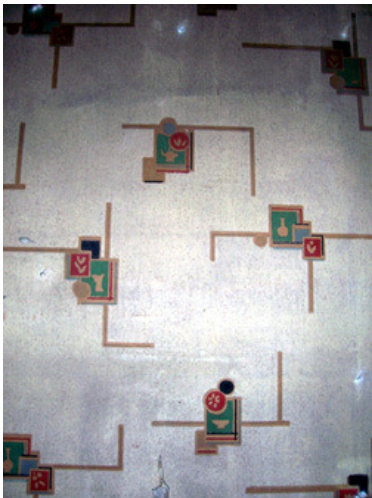


As with the rest of the house, renovations to the kitchen of the Sutton-Peirson house after its relocation to Washington Street in 2009 revealed several layers of older wallpapers and paint treatments. One of these papers, of which only a thin strip survives, is an imitation-wood-grain wallpaper. These faux-wood-grain papers were popular starting in the 1840s, and would sometimes be varnished after they were hung to further create the illusion of genuine wood. But at some point during the first few decades of the following century, the kitchen was modernized to take it out of the Victorian era and into the twentieth century. New wallpaper was part of this modernization.



Layers of paint and wallpaper in the kitchen, 19th and 20th centuries.

Although Mary Draper owned the house until 1944, she had deeded the house to her mother in 1912. Her mother owned the house for the next twenty years before deeding the house back to her daughter in 1932. At some point during the time that Mary E. Dukelow owned the house, new wallpaper was hung,



Art Deco wallpaper in the kitchen

perhaps as part of a major modernization of the kitchen that could have included newfangled appliances such as an icebox or a gas stove. This new wallpaper heralded not only a new century, but a new style of decorative arts as well. Hidden for decades behind blueboard and the modern appliances of the house's last occupants, the kitchen wallpaper is a triumph of Art-Deco design. Conventionalized flowers and household items such as candlesticks, bowls, teapots, and vases are silhouetted in negative space accompanied by circles and squares in metallic gold and set against geometric shapes in blue, red, green, and black. They have a vaguely Asian feel to them, and would have been an appropriate motif for a kitchen. The use of metallic color was a popular embellishment in wallpaper of the 1920s, perhaps influenced by the discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922, when the spectacular gold artifacts that were unearthed inspired an Egyptian Revival within the Art Deco movement. This paper was printed using a new method of wallpaper printing: silk screening. Silk screening in its earliest form originated in China between the 10th and 13th centuries, but the first modern silk screening process was patented in England in 1907. Modern silk screening was originally used to print expensive wallpapers on fine fabrics. In silk screen printing, the stencil of the pattern to be printed is cut out of the silk screen, with one screen for each color used in the pattern. The screen is then laid over the paper and the pigment is spread over the screen with a roller or squeegee. The pigment is pushed through the stencil to deposit the color onto the paper, but it remains on top of the mesh over the rest of the surface area of the screen. When the pigment is dry, the next screen is placed over the paper for a different color to be deposited to print another part of the pattern. That the Art-Deco wallpaper used in the kitchen of the Sutton-Peirson house was silk screened is evidenced by the overlay of colors in some places on the paper, as if the screen for that color was not exactly aligned when placed over the pattern of the colors printed beforehand.



*Detail of Art Deco wallpaper.
Note the overlapping colors.*

The Sutton-Peirson house had been continuously inhabited from the time it was built in 1847 until the death of its last owner in 2008. The many layers of wallpaper in the house, both old and new, are reminders of how over a century and a half of occupants chose to make their living environment more hospitable and aesthetically pleasing. In its new location on Washington Street, the Sutton-Peirson house is in good company. To its right is the Salata-Osborn House, also owned by the Peabody Historical Society and dating from 1852. Its new neighbor to its left is another, privately owned Gothic Revival house dating from approximately the same time as the Sutton-Peirson house. The two houses complement each other perfectly, and look as if they have existed side by side for the past century and a half. The Sutton-Peirson house is currently undergoing renovation and restoration. When completed, it will become the new home of the Ruth H. Hill Library of the Peabody Historical Society and Museum. It will house the Society's collection of books, maps, photographs, and archives, and will better accommodate students, scholars, and other members of the public who wish to take advantage of the Society's vast resources on the City of Peabody.



The Sutton-Peirson House at its new location on Washington Street.



The gable, vergeboard with trefoil motifs, and lancet window, are quintessential elements of the Gothic Revival style.

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