

THE MONOGRAPH SERIES

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PARLOR MANTEL—ABOUT 1815—IN LATER PORTION

(See Measured Drawing on Page 75)

FARMHOUSE OF ELIAS ENDICOTT PORTER—1737—PUTNAMVILLE
DANVERS, MASSACHUSETTS

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MANTELPiece IN FRONT PARLOR
MAJ. ISRAEL FORSTER HOUSE—1804—MANCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

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SOME LOW MANTELS *and* FIREPLACE ENFRAMEMENTS

PRINCIPALLY *of the* BEGINNING *of the* NINETEENTH CENTURY

Photographs by Arthur C. Haskell

AT the time the fireplace was removed from its earlier location in the center of the room to one of its walls or corner angles, the square hearth shrank to a segment of its former area; and its marginal moulding seems, appropriately enough, to have extended upward over the wall surface in order to continue to limit the fireplace boundaries along its two sides and top. In those Mediæval days when the fire recess was first given an enclosed or concealed flue, it usually opened from the top of a stonebuilt hood, which itself soon became an appropriate part of the æsthetic design of the mantel, as well as exercising its inner functional purpose in collecting the smoke above the firebox and directing it into the flue that had been newly devised for the very practical purpose of removing the smoke from the room.

As the firebox itself became more deeply recessed into the wall—and especially as that wall became less a part of a stone built border castle and came into general use in the more humble dwelling of serf or retainer—the somewhat pretentious exterior hooded treatment disappeared from view; although it remained concealed more deeply within the wall, and was executed in humbler—and less fire resisting materials. In this less costly and more impermanent dwelling, the fireplace was either only partially built of stone inserted into a wooden or wattle wall,—or it largely or entirely filled one end of the principal room of the small dwelling; the flue often being carried up outside, of crisscrossed twigs heavily daubed with wet clay both inside and out.

This was also the earliest method employed in New England, and survivals of this treatment may still be found in early houses along the Eastern Coast, of which perhaps the best known examples are the early “stone-end” houses of New Jersey, Connecticut, and Rhode Island—or the brown stone dwellings of the lower Hudson Valley. When the house increased in

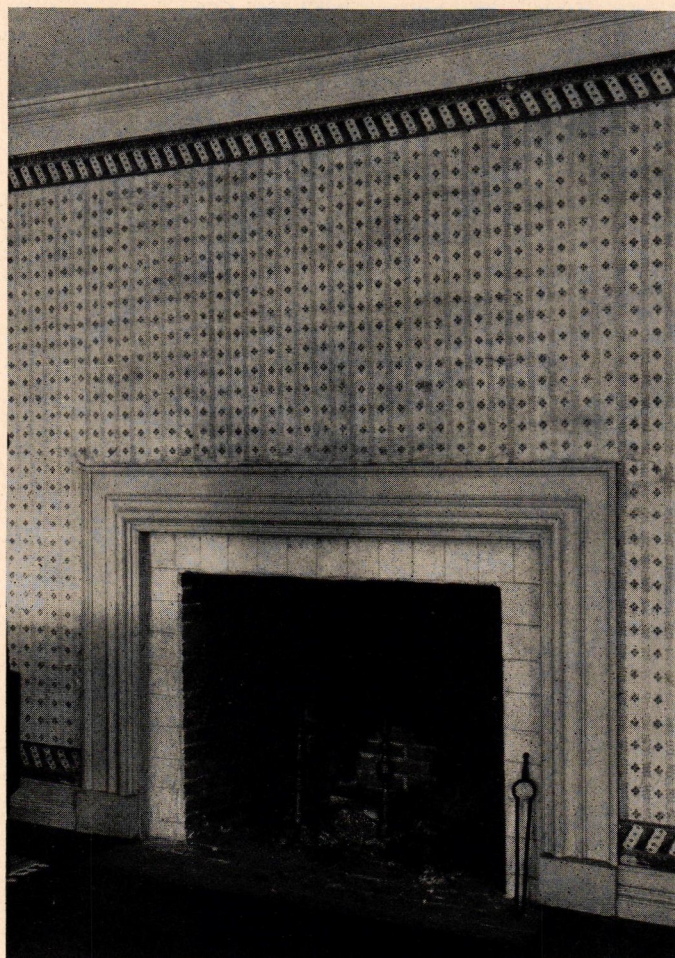
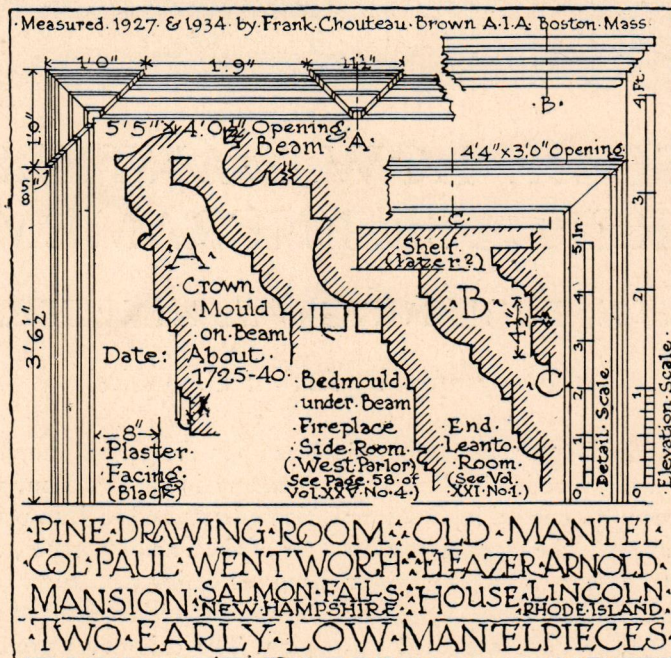
size upon the ground, however, it became a matter of economy in construction, as well as in the conservation of heat and fuel, to place the chimney in the center of the small structure, thus enclosing the chimney and increasing the danger of fire, as well as bringing it between the inner walls of the two or three room floor plan. The chimney at once became larger, the fireplaces deeper, and the masonry construction of the fireplace itself came necessarily to be extended up through the wooden framed structure and well above its roof surfaces.

