

ADVERTISING LINCRUSTA: ANALYZING MARKETING MATERIALS FOR “THE KING  
OF WALL HANGINGS” IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

by

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(Under the Direction of Katie Marages)

ABSTRACT

Lincrusta is a wall covering made of linseed oil by the inventor of Linoleum, Frederick Walton, that was popular in Europe and North America during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is water-proof, sanitary, and easily imitates more expensive materials such as carved wood or pressed metal for a fraction of the cost. Lincrusta can be found in all types of buildings, from the White House to hospitals. The curious placement of Lincrusta can be determined by how it was advertised, and the greater historical context in which it was invented. Three major events intersected to create the very specific need for Lincrusta: The Victorian Era, advances in printing, and germ theory. Analyzing Lincrusta’s advertisements reveals clues about its historical context and provides a new strategy for identifying important materials that may have otherwise been overlooked.

INDEX WORDS: Lincrusta, Linoleum, Victorian Era, Germ Theory, Magazine, Wall  
Covering, Cameoid, Anaglypta, Vitrolite, Marshtile, Walcrusta

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, who I know can barely contain their excitement to read it. To my son, Jack, thank you for the work breaks wrestling on the floor and watching animal videos. To my daughter, Josie, thank you for making me hurry up and finish this thing. To my wife, Kayla, thank you everything.

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## Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

In the decoration of a house or building, the walls receive careful consideration. Bare walls act as a blank canvas and because they typically comprise the most surface area of a room, they are arguably the most important spaces to decorate. Wall decoration is not new. In fact, people have been decorating their living spaces for more than 40,000 years. The earliest cave painting dates back 45,500 years ago in modern-day Indonesia.<sup>1</sup> Even more modern treatments, such as wallpaper, have been around since the 12<sup>th</sup> century when the Chinese pasted decorated rice paper onto their walls.<sup>2</sup> By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, wall decoration was a booming industry. It seems, however, that choosing wall decoration meant compromise: ornate but expensive, beautiful but delicate, sturdy but austere. One particular type of wall decoration created a nexus between decoration and practicality, as well as high-art and affordability. Though known by several names, beginning in the late 1870s, the eponymously-named Lincrusta-Walton disrupted the interior design industry by providing ornate designs, durability, and affordability. One manufacturer, F.R. Beck, made no mistake about its feelings regarding its product, calling it “The King of Wall Hangings.”<sup>3</sup>

Lincrusta’s name is rooted in Latin, with *linum* for linseed and *crusta* for relief or design. Initially, Lincrusta-Walton was named for both its composition as well as for its inventor, Frederick Walton. Lincrusta has several monikers including Lincrusta-Walton, Lincrusta

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Brumm et al., "Oldest Cave Art found in Sulawesi," *Science Advances* 7, no. 3 (Jan 1, 2021). doi:10.1126/sciadv.abd4648. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/33523879>.

<sup>2</sup> Isabelle Lambert and Claude Laroque, "An Eighteenth-Century Chinese Wallpaper: Historical Context and Conservation," *Studies in Conservation* 47, no. sup3 (Sep 1, 2002), 122-128. doi:10.1179/sic.2002.47.s3.026. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1179/sic.2002.47.s3.026>.

<sup>3</sup> F.R. Beck & Co, "Lincrusta-Walton: Prize Medals Wherever Exhibited," (1891). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nnc2.ark:/13960/t0zq3qm8g&seq=1>.

Muralis, and “The Sunbury Wall Decoration.”<sup>4</sup> For consistency and clarity, the material will be referred to as Lincrusta throughout this thesis. Lincrusta eventually made its way to the United States in 1883 when F.R. Beck purchased the patent rights and began manufacturing it in Stamford, Connecticut.<sup>5</sup> Lincrusta preceded another one of Walton’s inventions, Linoleum. Linoleum is essentially Latin for flaxseed oil, with *linum* for flax and *oleum* for oil. Linoleum comprises linseed oil that’s mixed with an aggregate or ground cork dust, gums, and pigments, which are pressed into sheets with canvas backing. It became a popular flooring choice due to its water-resistant properties, durability, and affordability. Lincrusta is basically linoleum made for hanging on walls much like wallpaper.

Though similar, there are a few key differences between wallpaper and Lincrusta. Chiefly, Lincrusta is embossed, or textured, and washable, making it unique among wall decorations. It can mimic the look of more expensive treatments like leather and wood paneling while also remaining economical and even sanitary with its water resistance. Lincrusta seems to be a paradox. It has an impressive pedigree and was used in notable spaces such as the White House and Titanic.<sup>6</sup> Although it was used in opulent and exclusive places, in many instances, its advertisements feature its affordability. It possesses the air of sophistication, but Lincrusta’s best and most often marketed qualities are not normally a high priority for the wealthy. Thus, the question of who the target market for Lincrusta was begins to emerge. This thesis will argue that Lincrusta’s marketing strategy is the product of a combination of major developments in culture, technology, and science. It will identify those developments and demonstrate how the marketing

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<sup>4</sup> Helena Brazil, *Lincrusta-Walton 1877 -1887: The Development, Design and Character of Lincrusta-Walton*, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> "The most Perfect and Beautiful of all Wall Decorations," , accessed 10.4.23, , <https://driehausmuseum.org/blog/view/the-most-perfect-and-beautiful-of-all-wall-decorations>.

<sup>6</sup> "Lincrusta the Ultimate Wall Covering since 1877," , accessed 10/2/, 2023, <https://lincrusta.com/our-history/>.

materials reflect them. In doing so, this thesis will ultimately attempt to prove that analyzing marketing materials can uncover important historical clues and provide preservationist's another tool for determining a material's significance.

Lincrusta originates much later than other wall coverings such as wallpaper and paint, and its invention inspired similar products. Anaglypta and cameiod, two similar products, are the inventions of former Lincrusta employees. Lincrusta was a world-wide product. To narrow the scope of research this thesis will focus on Lincrusta and its advertisements from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, about 1877-1940. This time period covers its invention through a point where production largely slowed in an effort to conserve materials and labor for the outbreak of World War II. Specifically, analysis of marketing materials will try to determine broad themes (focus on material composition, design quality, etc.).

### ***Methodology***

The research method employed in this thesis is the analysis of printed materials, such as brochures, magazines articles, or advertisements. I will put these advertisements in historical context to understand how major historical and cultural events in Europe and North America influenced the creation and reception of these advertisements.

The second chapter will provide a review of the current literature regarding Lincrusta and the broader themes of interior design during the Victorian Era, Germ Theory, and the importance of magazines. The existing literature serves as a basis for my own research and analysis.

The third chapter will look at the historical and cultural context for the time period covered by this thesis. It will explore the major cultural trends and significant developments in technology and science that laid the foundation for Lincrusta such as design sensibilities, concern for sanitation, and advances in printing technology. The fourth chapter will explore advertisements

for Lincrusta and other similar products. Analyzing these materials within their historical context will explain Lincrusta's marketing strategy.

Lastly, the fifth and final chapter will conclude the thesis with a summary of the findings and recommendations. It will argue that this research is not only important for Historic Preservation, but lays the groundwork for conducting further studies in similar fashion.

## Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review some of the current literature about the consumer's general reception of Lincrusta and how it fit into art and architecture in a broad sense. Lincrusta exists at an interesting nexus of high art and affordability, and reviewing literature that addresses this is crucial to completely understanding its marketing strategy.

Analyzing Lincrusta and its marketing materials during the Victorian Era requires an analysis of the existing literature in decorative arts at large. Key texts which explore decorative arts and advertising during the Victorian Era will be the primary focus. This thesis will also explore what others have written about Germ Theory and how it affected the decorative arts, as well as the importance of magazines in advertising.

*The Poetic Home: Designing the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Domestic Interior* by Stefan Muthesius establishes that decorative arts during the Victorian Era could be complicated. Muthesius writes: "The domestic interior of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the creation of such complexity and sophistication that it is not surprising that it has attracted a lot of attention."<sup>7</sup> This sentence alone predicates how much emphasis belongs to interior decoration during the Victorian Era.

*The Poetic Home* captures the idea that decorating homes and buildings during the Victorian Era was a more involved process than one might think at first. This thesis will elaborate on Muthesius' claim that interior decorating at the time was complex by introducing other factors at play. In particular, the rise in popularity of ladies' magazines, product brochures, and Germ Theory play significant roles in interior decorating during this specific time period.

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<sup>7</sup> Stefan Muthesius, *The Poetic Home : Designing the 19th-Century Domestic Interior*, (2009).

Critical analysis of interior design magazines and brochures is also important. *The Distance from Home: The Domestication of Desire in Interior Design Manuals* by Janna Jones takes a closer look at the contents of interior design magazines and explores how cultural concerns began to shape the home. In her work, Jones analyzes six different texts published in the United States during the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The texts offer a diverse range of design principles, class consciousness, and opinions about modern culture.<sup>8</sup>

Jones' analysis of how cultural events impact design tastes is useful to this thesis as it explores similar themes. However, Jones' work focuses on broader ideas related to design instead of actual materials. Some topics she discusses involve strategies in frugality, such as furnishing a room piecemeal instead of all at once. It is more of an analysis of how people, especially women, used whatever resources they had to address the cultural expectations that were influencing interior design during the Victorian Era. This hints that that Lincrusta could be a product of cultural change, but it does not explore any materials in depth.

The current body of literature on Lincrusta largely focuses on the material composition or preservation of materials, but not why people wanted it in their homes. Lincrusta is interesting because of its proprietary nature: water-proof, imitative capabilities and ease of cleaning. In this thesis, I will analyze marketing materials such as magazine advertisements and brochures to argue that Lincrusta was a very important product that satisfied a myriad of interior decorating issues.

Other scholars have written about Lincrusta's unique properties. Pamela H. Simpson, an art historian from Washington and Lee University, published several works about Lincrusta. In *Linoleum and Lincrusta: The Democratic Coverings for Floors and Walls*, Simpson succinctly

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<sup>8</sup> Janna Jones, "The Distance from Home: The Domestication of Desire in Interior Design Manuals," *Journal of Social History* 31, no. 2 (Dec 1, 1997), 307-326. doi:10.1353/jsh/31.2.307. <https://api.istex.fr/ark:/67375/HXZ-6ZCKVPZ1-D/fulltext.pdf>.

summarizes what made Lincrusta so popular. She attributes Lincrusta's success to comfort, cleanliness, durability, artistry, and economy. Lincrusta was truly a product of its time, answering the calls for more artistic touches in the home and the ease of cleanliness. It was the solution to how almost anyone could afford to adorn their homes the same way the aristocracy did.

Simpson's book *Cheap, Quick, and Easy: Imitative Architectural Materials, 1870–1930* explored Lincrusta's ability to imitate other materials. Most importantly, Simpson challenges the notion that the middle-class would reject Lincrusta and see it as a cheap forgery of genuine materials. The elite class might feel that way, but average people would not be as dismissive. Some would argue that materials like Lincrusta made architecture and the decorative arts cheap through imitation, but Simpson believed it democratized it.<sup>9</sup> That is a key point which can be interpreted that part of the marketing strategy was to make high art and architecture accessible to regular people.

