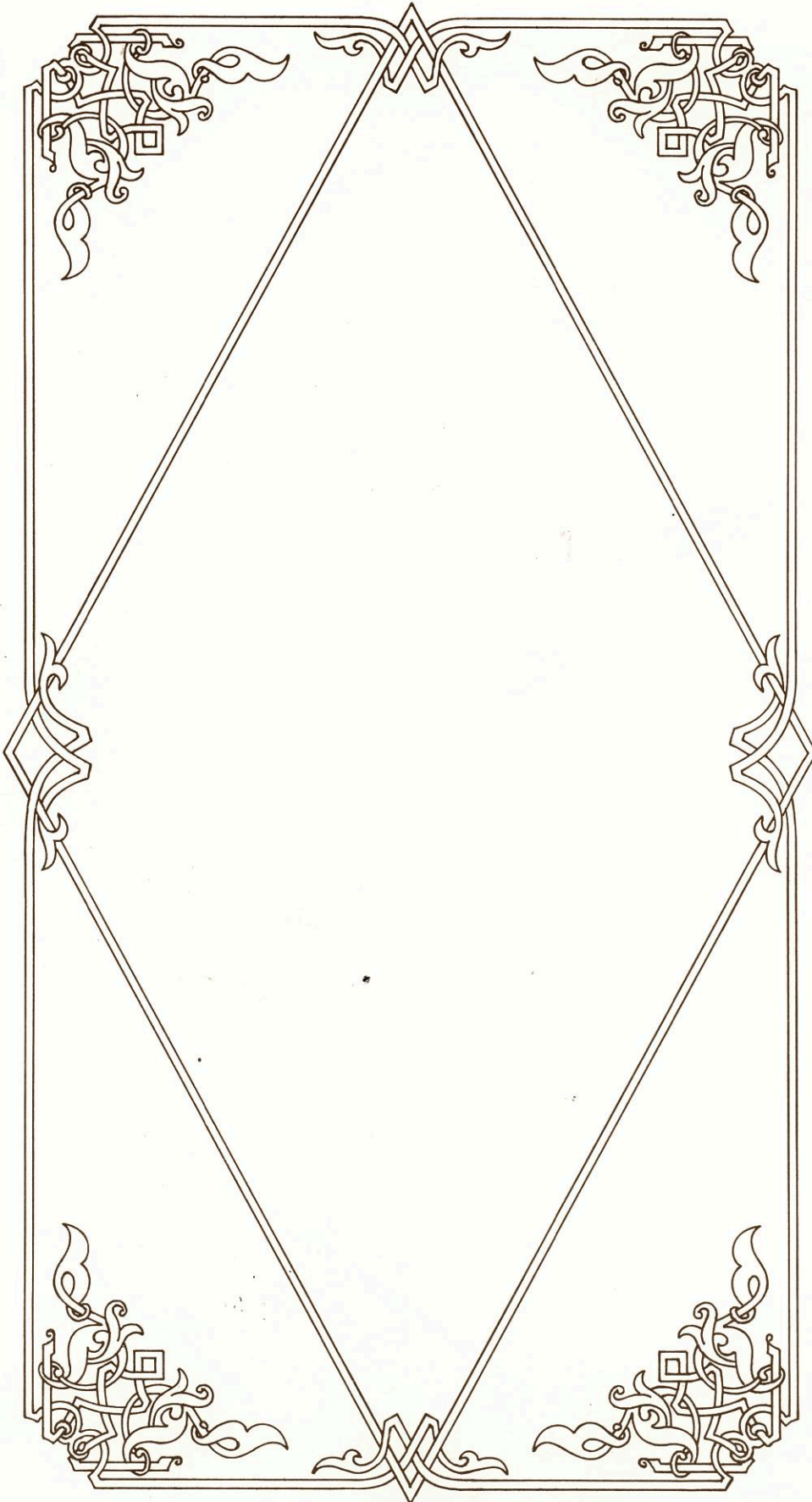
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Room 1-62 Ceiling & Frieze Design

This design demonstrates the influence of the Persian carpet. This is one of the design sets that survived, into