At the same time the fireplace began gradually to shrink in size, both in width—or length—height and depth. As this tendency continued, the æsthetic requirements of the owners (or perhaps it was only the woman’s demand for simpler surfaces to clean and dust) introduced a wooden screen or partition that filled the remainder of these interior walls, separated the staircase and hall from the two or more rooms on each floor—and made necessary some sort of a boundary or lapping finish that would cover the point where the masonry fireplace stopped and the wood boarded wall at each side of and over it began. And so—and from quite another and different set of conditions—once again the suggestion for a moulded enframement of the fire opening evolved.

The danger of fire was still sufficient to require that the masonry firebox be extended in a facade upon both sides, and over the top of the fire opening, in the wall face; that the bordering woodwork be kept well back from the fire opening, and that a moulding be introduced to make tight the joint between the two materials and prevent any draft from drawing sparks up back of the paneling, into the space around and outside of the chimney flue. Among the earliest treatments, was the well known form of the “Bolection” moulding, at first used along the edge of the fire opening in stone, and later reproduced in wood (but at first still maintaining a full stone scale) four to eight inches back from the edge of the fire opening.

In some early fireplaces this precaution was disregarded, and an example may be seen in the West Pan-eled Bedroom of the Col. Paul Wentworth Mansion (The Mono-graph Series, Vol. XXV, No. 4, Page 60). This was a rather dangerous exception, nevertheless — as not only might sparks from the fire be car-ried in back of the paneling, but also the inner edge of the wood stiles come so near the edge of the mason-ry opening that the heat from a hot fire might easily start a conflagration.

In most cases, there-fore, the early fire-places in Colonial dwellings were placed back of a paneled end or side wall of a room, with a framing mould-ing around the fire opening. In other words, the rudiments of what is termed a "mantel." The earlier simple Bolection moulding, which often fitted back against the stile of a paneled wall treatment, was often aided by some especial emphasis on the area directly over the fire-place opening (The Mono-graph, Vol. XXV, No. 4, Page 61) usually by a simple variation in the direc-tion or arrangement of the panelwork itself. The Bolection section was supplanted by other simple moulded



OLD MANTEL
DR. PETER OLIVER HOUSE—1762
MIDDLEBOROUGH, MASSACHUSETTS

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arrangements — as is illustrated in Vol. XXV, No. 4, Page 59, and at the left, where the mouldings of that example are drawn.

A simple variant of the label moulding is often used without a shelf over it (although the latter is frequently added in later years — as in Vol. XXV, No. 4, on page 58), returning against a plain paneled wall in the earlier years, or — a little later — against a wall of plaster — as in the Dr. Peter Oliver House (below) and the Stephen Daniel House, (across page). By early in the Eighteenth Century the use of plaster sur-facing for at least three of the room walls became common, although the fireplace wall still continued to be paneled. The first change was to retain the high mantel with overpanel to the ceiling, sometimes with flanking side pilasters; but extending the plaster over the balance of the fourth wall, as well. This form was most typical of the English Georgian Period, and was fashionably followed in this country. But there being no longer a structural reason for the high mantel, it began by the end of the Century to disappear. The new fashion was to continue the lower portion of



OLD MANTEL IN LATER "END LEANTO" PORTION—c. 1740—(See *Measured Drawing* Page 68)
ELEAZER ARNOLD HOUSE—1687—LINCOLN, RHODE ISLAND



MANTEL IN FIRST FLOOR SOUTH WEST ROOM (OLDER PORTION) (*Historic American Buildings Survey*)
STEPHEN DANIEL HOUSE—1693—SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS



DETAILS OF FRIEZE AND PILASTER ORNAMENT, PARLOR MANTEL
MAJ. ISRAEL FORSTER HOUSE—1804—MANCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS



(See Measured Drawing Page 74)

the preceding form, with well established mantel shelf, and leave the wall space above it open for the hanging of a fine portrait or mirror.

An early example of this simple type is in the end-addition made to the Eleazer Arnold House (page 69),—a dwelling which is also one of the best examples of the Rhode Island “stone-end” fireplace house plan (The Monograph, Vol. XXI, No. 1). Another simple—and rather early—example is in the Col. John Gorham House (page 72). This is the type that has continued a favorite down to the present day. Embellished, as it has been, by small pilasters, by carved panels and frieze decorations, by carpenter’s hand worked and chiseled grooves, by varied and flowing outlines, it is the type to which the other illustrations in this issue have been given.