Simpson's research largely focused on overlooked or under-appreciated materials. Lincrusta, being a novel product and under scrutiny for attempting to make design more accessible to a larger population hits this focus. In *Corn Palaces and Butter Queens: A History of Crop Art and Dairy Sculpture*, we see more evidence of her championing lesser-known materials and forms of art. On the surface, sculptures made of butter seems like nothing more than a quirky hobby, but under Simpson's keen analysis it is revealed that butter sculpture represented America's abundance and the importance of the dairy industry.<sup>10</sup> Simpson was skilled at finding significance where others could not, and her research is greatly valuable to Historic Preservation.

Simpson's analysis does not, however, include any marketing information about Lincrusta.

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<sup>9</sup> Sally Ann McMurry, "Pamela H. Simpson, 1946-2011: An Appreciation," *Buildings & Landscapes* 19, no. 1 (Mar 1, 2012), ix-xi. doi:10.1353/bdl.2012.0004. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/481335>.

<sup>10</sup> Sally Ann McMurry, "Pamela H. Simpson, 1946-2011: An Appreciation," *Buildings & Landscapes* 19, no. 1 (Mar 1, 2012), ix-xi. doi:10.1353/bdl.2012.0004. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/481335>.



Through her work, we know what it was and that it was popular, but she does not address how people learned about it. My research on the marketing materials is important as it substantiates her claims that Lincrusta was embraced by the general public. Simpson bucks long-held notions that art is reserved only for the elite and attempts to change the idea that it would be met with rejection. This thesis explores how Lincrusta found its way into homes and buildings, which is through carefully-crafted marketing.

Much of the scholarship about Lincrusta discusses its qualities of sanitation and durability, but we should not discount the quality that elevates it to the status of art. Lincrusta's ability to imitate allows it to find a place amongst wall coverings found in more luxurious spaces. By creating the same look as more expensive materials, Lincrusta effectively asks the question about where the true value in art and architecture lies. Is art and architecture valuable because of its material composition? Or, is it valuable because of the emulated design and visual it creates? To ask it another way, do we value a painting based on the expensiveness or exclusiveness of the paints used, or the painting itself? Lincrusta may not have the same material value as the products it imitates, but it can be argued that it is more valuable because it imitates the products at a lower cost.

To further complicate matters, cleanliness and sanitation became concerns associated with interior decoration in ways it had not before. In *The Aesthetic Interior as Incubator of Health and Well-Being*, Richard W. Hayes explores how interior decoration contended with health reform during the Victorian Era. He analyzes the architectural work of E.W. Godwin who saw interior decorating as a way to foster a clean, healthy life consisting of hygiene and relief from urban stress. There was a growing awareness of the need to "attain adequate sanitary conditions in the Victorian

home”.<sup>11</sup> This is critical evidence that supports the need for sanitary decoration in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. His research implicates that there was concern for and attention towards sanitary decoration during the Victorian Era.

Hayes dives deeply into Godwin’s work in sanitary decoration and architecture, covering in detail the paradigm shift regarding germs and diseases. The long-held prevailing theory, miasmatic theory, held that “bad air” was the origin of most diseases.<sup>12</sup> Germ Theory, which will be discussed in detail later, challenged that idea, but was not completely accepted at first. Many adopted both theories to inform their choices to procure more sanitary living conditions. Hayes’ analysis focuses more on the need for and new attention towards cleanliness but not how it could be achieved using interior design and decoration. This thesis will expand on this idea by identifying the materials, namely Lincrusta, that fulfilled these needs.

It is also critical to understand the importance of women’s magazines from the Victorian Era. In *Victorian Women’s Magazines: An Anthology* authors Margaret Beetham and Kay Boardman identify and summarize a wide selection of periodicals aimed at women, including fashion, politics, and design. Beetham and Boardman focus on how magazines targeted women as both readers and consumers, stating that “the potential value of magazines for advertising began to be realized so different kinds of goods became advertised in their pages.”<sup>13</sup> Their book explains how manufacturers took advantage of a captive audience by slipping in advertisements in between stories and articles. Subtle, but effective. This thesis will use their idea, that magazines became

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<sup>11</sup> Richard W. Hayes, "The Aesthetic Interior as Incubator of Health and Well-Being," *Architectural History* 60 (2017), 277-301. doi:10.1017/arh.2017.9. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1017/arh.2017.9>.

<sup>12</sup> Richard W. Hayes, "The Aesthetic Interior as Incubator of Health and Well-Being," *Architectural History* 60 (2017), 277-301. doi:10.1017/arh.2017.9. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1017/arh.2017.9>.

<sup>13</sup> Margaret Beetham and Kay Boardman, *Victorian Women's Magazines: An Anthology*, (2001). [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqi:res\\_ver=0.2&res\\_id=xri:ilcs-us&rft\\_id=xri:ilcs:rec:abell:R01652991](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqi:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:ilcs-us&rft_id=xri:ilcs:rec:abell:R01652991).

hugely popular for advertisements, to explain how Lincrusta founds its way in front of consumers.

Consumer culture was strong during the Victorian Era. In *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women* author Lisa Anne Loeb writes: “The new cultural direction approached hedonism, not in the sense of moral abandon, but rather in its pursuit of pleasure and especially the satisfactions gained through material objects.”<sup>14</sup> Throughout her book, Loeb discusses the societal changes that led up to a strong focus on consumerism and in turn, the importance of advertising. She identifies the threat of disease as a driving force behind the advertisement of many products, which is of particular use to this thesis. Although Loeb’s book argues that advertising was important during the Victorian Era and that magazines were a primary avenue to the consumer.

To summarize, there is already literature on Lincrusta, decorative arts, germ theory, and magazines. This thesis will synthesize that information and go one step further by analyzing some of the marketing materials for Lincrusta to demonstrate how everything fits together.

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<sup>14</sup> Lori Anne Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women*, 1994).  
[http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&res\\_id=xri:ilcs-us&rft\\_id=xri:ilcs:rec:abell:R01308658](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:ilcs-us&rft_id=xri:ilcs:rec:abell:R01308658).

### Chapter 3: CONTEXT

The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries saw many significant advancements in nearly all aspects of culture. These broad events shifted the wants and needs of people all over the world and changed domestic life in ways previously unseen. This thesis will explore the confluence of three major events: the Victorian Era, Germ Theory, and the rise of ladies' magazines. While seemingly unrelated, Lincrusta's use and advertising connects them.

#### *Lincrusta's Background*

Before discussing these themes in greater detail, it is important to understand the origins of Lincrusta. In the article "Centenary of the Birth of Frederick Walton: Inventor of Linoleum" William B. Coleman succinctly details the important aspects of Frederick Walton's professional life that lead to the invention of Lincrusta. Walton began inventing at an early age. At just 21, Walton was working with his father and older brother in the family business of wire card making. His father James Walton developed a new technique of wire-card used in manufacturing, which is essentially a process of combining different types of fibers which creates a material that can be formed into other things like cardstock and canvases.<sup>15</sup> Frederick Walton received his first patent in 1857 for wire brushes with ornamental backings. A year later, he figured out how to solidify linseed oil leading to his invention of linoleum. Shortly thereafter, he invented Lincrusta.

Other important sources of information are materials from manufacturers such as A *Description of Lincrusta-Walton and It's Artistic and Sanitary Value for Interior Decoration*

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<sup>15</sup> R. D. Hodgson, "Frederick Walton. Centenary of the Birth of the Inventor of Linoleum," *Journal of the Society of Chemical Industry (Online)* 53, no. 10 (Mar 9, 1934), 214-220. doi:10.1002/jctb.5000531003. <https://api.istex.fr/ark:/67375/WNG-JMRPLSFG-G/fulltext.pdf>.

published by F.R. Beck & Company. This is a brief, 28-page document that does a great job of explaining what Lincrusta is and how it is used. As written by the manufacturer, Lincrusta is described as the ultimate wall covering in both design and practicality. This document also contains a list of awards Lincrusta had won, at least up until the time of this document's publication.

According to F.R. Beck, Lincrusta did not need much of an introduction because it has "for many years occupied the foremost position in high class relief decorations, and owing to the fact it being not only solid, but pliable and water-proof, there are endless possibilities for its use."<sup>16</sup> The last part of that sentence is important: endless possibilities for its use. This is clever marketing and a strategy not unique to Lincrusta, but it effectively makes Lincrusta a solution for anything. Lincrusta is easy to clean. Concern for moisture is not necessary because Lincrusta is waterproof. Lincrusta will add to the artistic value of the room. Lincrusta's unique properties allowed manufacturers to market it as the perfect solution for the Victorian Era's specific requirements for interior decoration.

### ***Decorative Arts and the Home in the Victorian Era***

To understand the impetus behind Lincrusta's invention, it is crucial to understand the context in which it began. Notably, the rise of the Victorian Era is the principal catalyst that created a social climate in which Lincrusta gained its popularity. The Victorian Era, which spanned the reign of Queen Victoria of the British Empire from 1837 through 1901 saw many cultural changes. Among them, the idea of a clear separation between the workspace and the home emerged, and there was more focus on the home acting as a private environment and oasis from work. In *Designing the Dinner Party: Advice on Dining and Décor in London and Paris 1860-*

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<sup>16</sup> F.R. Beck & Co, "Lincrusta-Walton: Prize Medals Wherever Exhibited,"

1914, Rachel Rich examines the importance of interior design during this time period. She states: "A family was not only socially cataloged itself, but in the house where they lived..."<sup>17</sup> This sentiment makes it clear that the emphasis on interior design during the Victorian Era had larger social implications than design for its own sake, essentially claiming one is only as good as their home.

Because the home was viewed as important to social standing, a strong emphasis on decoration began to emerge. People were looking for new ways to adorn their homes and new methods to demonstrate their place among polite society. While expensive furnishings were important, so too were the decorations on the walls. Demand was on the rise greatly for all types of wall coverings, and decorating the walls now meant something beyond hanging artwork. Wall decoration and wall coverings became an important decorative element in the Victorian Era house as evidenced by the popularity of intricate wall coverings during the Victorian Era. In the book *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery and Other Details*, author Charles Eastlake says of wall coverings: "As a rule, the simplest patterns are the best for every situation; but where the eye has to rest upon the surface of the wall alone, a greater play of line in the patterns may become advisable."<sup>18</sup> Eastlake's book highlights the demand for intricate designs such as those of William Morris, 19<sup>th</sup> century architect and designer, which often featured muted colors and repetitive, intricate designs. Eastlake's own designs were also widely popular and included in the book.

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<sup>17</sup> Rachel Rich, "Designing the Dinner Party: Advice on Designing and Decor in London and Paris, 1860-1914," *Journal of Design History* 16, no. 1 (Jan 1, 2003), 49-61. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1468330819>.