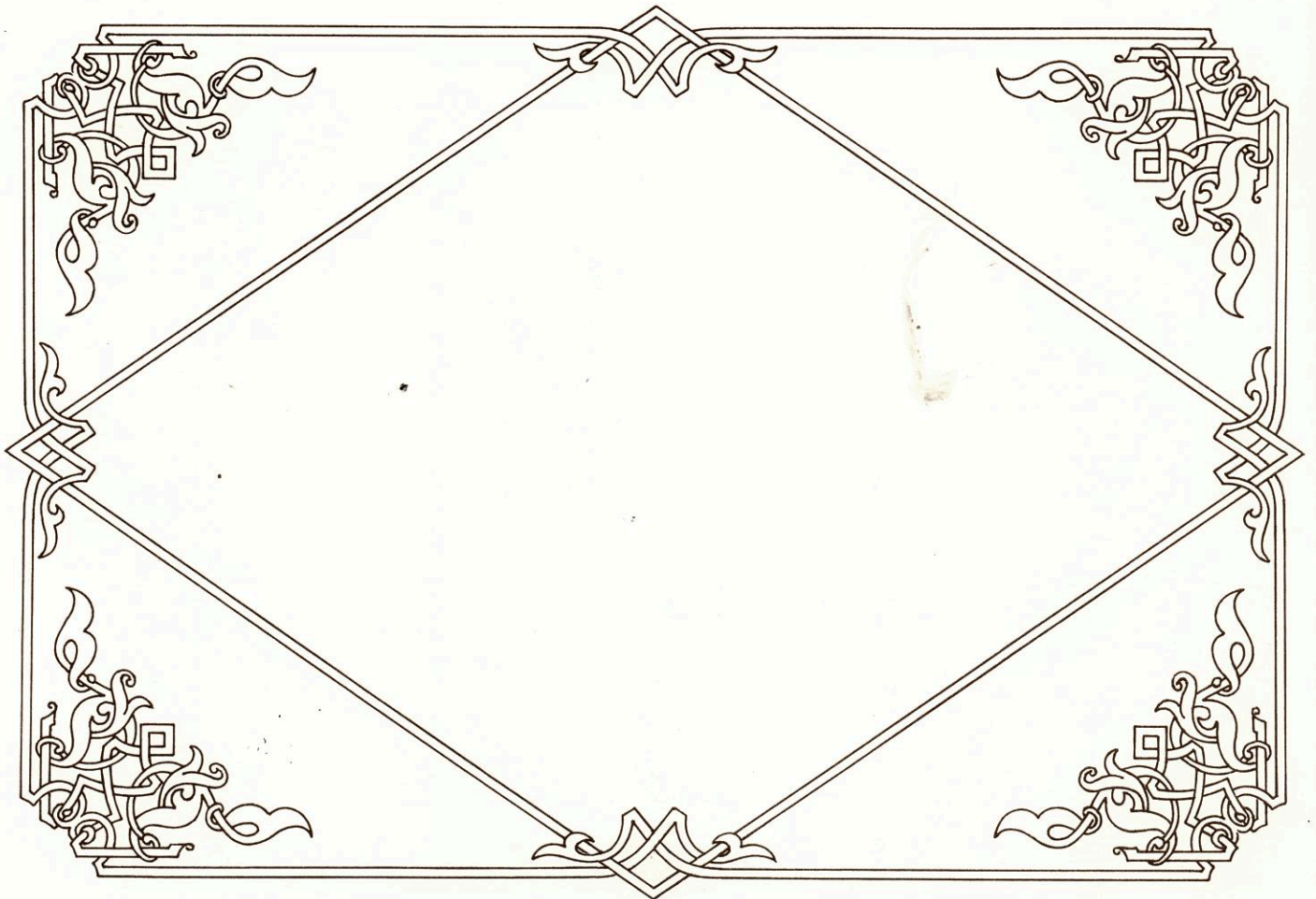
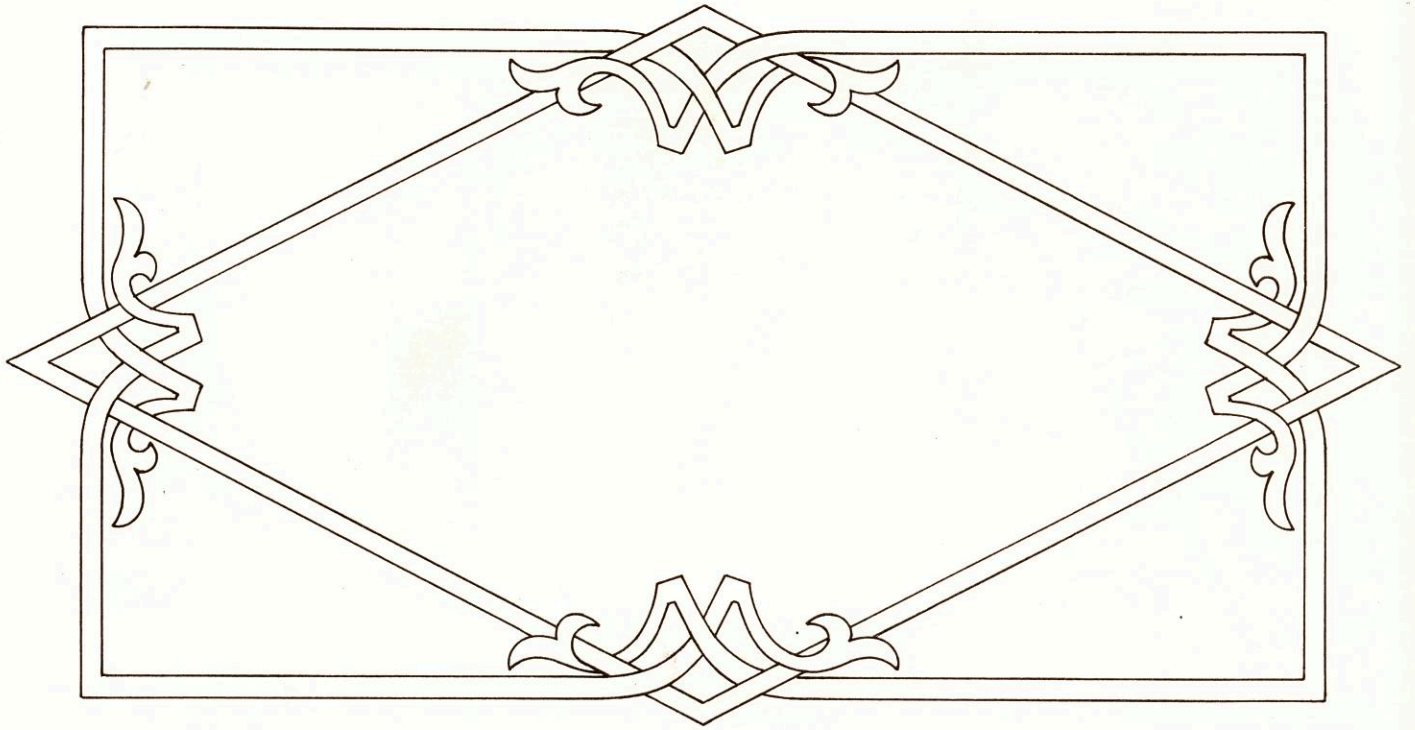
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Treasurer's Office      Small rooms at the front of the building      Ceiling & Frieze Designs