Two early examples of the new pilaster supports are in the Bryant-Cushing House, page 74 (and the Monograph, Vol. XXV, No. 3, page 37). An example of a transitional type from the preceding “over-mantel panel,” on page 66, is shown; where two delicate pilasters extend from the lower mantel shelf to the cornice of the room. The influence of Samuel McIntire is clearly evident in this mantel,—and, as Maj. Forster came from Marblehead to settle in Manchester, there may be reason for this resemblance—

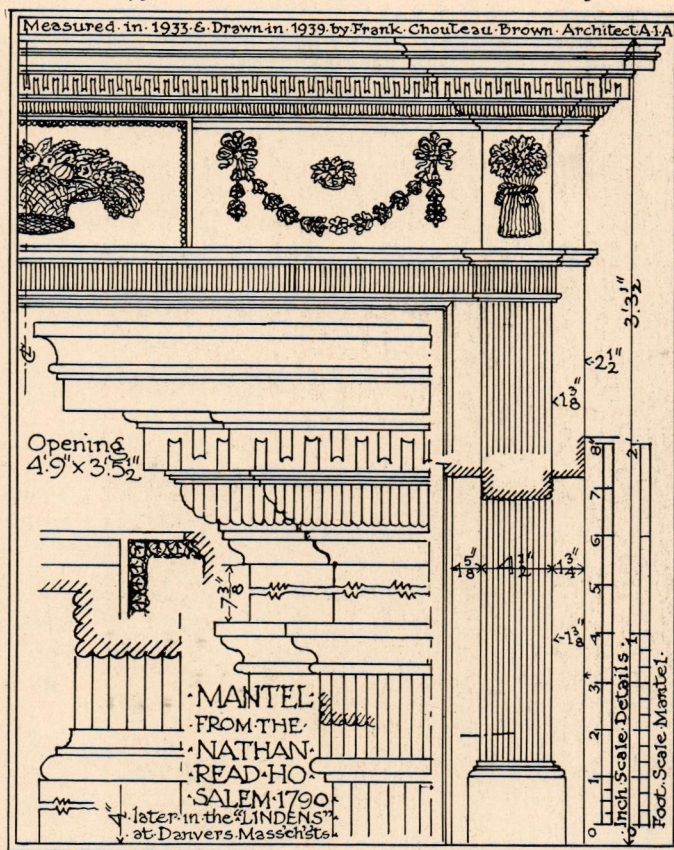


DETAILS OF CARVING, McINTIRE MANTEL, THE "LINDENS," FORMERLY AT DANVERS, MASSACHUSETTS
— TAKEN FROM THE NATHAN READ HOUSE—1790—DEMOLISHED IN SALEM, 1856

although its charming delicacy contrasts strongly with the bedroom mantel drawn beside it on page 74! Incidentally, the wall paper on this parlor was ordered by the owner from England, and, along with papers on the Dr. Oliver, and Samuel Fowler rooms, show five early examples in this issue. Another McIntire mantel is the sole survivor of the Salem over-door and three mantels from the Nathan Read House (Salem, 1790) that were installed in the "Lindens" by Francis Peabody on his purchase of the place in 1860—even against its incongruous 1754 paneled breasts!

In the Samuel Fowler mantels, pages 76 and 77, reappear the same local hand-cut and turned "carpenter patterns," to which notice was directed in the details of the doorways shown in the "Monograph," Vol. XXIV, No. 5, pages 168 and 169. Equal ingenuity is displayed by Cape Cod workmen at the Christopher Ryder House at Chathamport, who, with their grooved chisels, worked otherwise plain surfaces into partially fluted and beaded treatments.

FRANK CHOUTEAU BROWN, A.I.A.