<sup>18</sup> Charles L. (Charles Locke) Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery and Other Details* (London: Dover Publications, 1869).

Scale: half full size.

XX.



*Design for a Wall Paper.*

*Adapted by S. J. Eastlake from an Indian Diaper, Sanscrit, 1811.*

*Figure 3.1: example of Eastlake's wallpaper design*



*Figure 3.2: example of Eastlake's wallpaper design*

All of this, however, presents a problem. Decorating can be expensive, and cost prohibitive for many. If necessity is the mother of invention, then the Victorian Era is responsible for creating the perfect environment for Lincrusta.

The Victorian design sensibility had a “more is more” inclination, and that is evident when looking at photographs of rooms in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It can be difficult to explain exactly what that means, but the “Decorative Arts of the Nineteenth Century at the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” a 1927 journal article from *The American Magazine of Art* attempts to do just that. This journal is a review of a museum installation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art which recreated Victorian Era rooms like dining rooms and dens. Interestingly, the article states that “some of the



exhibits in this gallery are shown not because they have artistic merit but because they illustrate certain phases of the decorative arts during the last century that cannot be omitted if the period is to be truthfully represented.”<sup>19</sup>

The exhibit shows thoroughly decorated rooms. That is to say, it seems like these rooms took every opportunity to add decoration. There is ornate furniture. There are rugs on the floor and curtains on the windows. Noticeably, the walls are not bare. Whether or not these rooms are decorated well is up for debate.



**FIGURE 3. ALCOVE III. ROMANTICISM. THE REACTION FROM NEO-CLASSICISM**  
COURTESY OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

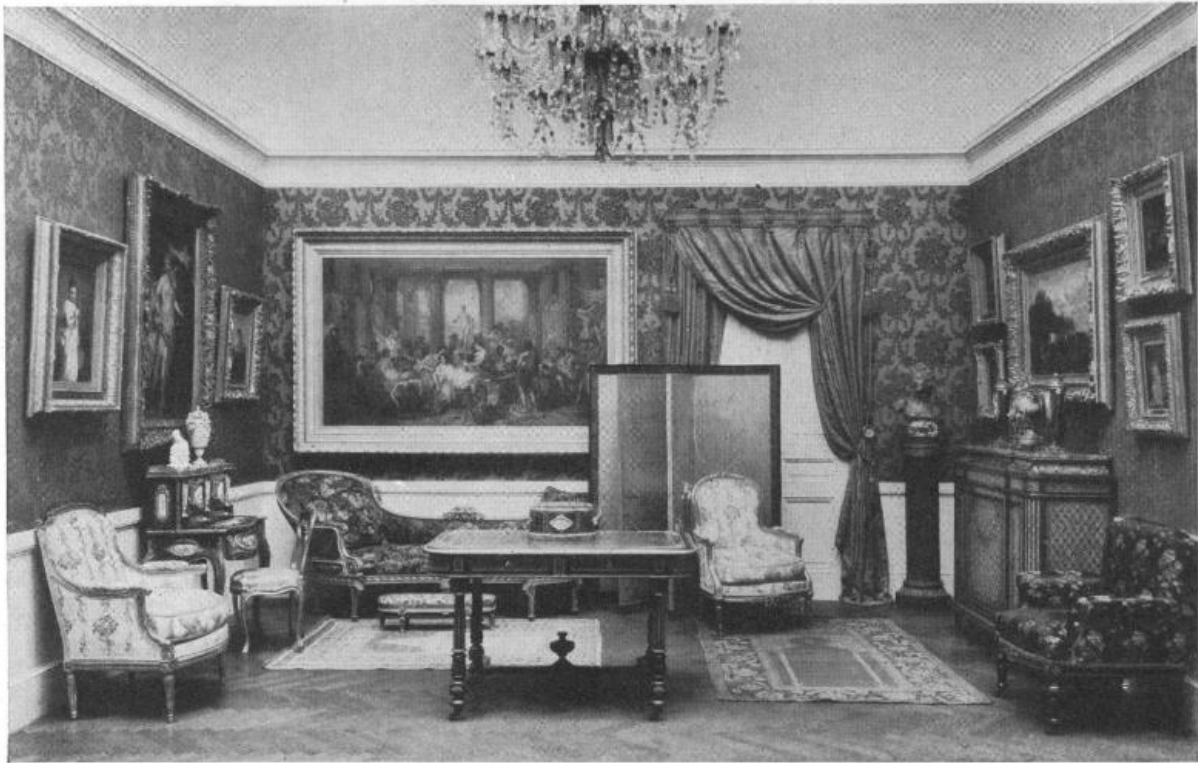
*Figure 3.3: museum exhibit of 19<sup>th</sup> century decorative arts*

The furniture, with its tufted seatbacks and carved wood, is decorative and serves a purpose other than its function. However, the arrangement has the furniture pushed against the walls and is

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<sup>19</sup> "Decorative Arts of the Nineteenth Century at the Metropolitan Museum of Art." *The American Magazine of Art* 18, no. 2 (Feb 1, 1927), 76-79. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23929456>.

perhaps situated more for looking at than actually using.



COURTESY OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

*Figure 3.4: museum exhibit of 19<sup>th</sup> century decorative arts*

Figure 3.4 depicts a room filled with not only furniture, but patterns. There are different patterns on the chairs, rugs, and walls. This is not by accident; these exhibits were careful curations which accurately represent design sensibilities from the Victorian Era, whether they have artistic merit or not. This is an important distinction about decorative arts during this time period and it illustrates the desire to include as much decoration in rooms as possible, even if it comes at the expense of taste. It is also a significant finding, because it further validates the idea that interior decorative materials like Lincrusta are part of a major historical design trend. This is evidence of form over function in regards to interior design which is part of the reason Lincrusta exists.

## *Germ Theory*

Another notable event during this time period was the rise of Germ Theory. Developed in 1861 by Louis Pasteur, Germ Theory is the idea that living, microscopic organisms are the cause of sickness and disease.<sup>20</sup> This challenged the prevailing idea of spontaneous generation, which held that living organisms could come into existence from non-living matter. Previous to Pasteur's theory, commonly-held beliefs purported that fleas could arise from dust and bread, and when left alone would produce mice. Of course, we now know those things are circumstantial: you might find fleas in dusty areas because of general untidiness, and bread left alone and unguarded will attract mice.

Germ theory posited that there was an unseen enemy lurking everywhere, and the previously-held notions of cleanliness were wrong and ultimately a betrayal of hygiene and overall cleanliness. Though germs, the invisible-to-the-naked-eye culprits which abound everywhere, are easily eliminated with soap and water. Things which were easy to clean became desirable in this situation, while things that were not fell out of fashion. This discovery had a sizeable effect on the marketing of interior decoration. This creates an interesting junction, and it is at this junction where Lincrusta begins to emerge.

Published by the Lincrusta-Walton Manufacturing Company in 1885, *Lincrusta-Walton, A New Decorative Material: Its Artistic, Sanitary, and Commercial Value, with Extracts from the Press*, is a 23-page brochure detailing the best qualities of Lincrusta, one of which particularly stands out: sanitary. At first glance, it is entirely reasonable to highlight a material's artistic and commercial value. Adding Lincrusta to your building could enhance the appearance, giving the establishment an appeal of sophistication, which could invite more business. But sanitary? When

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<sup>20</sup> Gerald L. Geison, *The Private Science of Louis Pasteur* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

buying something, especially as decoration, how often do you consider its sanitation? Keep in mind that clean and sanitary are not exactly synonymous; clean often refers to unsoiled or decluttered while sanitary specifically indicates a reduced level of germs or pathogens that is safe. It may be common to consider how easy it is to clean something, but prior to Germ Theory, it would not be the case when it comes to how sanitary something was. Highlighting the sanitary properties of Lincrusta, which comes from its material makeup, manufacturers were able to address the concerns about germs. In this context, selling Lincrusta as a “washable wall covering” makes sense. As with many inventions, Lincrusta aimed to solve a problem. At the time of its inception, there were already wall coverings. However, there were not any wall coverings like Lincrusta.

### ***Ladies' Magazines***

Through strides in technology making printing easier and cheaper, more magazines became available to a wider audience beyond the wealthy. Advertisers saw that magazines had the potential to figuratively bring their shop windows into every home. These magazines capitalized and even helps create the idea that women were in charge of the home, and the home should act as a refuge from work and the outside world. Lincrusta's particular and purposeful marketing strategy addressed the context in which it was born. Having identified that interior decoration was hugely popular during the Victorian Era, analyzing how it became popular and how people learned what was fashionable is the next step. There is another catalyst which fits neatly within the framework of promoting interior decoration, and that is the advent of new types of reading materials, notably women's magazines. Previously, printing was expensive and typically only done in black and white. Around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that changed. Chromolithography, a method of color printing through a chemical process, made it possible to showcase materials in

color which previously would have been printed in black and white.<sup>21</sup> Things like wallpaper, carpets, and window dressings were suddenly displayed in full color, giving the reader a better look at the actual product.

There were changes in paper in the Victorian Era, too. Paper-making had come a long way since its origins more than two thousand years ago, but it was still expensive to produce which meant that publications such as magazines were only available to the wealthy and as a result, their contents were geared toward that audience. During the Victorian Era it was customary for the husband to work and provide financially for the family while domestic duties belonged to the wife. With household affairs largely belonging to women, it is no wonder women's magazines became popular. Early versions of women's magazines from the 19<sup>th</sup> century such as *The Lady's Magazine* and *The Lady's Monthly Museum*, which focused on fashion, needlework patterns, and clothing, were aimed at upper-class women with discretionary income.<sup>22</sup> It was not until 1840 when inventors Friedrich Gottlob Keller and Charles Fenerty developed a method of producing paper with wood pulp, making the process much easier and less expensive.<sup>23</sup>

With advancements in technology and decreasing costs of production, publishers began to reach wider audiences and started producing more affordable magazines. This also changed how magazines approached their audience. No longer focusing on only the elite class, magazines began offering material relevant to more demographics with publications focusing on fashion, children, and home decorating. This was a global phenomenon. In Germany, magazine

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<sup>21</sup> Joan M. Friedman, *Colour Printing in England, 1486-1859* (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1978).

<sup>22</sup> Solveig Robinson, "Women's Periodicals," *19th Century UK Periodicals* (2008).  
<https://www.gale.com/intl/essays/solveig-robinson-womens-periodicals>.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Burger, *Charles Fenerty and His Paper Invention* (Toronto: , 2007), 30-32.

publisher Alexander Koch was the first in his country to focus specifically on interior design.<sup>24</sup>

Koch viewed the magazine as the shop window; an opportunity to showcase what was for sale.