*These designs were put in at a later period probably around the turn of the century. They were not replaced*

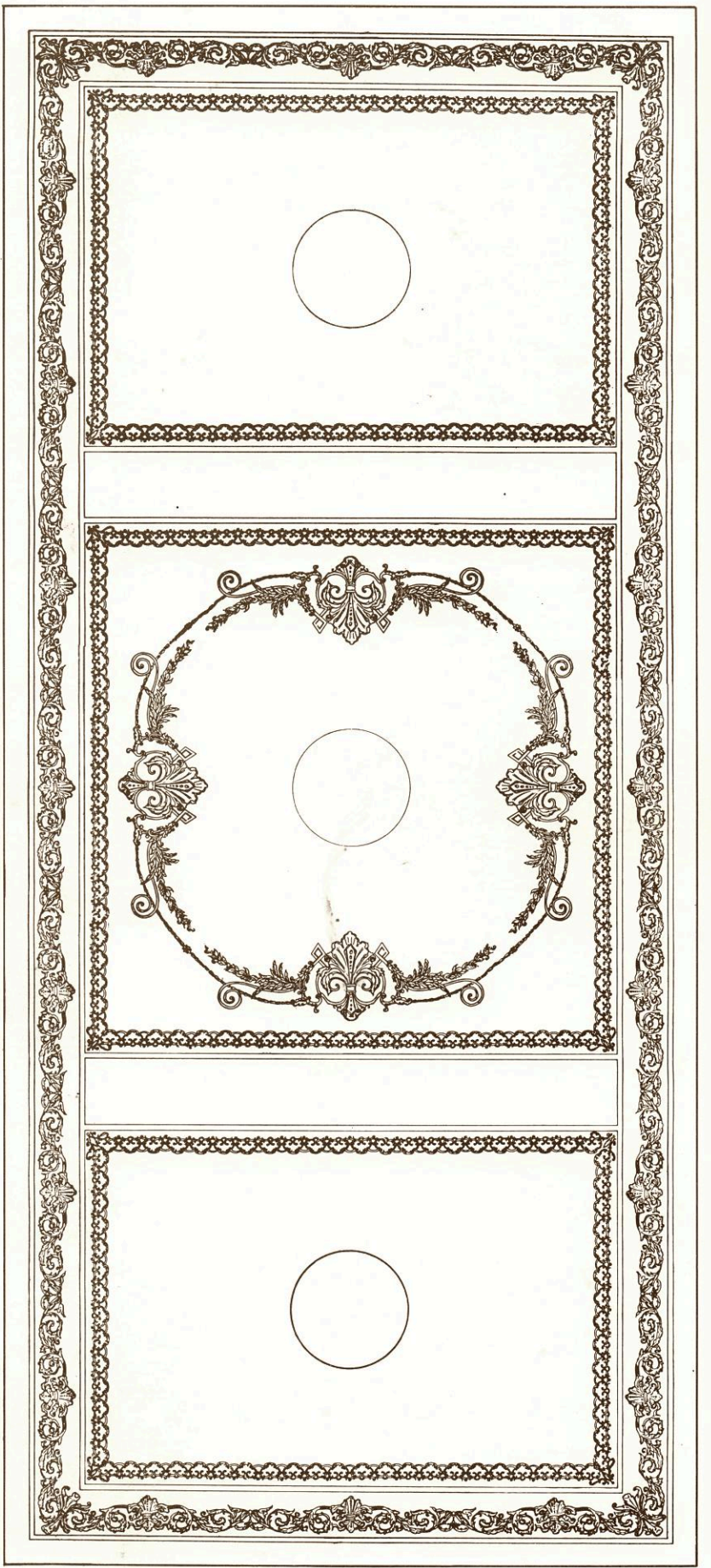
CALIFORNIA STATE CAPITOL BUILDING



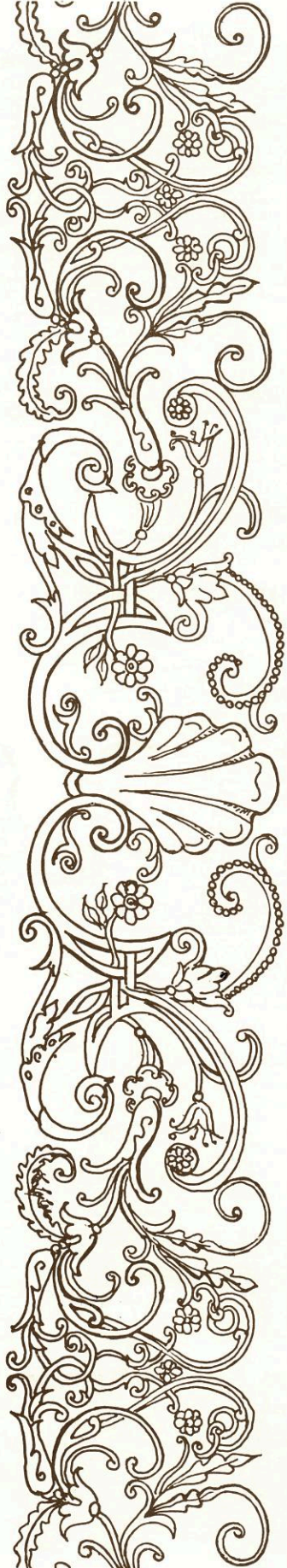
*Treasurer's Office      Small rooms at the front of the building      Ceiling Designs*

*These designs were found in the small rooms at the front of the building. They are a marvelous example of Art Nouveau with an Oriental influence. The designs were defined in the half-round parterre*