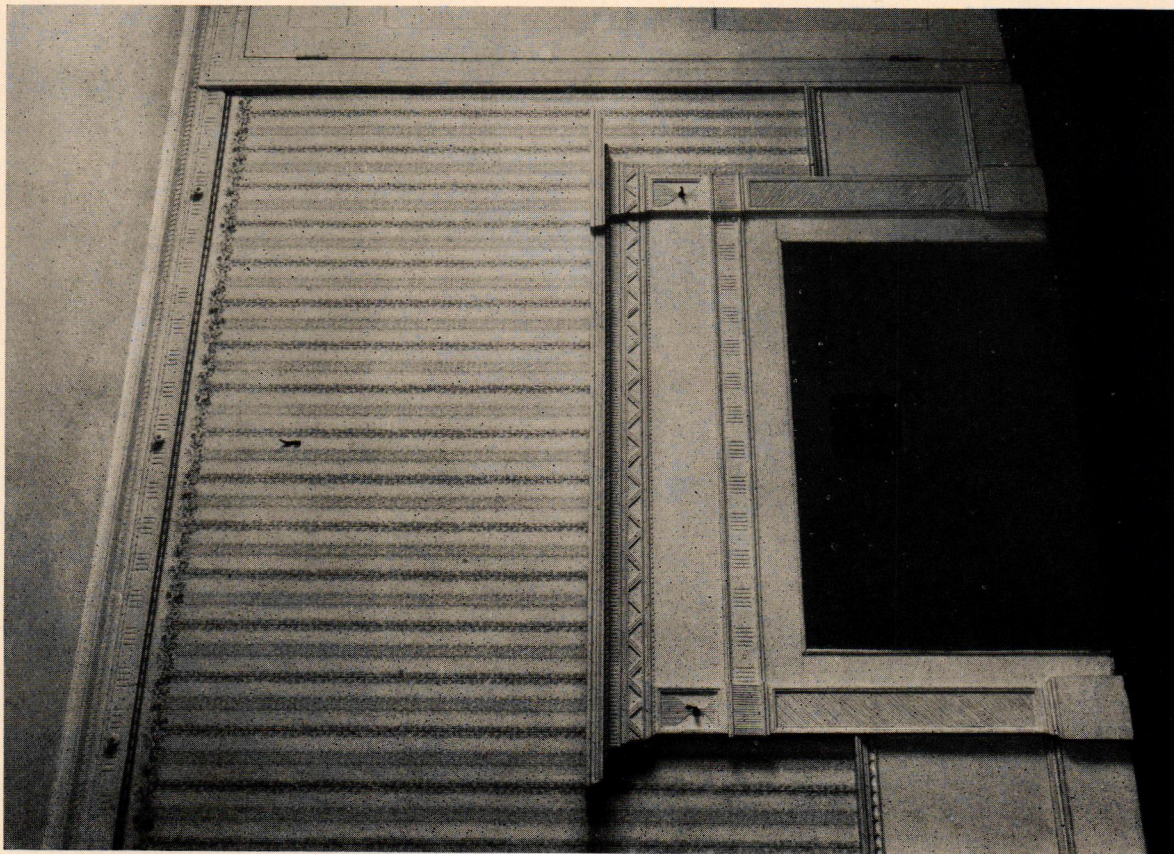




DINING ROOM MANTEL
COL. JOHN GORHAM HOUSE—1690—BARNSTABLE, MASS.



MCINTIRE MANTEL, FROM NATHAN READ HOUSE—1790—SALEM
(Historic American Buildings Survey)
LATER IN "THE LINDENS," AT DANVERS, MASSACHUSETTS



(Historic American Buildings Survey)

MANTEL IN BEDROOM

(See Measured Drawing Page 75)