He also understood the value of targeting women as his audience. One strategy Koch employed was to hold design competitions for his magazines, one of which ran for 15 years from 1891 to 1906 under the title “How can our women undertake the decoration of our living rooms?”<sup>25</sup>

Another competition which followed the first competition and ran for six years was “Simple and Cheap Dwellings,” which had the intention of bringing decoration into modest dwellings.

In 1897, *Country Life* began weekly publication in London and featured full-color advertisements for interior decorations and home goods.<sup>26</sup> Targeted toward women, *Country Life* did not aim to simply sell something to the reader, it also intended to inform. By covering topics like politics, fashion, gardening, book reviews, art, and architecture, *Country Life* was cosmopolitan, and where better to get your home decorating advice than such a well-informed magazine? *Country Life* is still in publication, and still advertises Lincrusta. In an issue from April 2023, Lincrusta is referred to in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as being “a popular feature of Victorian houses. Deeply embossed to create striking relief patterns” and includes a pattern available for purchase.<sup>27</sup>

Whether a magazine’s focus was politics, fashion, or home decorating, the intent was to capture the reader’s attention. With magazines, if you can get someone’s attention, then you can sell them something. Further reinforcing the idea that the products advertised within the pages were worth having was the idea that not only were these items nice, but they are must-have items.

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<sup>24</sup> Jeremy Aynsley, "Graphic Change: Design Change: Magazines for the Domestic Interior 1890-1930," 18, no. 1 (2005), 43-49. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3527018?seq=4>.

<sup>25</sup> Jeremy Aynsley, "Graphic Change: Design Change: Magazines for the Domestic Interior 1890-1930," 18, no. 1 (2005), 43-49. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3527018?seq=4>.

<sup>26</sup> Bernard Darwin, "Fifty Years of Country Life," *Country Life*, 1947, .

<sup>27</sup> Anonymous, "Country Life Colour Edit," *Country Life*, April 19, 2023, 80.

Not only can you decorate your house with Lincrusta, you *should*. Well-appointed homes feature Lincrusta. Lincrusta is in *Country Life*, which is the guidebook for decorating your home, dressing your family, and thinking about political issues. Catalogs and brochures from the manufacturer do a great job of telling you how wonderful the product is, but magazines put them into context. Magazines actually sell the product.

As mentioned earlier, interior design in the Victorian Era had deeper implications beyond decoration. During the Victorian Era, interior design had ties to the women's suffrage movement. Notable suffragists expressed their opinions on interior design and how it related to the movement in more than one way. Emmaline Pankhurst, a British suffragette who lived from 1858 through 1928, pursued artistic endeavors through interior design to demonstrate compatibility with the women's suffrage movement and domestic duties of women.<sup>28</sup> Pankhurst understood that asking women to eschew all domestic responsibilities might dissuade some women from the idea of suffrage because they did not want to neglect their homes or families. If suffrage is not a complete departure from everyday life, it might be an easier sell. Further, interior decoration could be a vehicle for the suffrage message. Attaching a radical idea like suffrage to something conservative like decorating is an effective strategy to bring the message to women.

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<sup>28</sup> Miranda Garrett and Zoë Thomas, *Suffrage and the Arts*, 1st ed. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2019).

## Chapter 4: THE STUDY

So far, the important cultural and scientific events that created an environment which made Lincrusta desirable have been identified. This chapter will discuss how Lincrusta made its way into homes and buildings, through advertisements. Materials such as brochures, catalogs, and magazine advertisements will be the primary sources of information. This chapter will also analyze advertisements of competing materials. By including advertisements for other, similar products, a greater understanding of the historical context emerges. The issues that Lincrusta was addressing were not small, but ushered in completely new types of products specifically designed to look and function a certain way.

### *Manufacturer Publications*

The U.S. manufacturer F.R. Beck & Co bought the patent to Lincrusta in 1883 and began production in Stamford, Connecticut shortly thereafter. They produced several publications showcasing the qualities, designs, and versatility of Lincrusta. In *Lincrusta-Walton: Prize Medals Where Exhibited*, published in 1900, all of Lincrusta's best qualities were showcased on the very first few pages, with the rest of the catalog providing design samples. Just the title, *Prize Medals Where Exhibited* tells the reader everything they need to know: wherever Lincrusta went, it won awards.

The catalog described Lincrusta as “practically indestructible” and stated it would last “as long as the building it beautifies”.<sup>29</sup> That tells the reader that not only is it durable, but beautiful as well. It is definitive. It is not just somewhat durable and may or may not add artistic value to

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<sup>29</sup> F.R. Beck & Co, "Lincrusta-Walton: Prize Medals Wherever Exhibited,"



the building. It will survive the building, and it will enhance it. Again, one would expect this kind of language from the manufacturer, but it is not so much the veracity of the claims but the claims specifically. These claims address concerns that other wall coverings did not and could not.

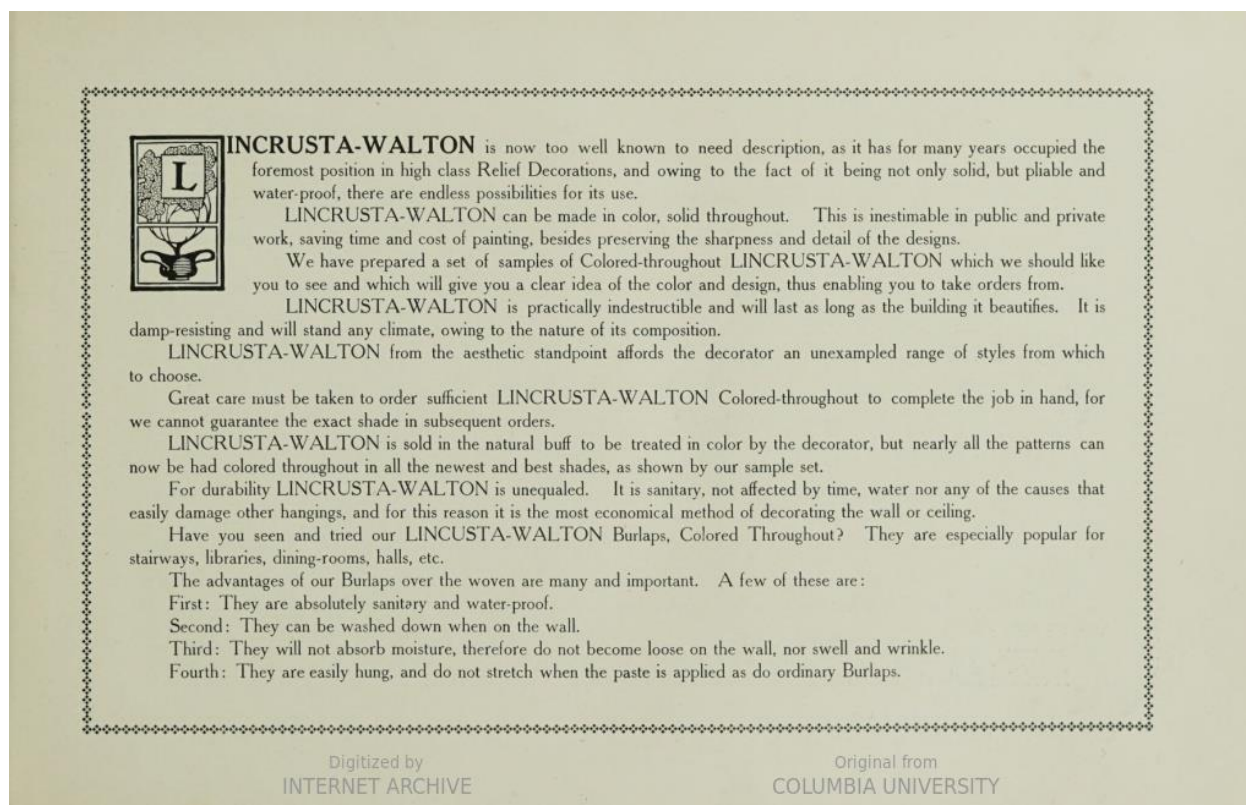
The catalog goes on to mention the sanitary qualities of Lincrusta and states that moisture will not affect it and cause damage like it would to other wall coverings, and as such is the most economical method for decorations walls and ceilings.<sup>30</sup> This claim works again by separating Lincrusta from other wall coverings, but it also subtly solves the issue of affordability. We find many of its advertisements championing Lincrusta as valuable, but not necessarily cheap. The key difference is that Lincrusta is more valuable than other materials because of its qualities, especially those that it imitates, rather than just being cheap. Because it is saying that Lincrusta will last so long and is impervious to the damaging factors that plague other wall coverings, it is the more economical solution because it will not need the same level of repair or replacement.

Lastly in its summary, the catalog suggests places to use Lincrusta including stairways, libraries, dining-rooms, halls, etc. The “etcetera” is important because it suggests limitless use not hemmed in by a specific number of appropriate places. It also subtly suggests Lincrusta in lavish spaces like libraries which most people did not have in their homes. That may suggest to the reader that putting Lincrusta in their living room may make it feel more luxurious, like a library. However, the main focus here is still on the durability and sanitary nature of Lincrusta. “It is absolutely sanitary and water-proof...can be washed down when on the wall...will not absorb moisture and therefore will not swell or wrinkle.”<sup>31</sup>

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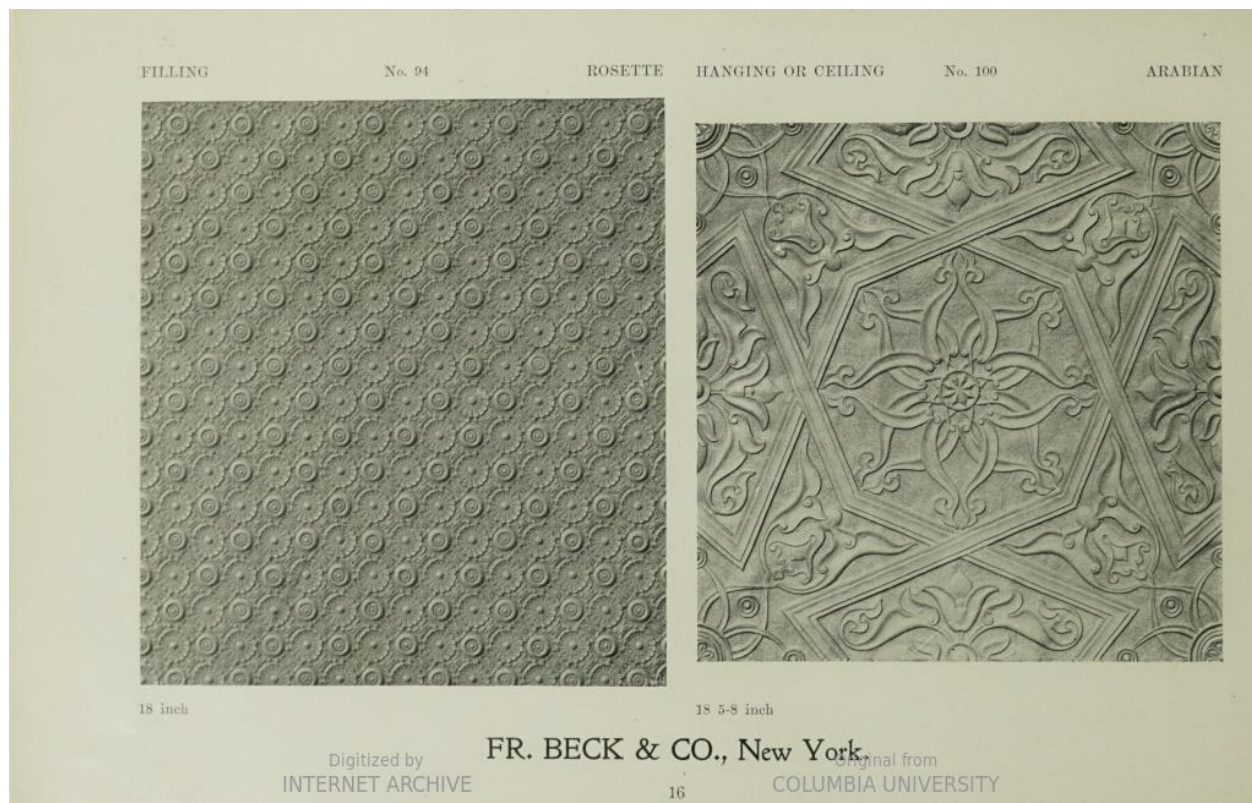
<sup>30</sup> F.R. Beck & Co, "Lincrusta-Walton: Prize Medals Wherever Exhibited," (1891).  
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nnc2.ark:/13960/t0zq3qm8g&seq=1>.