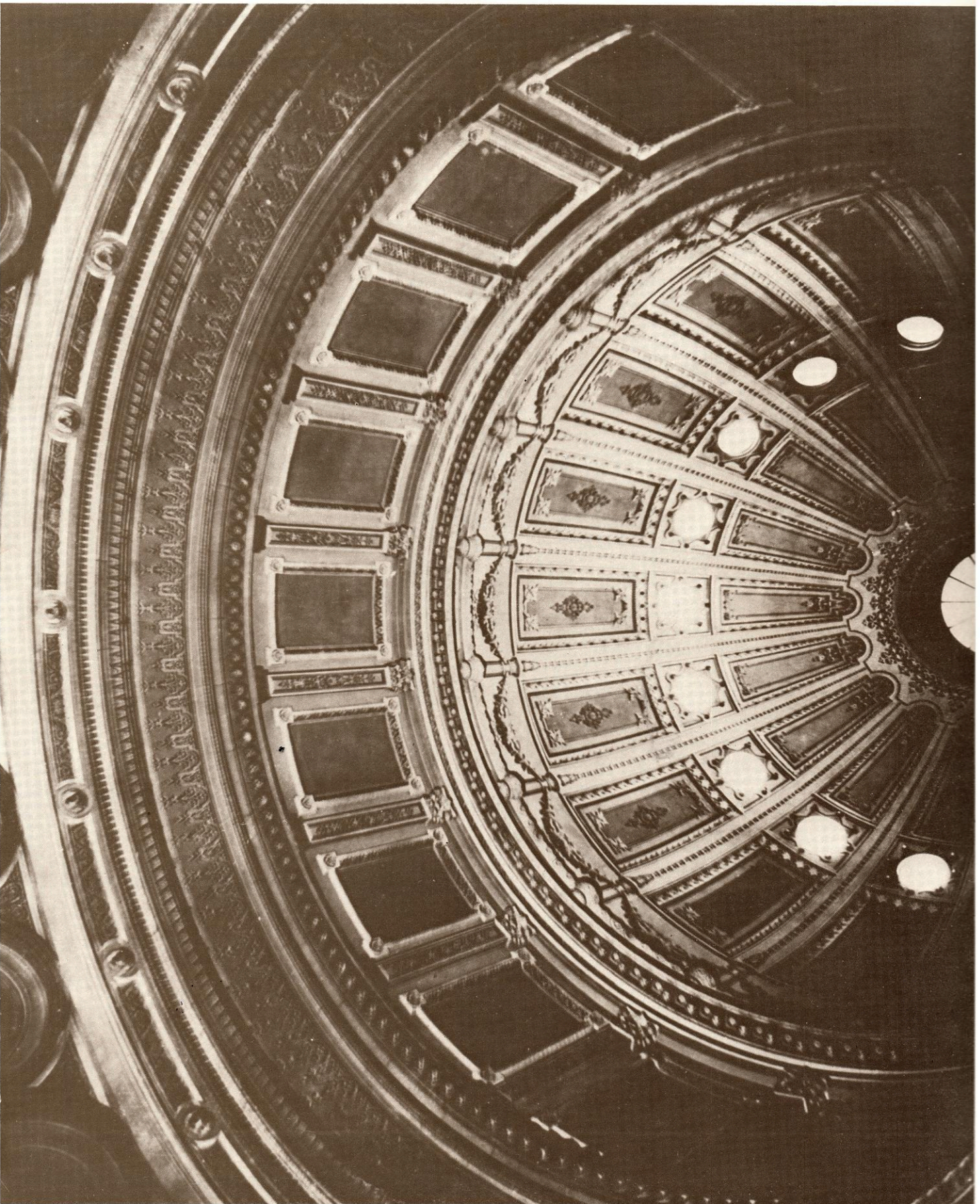




Rooms 1-31, 1-57      Legislative Meeting Rooms      Ceiling & Frieze Designs



On the inside part of the hallway of the North and South Wings the original three rooms were combined into one large room to meet the changing needs of the building. The designs were meticulously taken from a turn of the century photograph of the State library that at that time resided in the Capitol. The scale for the design was taken from the size of the books on the shelves.



*Rotunda The most detailed surviving photograph of the original rotunda. During the restoration there was a great deal of debate over which elements were in relief and which were merely stenciled. This was the main source of reference for the decisions that were made.*