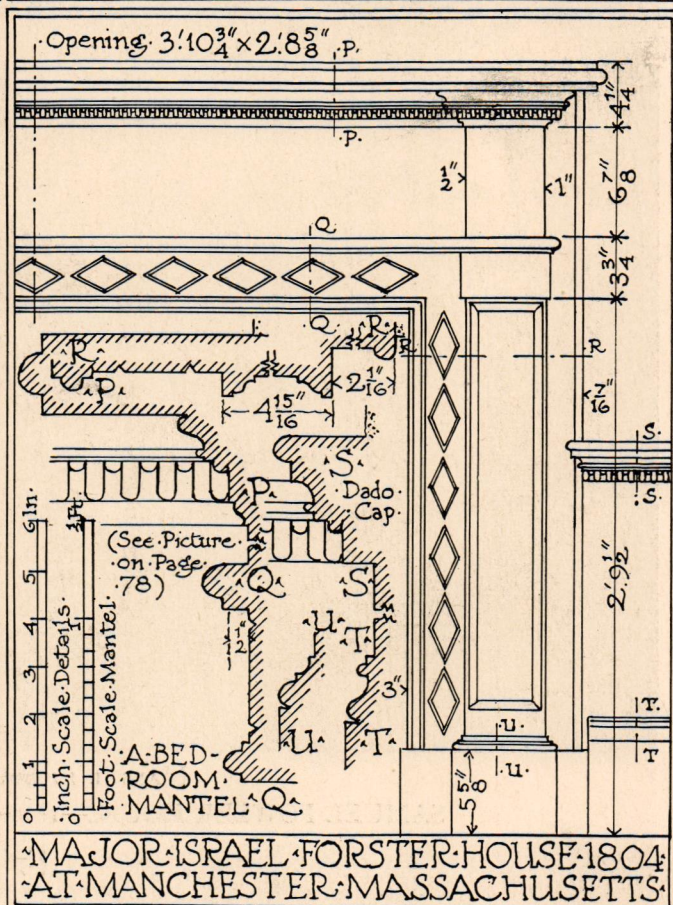
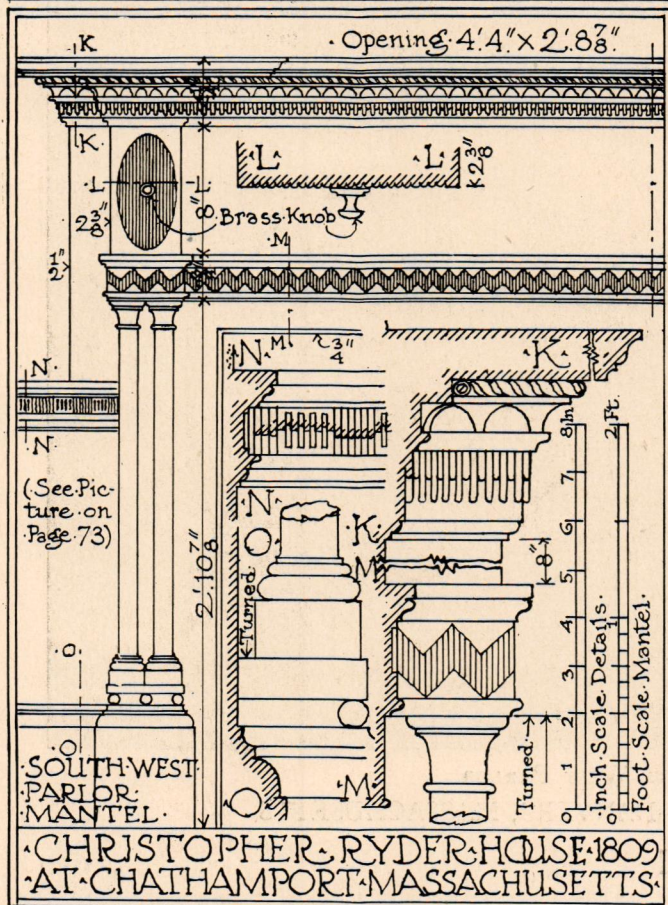
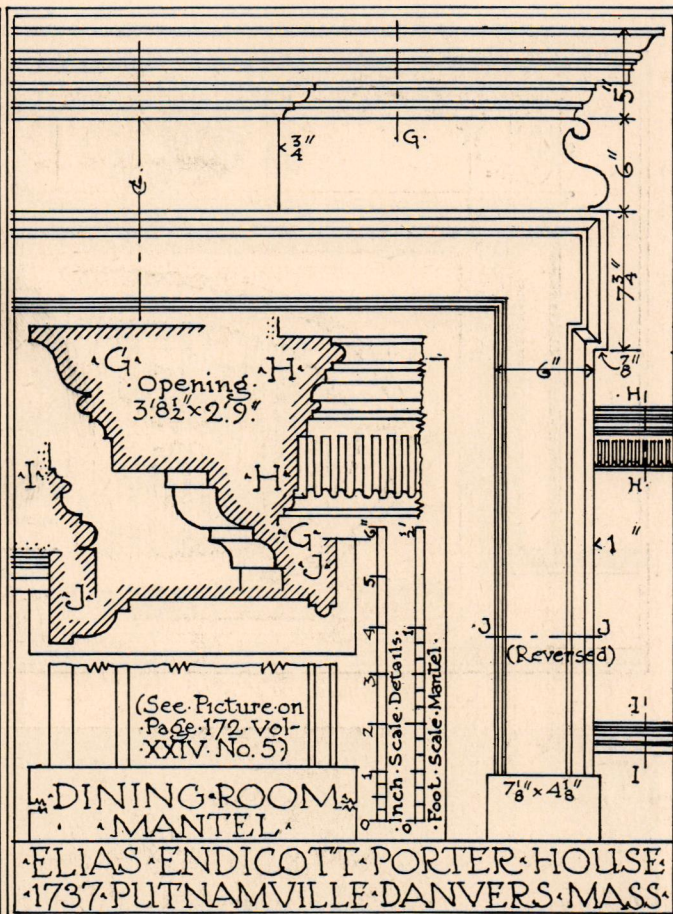
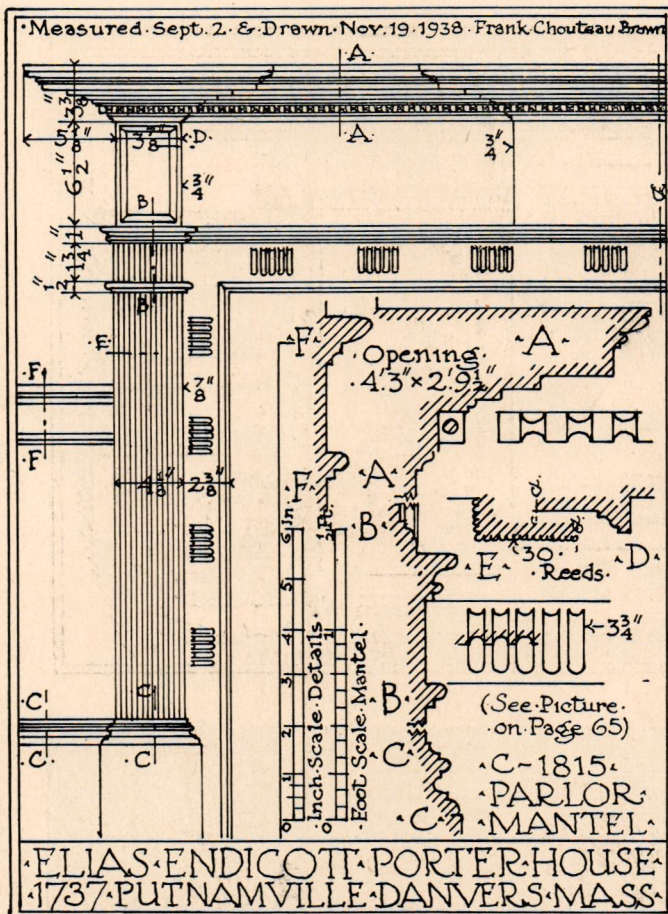
CHRISTOPHER RYDER HOUSE, 1809, CHATHAMPORT, MASSACHUSETTS