<sup>31</sup> F.R. Beck & Co, "Lincrusta-Walton: Prize Medals Wherever Exhibited," (1891).  
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nnc2.ark:/13960/t0zq3qm8g&seq=1>.



*Figure 4.1: advertisement for Lincrusta from F.R. Beck & Co brochure*

The remaining pages, of which there are over 200, contain examples of the different patterns available. The patterns range from simple to very detailed. Some are mostly geometric shapes while others feature natural motifs such as leaves and flowers. The idea is that there is something for every taste. These are not colored samples, but it is mentioned that Lincrusta is very easy to paint and can also come pre-colored. The catalog is imbalanced in how it very briefly describes the product in the first few pages and contains hundreds of pages of samples from that point on. It is purposely exhaustive. By including so many designs, it signals to the consumer that there is something for every design sensibility.



*Figure 4.2: sample of Lincrusta from F.R. Beck & Co brochure*

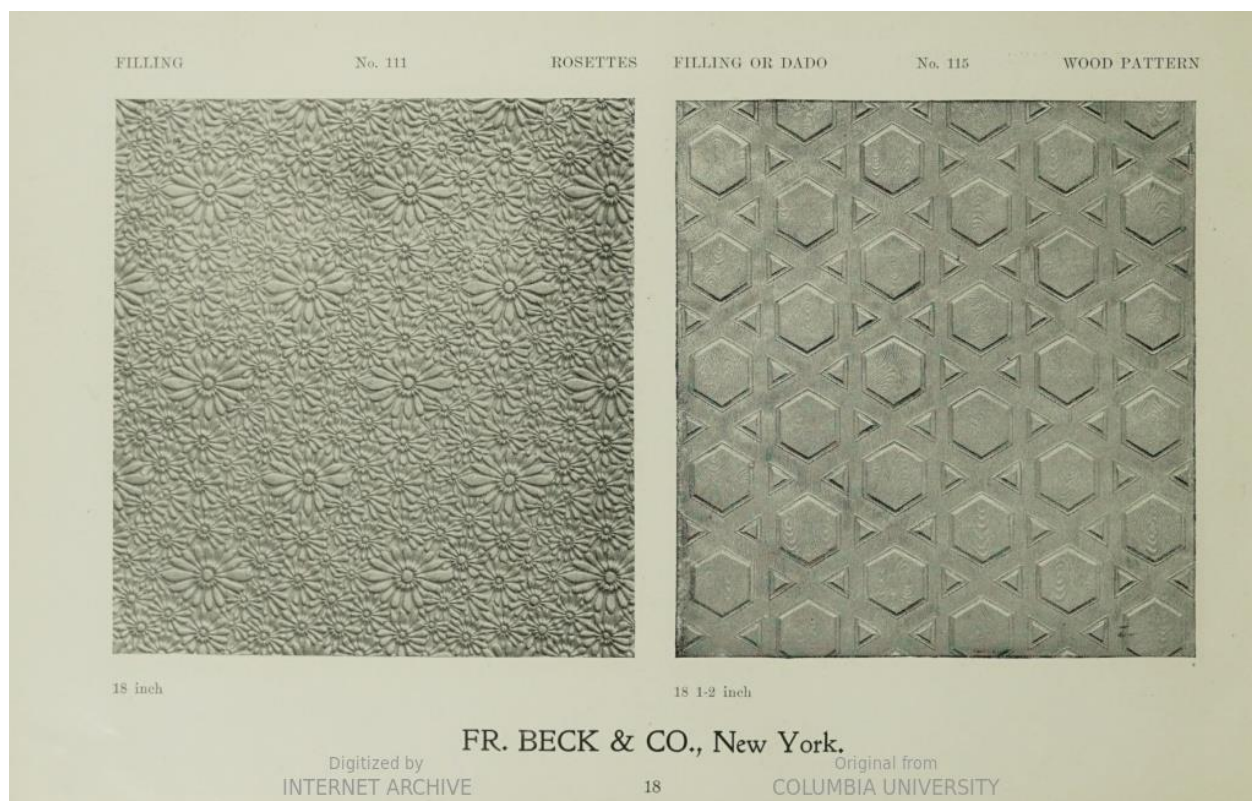




Figure 4.3: sample of Lincrusta from F.R. Beck & Co brochure

An exhaustive array of samples was not exclusive to just one publication from F.R. Beck & Co. They produced several catalogs which almost exclusively contained designs with very little writing about the product. *Catalogue of Designs of Lincrusta-Walton* contains over 200 pages of designs, which demonstrates just how versatile Lincrusta is. Like *Lincrusta-Walton: Prize Medals Where Exhibited*, this catalog features the repeating geometrical prints that are available but also showcases other more ornate designs.

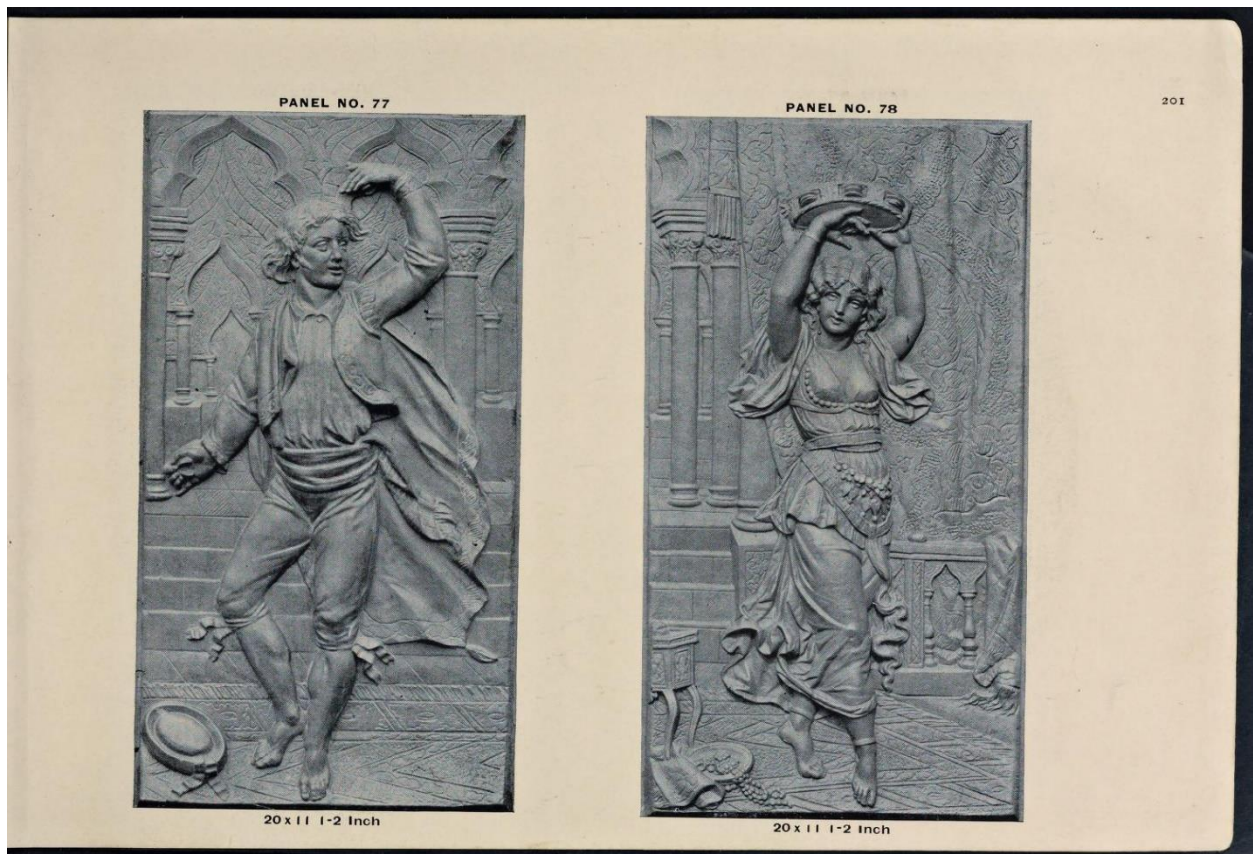
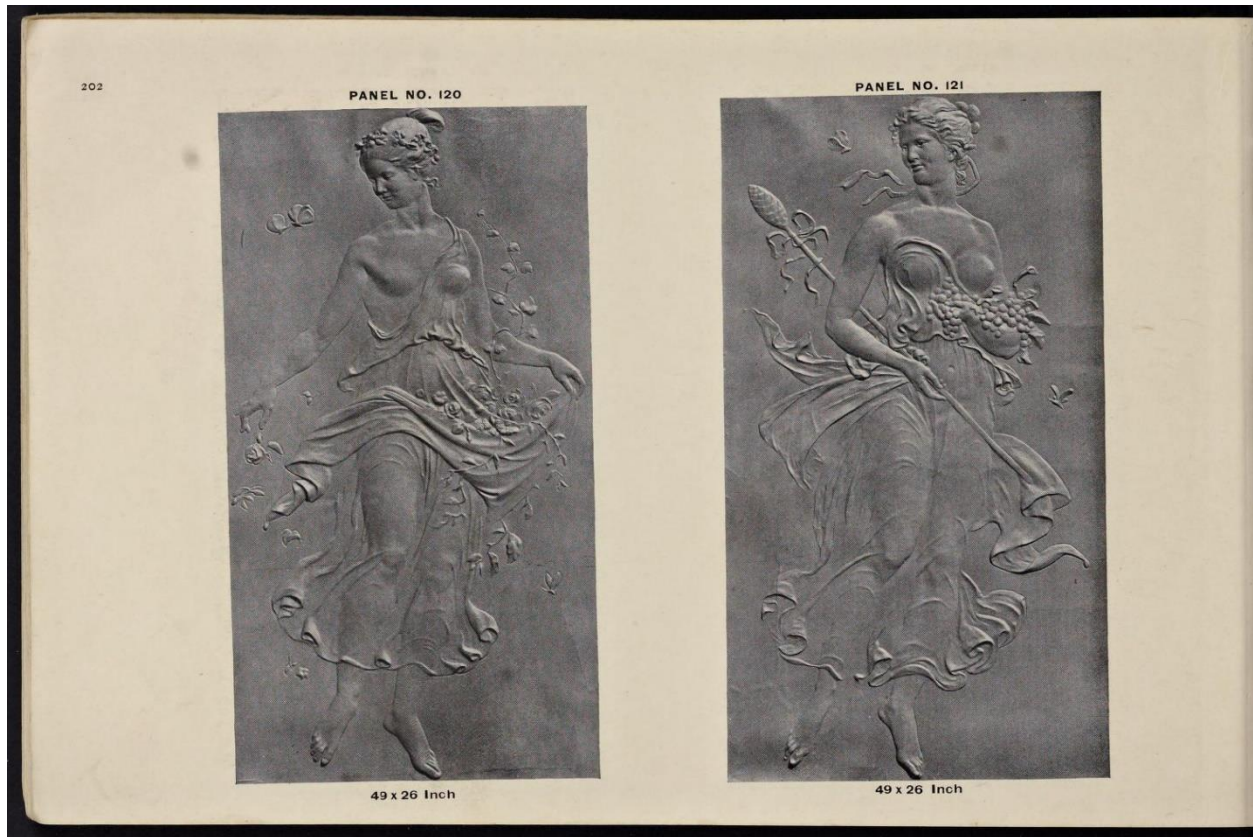


