

Something New Underfoot

By Trail End State Historic Site Curator Nancy McClure; from *Trail End Notes*, April 2001

Since 1997, End Guilds members and Trail End staffers have been working with Floor Designs Inc., of Dalton, Georgia, on a design for the replication of Trail End's rugs. Floor Designs uses a computerized loom called a CYP which enables them to match the pattern, color and texture of the original rugs at an affordable price.

For the Trail End project - replicating twelve Wilton-style tufted rugs in three colors - the price runs about \$12,000.

Money for the project came from book and postcard sales, Grand Home Tour ticket sales, plus donations from the visiting public and members of the extended Kendrick family.

The hardest part of the project was the color match. We had to go with a custom color mix in order to match the deep tones of the original rugs. We also had to find a portion of the original rugs that hadn't been faded by nearly ninety years of direct sunlight (the south end of the second floor had the most original coloring).



Replication Rug (left) and Original Rug (right)

At Trail End, we are very proud of the fact that the majority of the furnishings and household objects on exhibit are either original to the building or were owned and used by the Kendrick family at one time or another. This has always included the beautiful maroon and gold Wilton-style wool rugs that have graced the first and second floors of the house, as well as the main staircase that ascends from the foyer to the third-floor ballroom.

But as in all historic house museums, the rugs on our floors must necessarily endure the traffic of all who visit the home each day, and of the staff members who take care of the building and its contents. While we know that the Kendrick family liked to entertain, the number of guests

that the house received during its history as a private residence pales in comparison to the volume of visitors we now welcome to the museum.

Our dozen or so historic rugs have held their own for nearly ninety years, but in recent times have begun to show significant wear and tear from the years of foot traffic they have received.

In any museum, responsible management involves a balancing act between ensuring preservation of the building and the artifacts it houses, and providing public access to and interpretation of these same historic resources. In our roles as stewards of a public institution, the staff of Trail End strives to maintain this balance of preservation and access so that current and future visitors can explore the mansion and learn its history for years to come. If we simply allowed the artifacts under our care to deteriorate, we soon would have nothing tangible left, and those objects that connect us to Wyoming's heritage would be lost.

The historic rugs that we are replacing will be transferred to the storage facilities at the Wyoming State Museum, where they will be retired from service, stored, and preserved for the future. [At the State Museum's request, the rugs were later returned to Trail End for storage.] We will keep one of the smaller rugs here at the mansion as an example of the original floor coverings. [This rug is on exhibit near the second floor elevator doors.]

Though the colors are not exactly exact, and the pattern is just a little off scale (due to changes in manufacturing techniques), Trail End's replication rugs will allow us to continue welcoming our local friends and traveling visitors while preserving the original rugs. Visitors will still tour a historic house that exhibits a wealth of original, historic artifacts that invite them to imagine the house as it was when the Kendrick family called it home. The rugs - once thin, shabby and faded - will once again provide the luxurious look and elegance of bygone days.



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