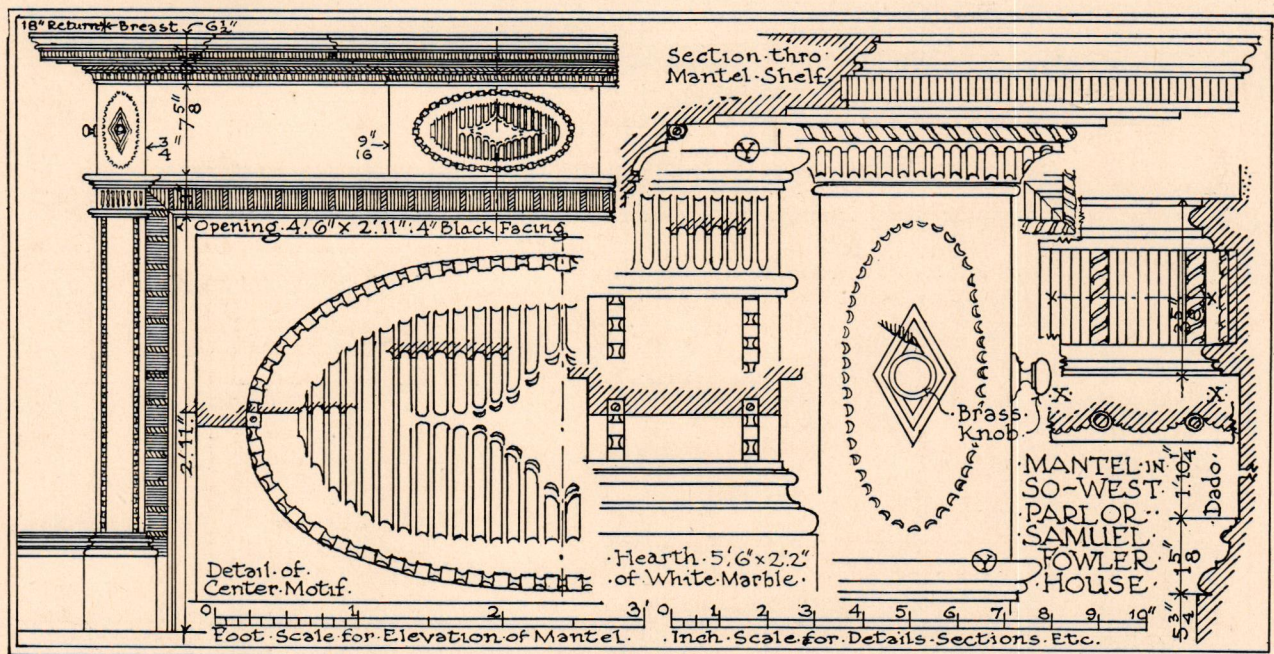


(Historic American Buildings Survey)