Figure 4.4: sample of Lincrusta from Lincrusta-Walton Co brochure



*Figure 4.5: sample of Lincrusta from Lincrusta-Walton Co brochure*

The subject matter and intricacy of some of the designs seem like they should be decorating museums and stately residences. In many cases they do decorate these places, but they are also available to the average person as well.

### ***Magazine Advertisements***

Brochures and catalogs are not the only places to find advertisements for Lincrusta. Manufacturers were able to distill their message into bite-size formats that were effective in newspapers and magazines, too.

Only Manufacturers in the U. S. of

**Lincrusta Walton**

PROTECTED BY PATENTS.

We call the attention of the public to our world-renowned sanitary relief interior decoration

**“Lincrusta-Walton.”**

THE MOST PERFECT AND BEAUTIFUL OF ALL

**WALL DECORATIONS.**

High Art designs in solid relief. Perfectly waterproof. Excludes cold and damp. Prices moderate. Suitable for Public and Private Buildings, Hotels, Offices, etc.

For Sidewall Covering, Wainscotings, Panel Work or Ceiling Ornamentation it is unapproachable.

Beautiful specimens of Ceilings in Louis XV. and XVI. styles. Stairway Dadoes and Panels descriptive of the seasons.

**—EVERY DESIGN ORIGINAL.—**

Catalogues and Price-Lists sent to dealers on application. Also manufacturers of GENUINE SILK HANGINGS and the most extensive assortment of HEAVY PRESSED PAPERS in the world, as well as all grades of Fine Hand and Machine-Made Wall Papers.

**FR. BECK & CO., OWNERS AND MANUFACTURERS, 29th St. & 7th Ave., New York.**

Figure 4.6: advertisement for Lincrusta

Again, there is a theme present that is common in other Lincrusta advertisements, which is the idea of perfection. “The most perfect and beautiful of all wall decorations.” It is succinct, definitive, and clearly articulated. The advertisement above includes the usual selling points and highlights the artistic designs, water resistance, and moderate price. It is noted that Lincrusta is suitable for public and private spaces, hotels, offices, etc. This advertisement is from the U.S. manufacturer, F.R. Beck & Co, and right at the top it mentions Lincrusta’s popularity as a “world-renowned sanitary relief interior decoration.” This advertisement could do that, because Lincrusta had already been around for more than two decades. However, leaning on Lincrusta’s popularity was not a strategy exclusive to the U.S.





CEILING. 1133. (Renaissance)

CEILING. 1134 (Diaper.)

CEILING. 1133. (Greek.)

DADO. 1140. (Tiles)

DADO. 1130. (Flute and Panel)

DADO. 1129. PILASTER. 1129

**LINCROSTA-WALTON,**  
 THE SUNBURY WALL DECORATION.  
**FREDERICK WALTON & Co., Limited,**  
 Patentees and Sole Manufacturers.  
 SEE PATTERN BOOK FOR 1889.

**LINCROSTA-WALTON**  
 HAS OBTAINED THIRTEEN PRIZE MEDALS.  
 (HIGHEST AWARD WHEREVER EXHIBITED).  
*The Jurors at the Architectural and Building Trades' Exhibition of the Society of Architects for 1885, in their Report, say:—*  
 "LINCROSTA-WALTON is so excellent a material and so well known as to need but little special Notice. Its great low well known as to need & it most suit- known as to need but little special Notice. special No  
 LINCROSTA-WALTON country in the Civilised the wall-hanging material ever made, and the demand for it from every country in the Civilised World increases daily.  
 LINCROSTA-WALTON is sold by all first-class Decorators and Furnishers in the United Kingdom.

ALL Communications should be addressed to  
**FREDK. WALTON & COMPY., Limited,**  
 AT THEIR HEAD OFFICE AND SHOW-ROOMS,  
**2, NEWMAN-ST., OXFORD-ST., LONDON, W.**  
 FROM WHENCE ALL ORDERS WILL BE IMMEDIATELY DESPATCHED. PLEASE NOTE ABOVE NEW ADDRESS.

Figure 4.7: advertisement for Lincrusta

Above is an advertisement from 1889, produced by Frederick Walton & Co, the original manufacturer. While it is true that Lincrusta came into development about ten years earlier, the claim is bold. "Lincrusta-Walton is so excellent a material and so well-known as to need but little special notice." This advertisement eschews the description of the product for accolades

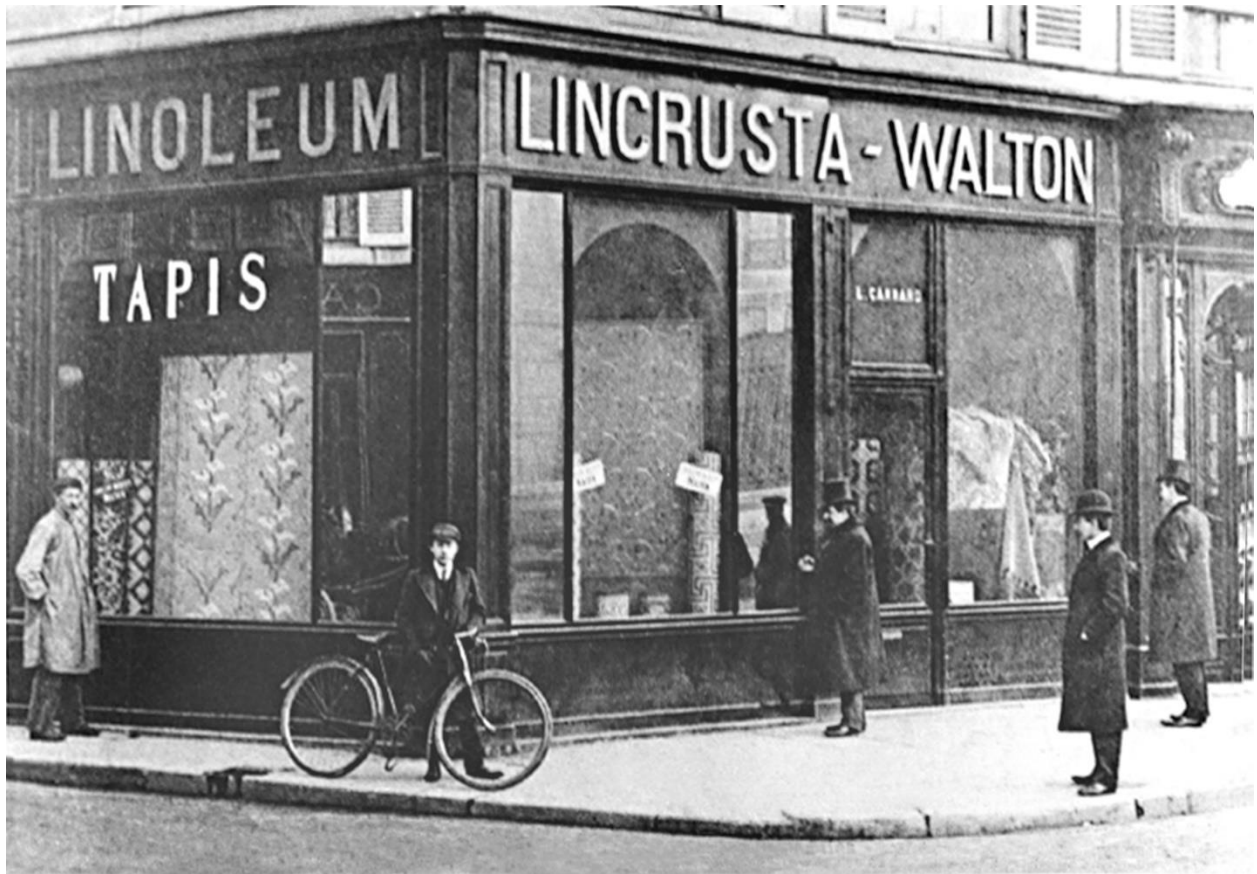
by mentioning the thirteen prize medals given to the product. It almost seems to claim that Lincrusta is so good it sells itself. They do not need to tell you why it is so great, because you already know. This advertisement does not even describe what Lincrusta is, but instead leans into its elegance. Near the bottom the advertisement reads “Lincrusta-Walton is sold by all first-class decorations and furnishers in the United Kingdom” which further substantiates its ubiquity among the noble.



Figure 4.8: French advertisement for Lincrusta)

Advertisements for Lincrusta existed internationally, and they told similar stories. The advertisement above from France in 1899 includes many of the same points from its U.S. and English counterparts. Translated, the advertisement tells the reader how Lincrusta is perfect for living rooms, dining rooms, bathrooms, etc. It mentions that it is sold in France and abroad, indicating its world-wide popularity. One could also visit a showroom, like this one in Paris.