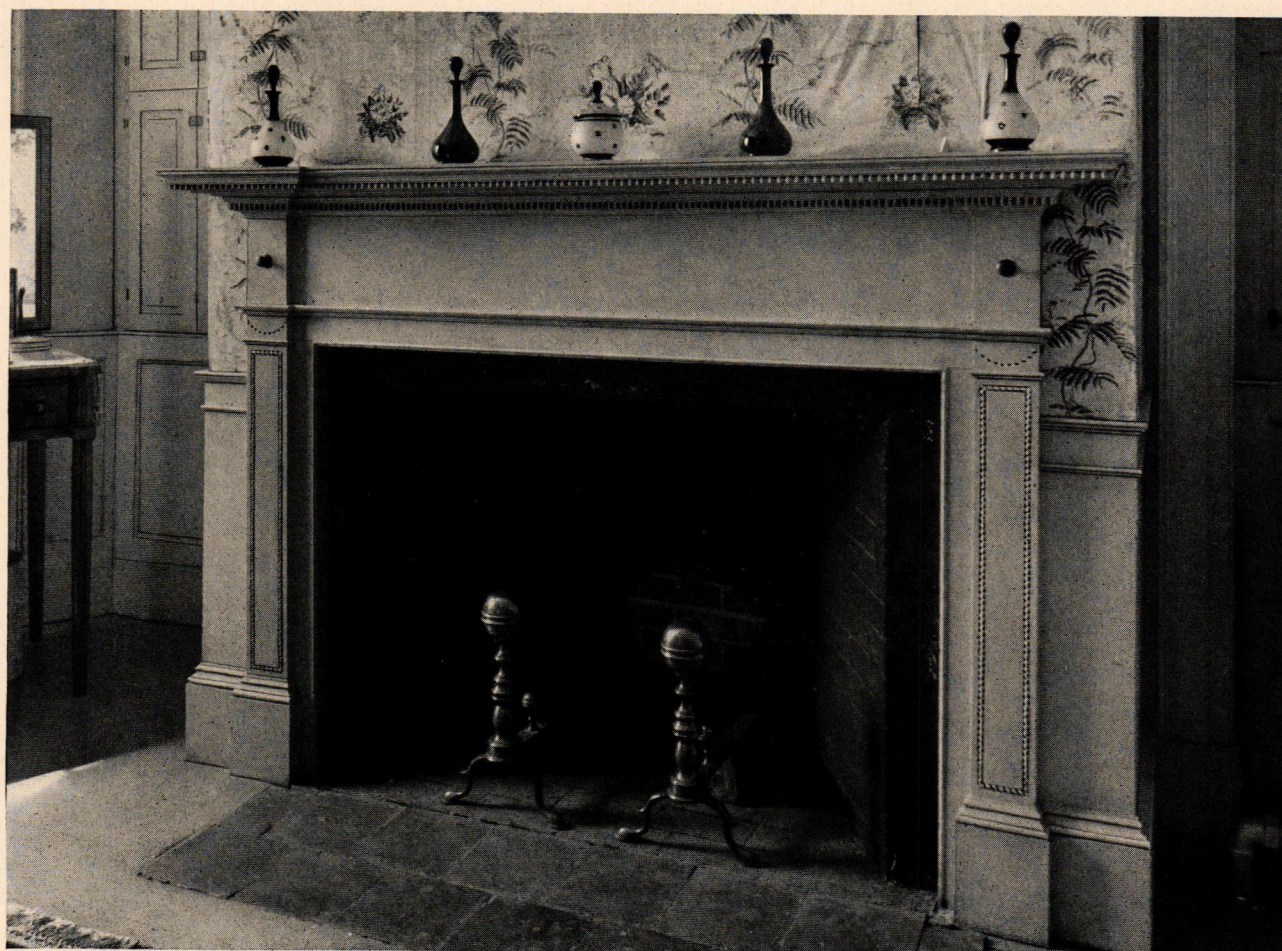
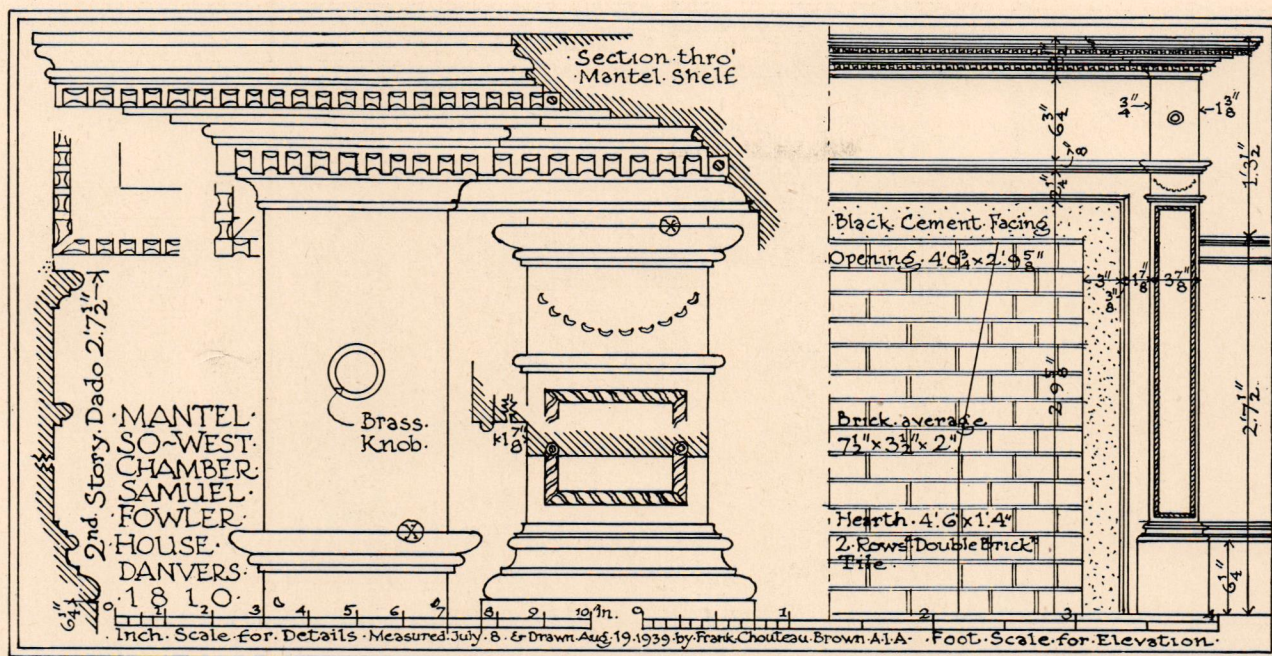
SOUTH WEST PARLOR MANTEL

CHRISTOPHER RYDER HOUSE, 1809, CHATHAMPORT, MASSACHUSETTS

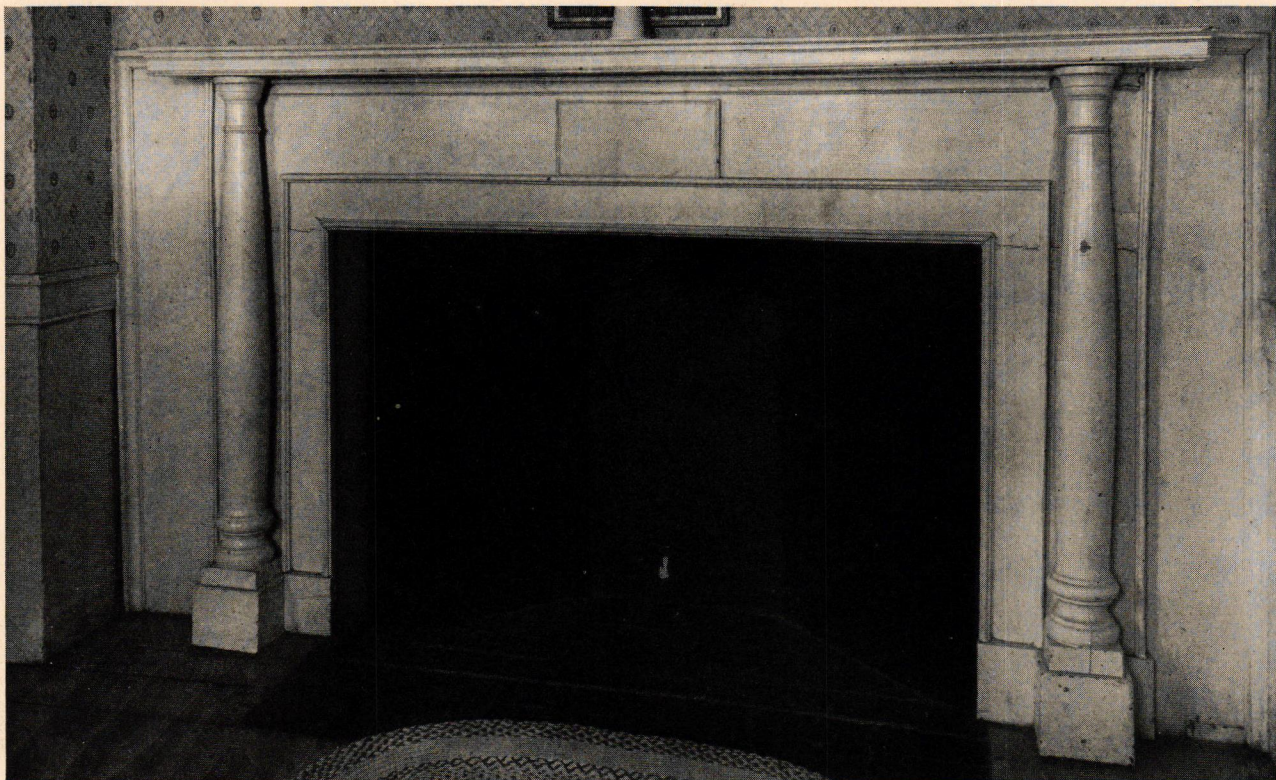




MANTEL IN SOUTH-WEST PARLOR
SAMUEL FOWLER HOUSE—1810—DANVERS, MASSACHUSETTS



MANTEL IN SOUTH-WEST CHAMBER
SAMUEL FOWLER HOUSE—1810—DANVERS, MASSACHUSETTS



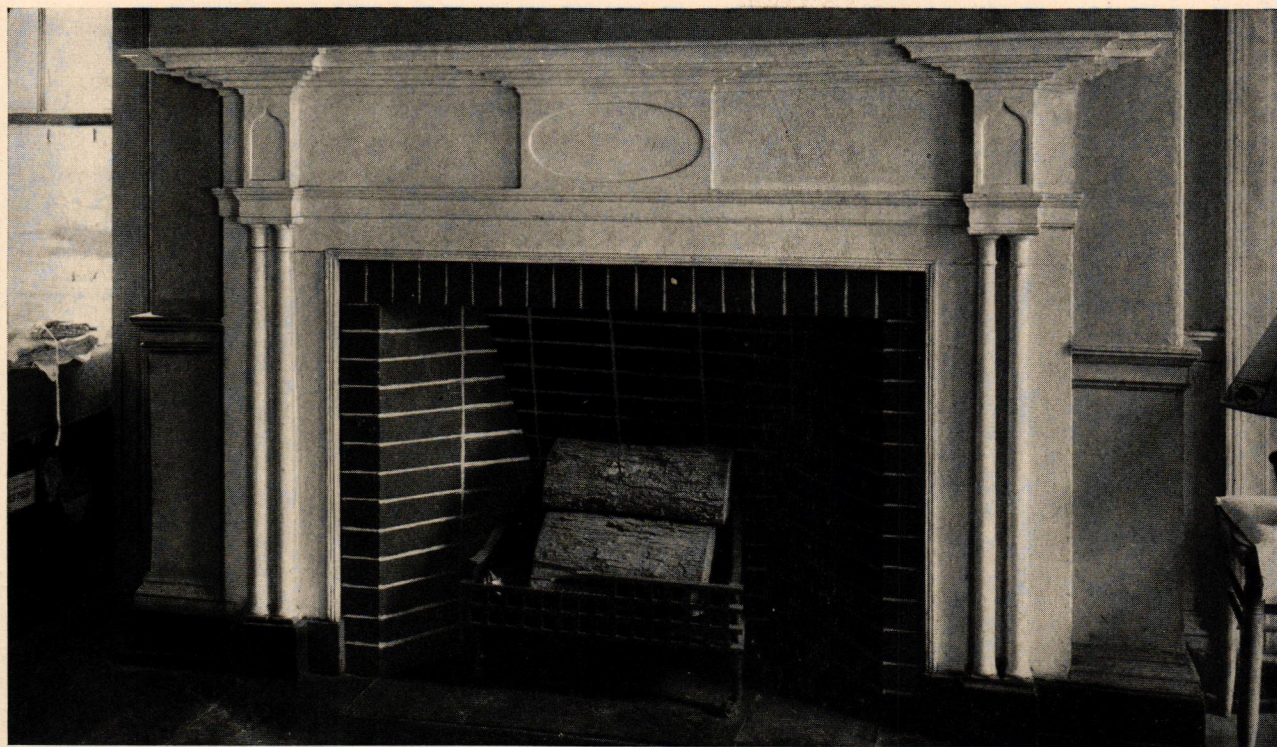
MANTEL IN BEDROOM



MANTEL IN BEDROOM

MAJ. ISRAEL FORSTER HOUSE—1804—MANCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS
(See Measured Drawings, Pages 74 and 75)

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MANTEL IN BEDROOM
EDWARD EVERETT HOUSE—1806—CHARLESTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS



BULFINCH TYPE MANTEL, IN PARLOR
MAYOR ADAMS HOUSE—1811—CHARLESTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS



KITCHEN FIREPLACE AND MANTEL

(Historic American Buildings Survey)

OLD TAVERN INN—C. 1700—SOUTH MIDDLEBOROUGH, MASSACHUSETTS



KITCHEN FIREPLACE AND MANTEL—C. 1815—See *Measured Drawing*, Page 173, Vol. XXIV, No. 5
ELIAS ENDICOTT PORTER FARMHOUSE—1737—DANVERS, MASSACHUSETTS

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