*Figure 4.9: photograph of Lincrusta showroom in Paris, France*



# Lincrusta-Walton Tiles.



**L**INCRUSTA-WALTON GLAZED TILE DECORATIONS are the best and cheapest substitute for Tiles at **less than half** the price of **Metal imitations**, are easy to hang, **damp proof**, the **glaze** is **permanent**, is not affected by steam, and can be fixed with **absolutely invisible** joints on ordinary plaster; no preparation required.

Lincrusta-Walton Tiles are made in **continuous rolls** 12 yards long, all brick patterns **running horizontally**, thus obviating the number of joints which are necessary in **all other imitation** tiles.

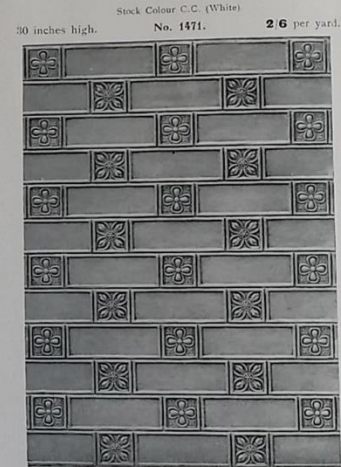
Lincrusta-Walton Tiles are now being specified by leading **Architects** for **Hospital Corridors**, being **hygienic** and **germ proof**, and can be washed **with a hose pipe** without in any way affecting the material.

Lincrusta-Walton has recently substituted tiles in the following places of amusement in London :--The New Victoria Palace, The Chiswick Empire, Wood Green Empire, New Middlesex Music Hall, Shepherd's Bush Empire, besides many others in London and the Provinces.

Lincrusta-Walton Tiles have been extensively used in the Lavatories of Corridor Trains on the **Great Eastern Railway**. It is not affected by vibration or change of Temperature.

Lincrusta-Walton Tiles are **pliable** to handle, can be used round **curves** and **angles** without detriment to the material, but in cases where the **angles** are **very sharp** it is desirable to fix a wood nosing, which can be **glazed to match** Lincrusta, or if the nosing is half round the **Lincrusta** can be fixed over it.

PLAIN DADO RAIL, specially designed for Bath Rooms, No. 382, 2½ in. wide, 2d. per foot.



This design is rolled horizontally in pieces 12 yards long by 30 inches high, and can be supplied highly glazed for Bathrooms, Lavatories, etc., at **3.9** per yard.

SAMPLES OF STOCK COLOURS ARE SHOWN AT END OF BOOK.

Figure 4.10: Advertisement for Lincrusta

While some advertisements portrayed Lincrusta as a luxury material, others leaned into its sanitary nature. This advertisement depicts Lincrusta entirely differently than the previous examples. Here Lincrusta is described as being “specified by leading architects for hospital corridors, being hygienic and germ proof, and can be washed with a hose pipe without in any way affecting the material.” This is a total departure from the previous examples and how they demonstrated Lincrusta to be luxurious and so well-known that a description of the product is discretionary. If only presented with this advertisement, the reader would have a completely different idea of what Lincrusta is in comparison to the others, and using it in the home might not be in consideration. If presented with one of the other advertisements one might never consider using Lincrusta in a hospital. Manufacturers knew that would be a missed opportunity, because hospitals are large buildings which require a lot of material to cover its interior walls. But it is

not just hospitals; this advertisement makes mention of Lincrusta's use in bathrooms and corridors in trains on the Great Eastern Railway. Lincrusta is a suitable material for trains because "it is not affected by the vibration of change of temperature."

It is obvious that a lot of thought went into these advertisements. Haphazardly including Lincrusta's best qualities in the advertisement with manufacturers hoping for the best is not the best strategy. Instead, the advertisements are careful curations designed to appeal to different audiences. All of the advertisements included above exist within fifteen years of each other which is not a significant amount of time to suggest a change in marketing strategy. For instance, in the 1880's there was a push towards sanitary qualities and then in the 1890's there was a focus on Lincrusta as a luxury decoration. These advertisements occupied the same time frame, but different spaces. Manufacturers found the balance between advertising Lincrusta as something of a miracle product without making it sound too good to be true. Had the advertisements presented Lincrusta as a luxurious decoration that needs no introduction, is perfect for dining rooms and libraries, and is easy to wash off with a hose so it is found in hospitals around the world, the reader might get skeptical about the abundance of claims. If it is so luxurious, why is it on the walls in hospitals and bathrooms?

### ***Competitor Advertisements***

F.R. Beck & Co was a founding member of the National Wall Paper Company in 1892.<sup>32</sup> This is important context considering F.R. Beck & Co was investing in other types of wall coverings but understood the potential of Lincrusta. It also signals that there was competition in the wall covering market, as different products aimed to be the ultimate solution in interior decoration. One such product was Vitrolite, a type of pigmented glass which was popular in the

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<sup>32</sup> F.R. Beck & Co, *Catalogue of Designs of Lincrusta-Walton Manufactured by F.R. Beck & Co*, 1893).

early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Vitrolite was popular because it would not absorb moisture or odors, nor would it swell or warp. Being glass, it was blemish and burn resistant and was colorfast, meaning the color would not fade. It was also hygienic, because it would not absorb germs which made it a popular choice for bathrooms and kitchens.<sup>33</sup>

**EYE VALUE AND PROPERTY VALUE  
ARE ENHANCED BY**

# VITROLITE

## BATHROOMS & KITCHENS

**VITROLITE ... A LIBBEY • OWENS • FORD PRODUCT**

There's a breath-taking beauty in bathrooms or kitchens of Vitrolite, absolutely impossible to achieve with any other material. Because, first of all, no other product provides the matchless color range of this lustrous COLORFUL Structural Glass.

Sixteen wonderful colors—ten solid hues, six rich agate shades—many two-tone sandblast, inlay and color-decorated effects, give the architect or decorator unlimited scope in working out a beautiful and unusual kitchen or bathroom scheme.

The finishing touch to thorough modernization is given by a Vitrolite Bathroom and Kitchen, beside making the home infinitely more livable and increasing the property value to a remarkable degree.

In new structures, unfurnished and unoccupied, a colorful Vitrolite Kitchen or Bathroom is the focal point of attention, often the decisive factor in sale or lease of the property. Successful realtors recognize this and mention this outstanding feature in their advertising.

Vitrolite is a permanent, lifetime improvement. It does not absorb odors and its flint-like surface will never check, craze, or grow dull. A damp cloth is all that is ever required to keep it lustrous and beautiful.

Vitrolite pays for itself many times over, when its unrivaled advantages are weighed against its moderate cost.




Figure 4.11: brochure advertisement for Vitrolite

The definitive language this advertisement uses is similar to the advertisements for Lincrusta. The advertisement states: “In new structures, unfinished and unoccupied, a colorful Vitrolite kitchen or bathroom is the focal point of attention, often the decisive factor in sale or

<sup>33</sup> Thomas C. Jester, *Twentieth-Century Building Materials : History and Conservation* (McGraw-Hill, 1995).



lease of the property.” Just like Lincrusta’s advertisements, Vitrolite is not just visually appealing, it is durable as well. “Vitrolite is a permanent, lifetime improvement.”

Another product trying to capitalize on the newfound popularity of sanitation was Marstile. A little more ambiguous in composition, Marstile was an oil-treated, water-proof tile-like material which could be applied over old or new walls. Like Lincrusta and Vitrolite, Marstile had similar focus in marketing, emphasizing its sanitary, economical, and durable qualities.



Figure 4.12: magazine advertisement for Marstile

## Curious Beauty Finished Walls are desired

**WHAT IS MARSH TILE?** Marsh tile is a permanent sanitary and lastingly beautiful interior wall finish in sheet form, that can be installed over old or new walls or woodwork. Basically it is a specially processed, oil treated, water-proof material to which a hard, but flexible glazed surface is permanently integrated. The tile-like glaze surface is finished by a burnishing treatment which completely seals the pores so that moisture and dirt cannot penetrate. Acids, alkalis and non-abrasive cleaning compounds are repelled, insuring a stainproof, easy-to-clean surface which retains its beautiful appearance for years.

**MARSH TILE IS EASY TO INSTALL** Marsh tile is inexpensive to install; installation of the large sheets of Marsh tile is made quickly and with little inconvenience or muss. It can be easily sawed and fit around windows, doors, and plumbing fixtures. Marsh tile moldings have been designed to enhance the beauty and facilitate the ease and speed of installation.

**BATH ROOM** In the average home, or apartment, the bathroom is the hardest-to-keep-clean room. Not so if decorated with Marsh tile. Its spick and span cleanliness requires but a few minutes time, occasionally, to sponge off the glossy surface. You cannot realize how clean and cheerful you can make your bathroom. The

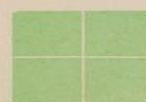


cost is low—less in fact, than the increased value that will be added to your property.

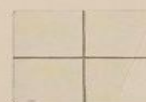
Marsh tile provides satisfaction that cannot be measured in dollars.



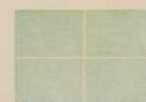
LARK IVORY



PHEASANT GREEN



NATURAL WHITE



ROBIN EGG BLUE



## YOUR DREAM KITCHEN

More time is spent and more work is done in the kitchen than any other room in the home. A great deal of the undesirable work is in cleaning. You can relieve much of the kitchen drudgery by having Marsh tile installed right over the present walls, at a reasonable cost. How proud you will be of your beautiful, modern, clean, kitchen.

Pictures can only give you an idea of how lovely your rooms will be with Marsh tile. You must see actual installations to fully realize the clean beauty, cheerfulness and charm that Marsh tile will give in your home. Visit the Marsh tile dealer at your first opportunity. He will gladly show you sample installations, and give you cost estimates without obligation.

The Marsh Wall Tile Co.  
Dover, Ohio

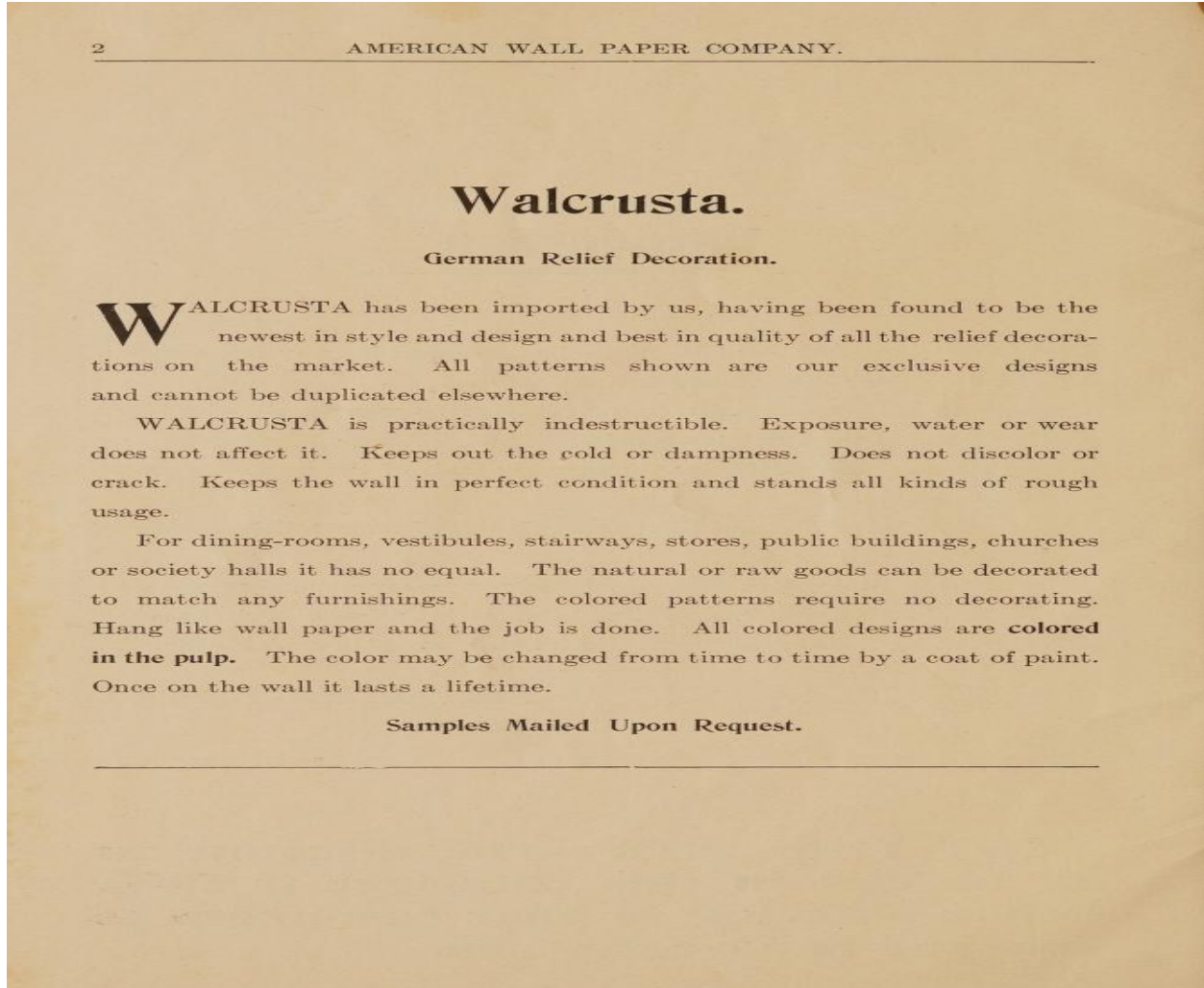
Surprisingly low Cost

Figure 4.13: magazine advertisement for Marsh tile

The above advertisements make bold claims in regards to its value. “Marsh tile provides satisfaction that cannot be measured in dollars.” Like Lincrusta, Marsh tile hedges its claims of affordability by obscuring the actual cost with broad terms of satisfaction and value.

Other competing materials did not try to solve the same problems with very different materials such as Vitrolite and Marsh tile, which accomplished similar objectives but were unique. Instead, other competitors steered into Lincrusta’s popularity to the point that a consumer might not be able to see a difference at all. In *Catalog of Paper Hangers’ Supplies* by the American Wall

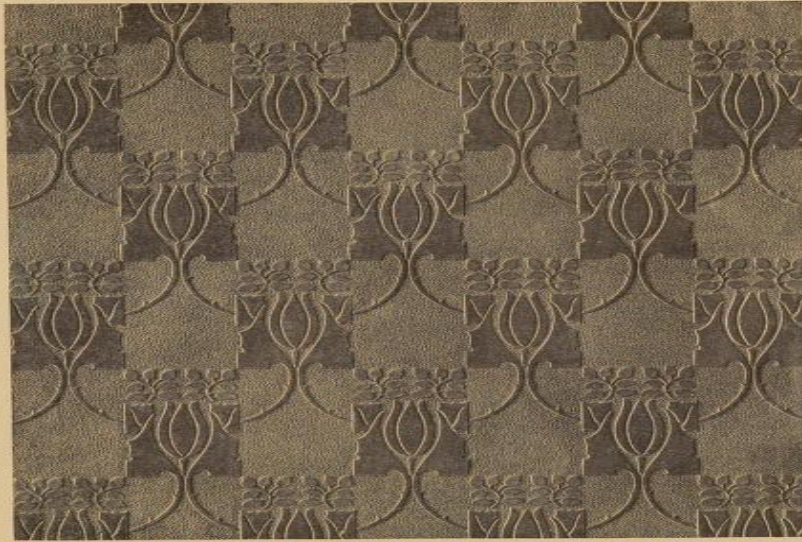
Paper Company is an advertisement for Walcrusta, a German version of Lincrusta.



*Figure 4.14: brochure advertisement for Walcrusta*



## WALCRUSTA.



Art Nouveau, 18 Inches Wide.

No. 100.	Light Green . . . . .	Price, per yard, <b>\$0.30</b>
No. 101.	Red. . . . .	“ “ “ <b>.30</b>
No. 102.	Raw . . . . .	“ “ “ <b>.30</b>

Figure 4.15: brochure advertisement for Walcrusta

Almost indistinguishably described as Lincrusta, Walcrusta was “practically indestructible” and “keeps the wall in perfect condition and stands all kinds of rough usage.” It was advertised as good for homes and public buildings with the bold claim that it “has no equal.”<sup>34</sup> It is worth noting that just a few pages later in this catalog are samples of Lincrusta.

Anaglypta was another product which was very similar to Lincrusta. As mentioned earlier, Anaglypta is the invention of a former Lincrusta employee and former London store

<sup>34</sup> American Wall Paper Company, *Catalog of Paper Hangers' Supplies*, 1907).



manager, Thomas Palmer who received his patent in 1887, about a decade after Walton patents Lincrusta.<sup>35</sup> Anaglypta principally employs paper pulp instead of linseed oil, which gives it the embossed, textured feel but without the water resistance.

In *The Anaglypta Decoration in Relief: Special Designs, Modern English Style* George Haite describes Anaglypta as having many of the same properties of Lincrusta, but is a completely different product.<sup>36</sup> "...it will be seen that anaglypta differs entirely from embossed papers, and is necessarily superior..." Anaglypta, is described as having all of the best features of Lincrusta such as the ability to imitate more expensive relief decorations but is supposedly lighter in weight and easier to install. Like Lincrusta, anaglypta came in a wide array of patterns ranging from geometrics to natural motifs, and often depicted without color as the material was usually installed first and painted after.

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<sup>35</sup> A London and (F P. ). Decorator, "Anaglypta," 19, no. 6 (March, 1892). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/25582142.pdf>. "Lincrusta the Ultimate Wall Covering since 1877," ; A London, "Anaglypta,"

<sup>36</sup> George Haite, "The Anaglypta Decoration in Relief: Special Designs, Modern English Style," *Wall Paper Manufacturers Ltd.* (1900). <https://archive.org/details/Anaglypta54012/page/n7/mode/2up>.

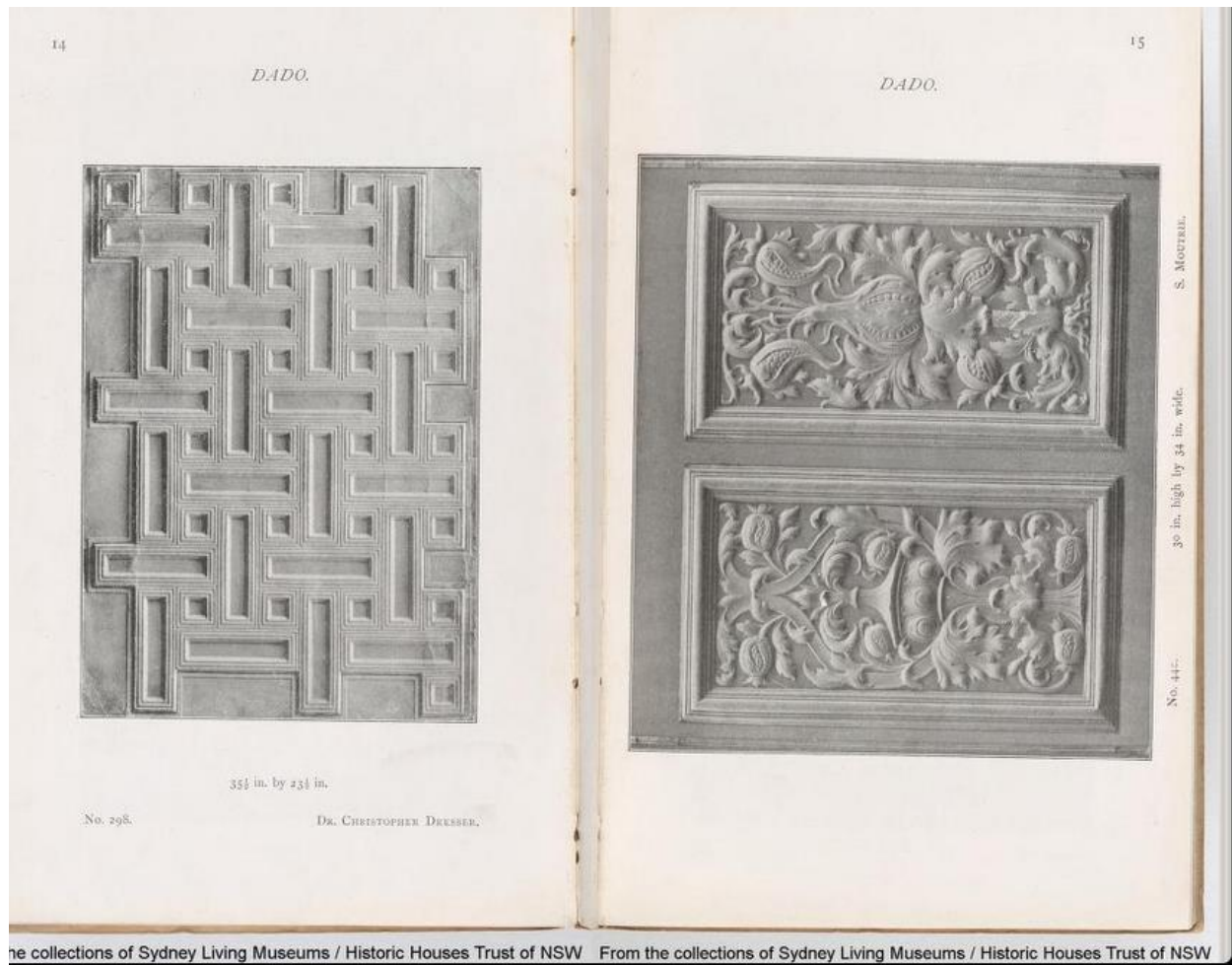
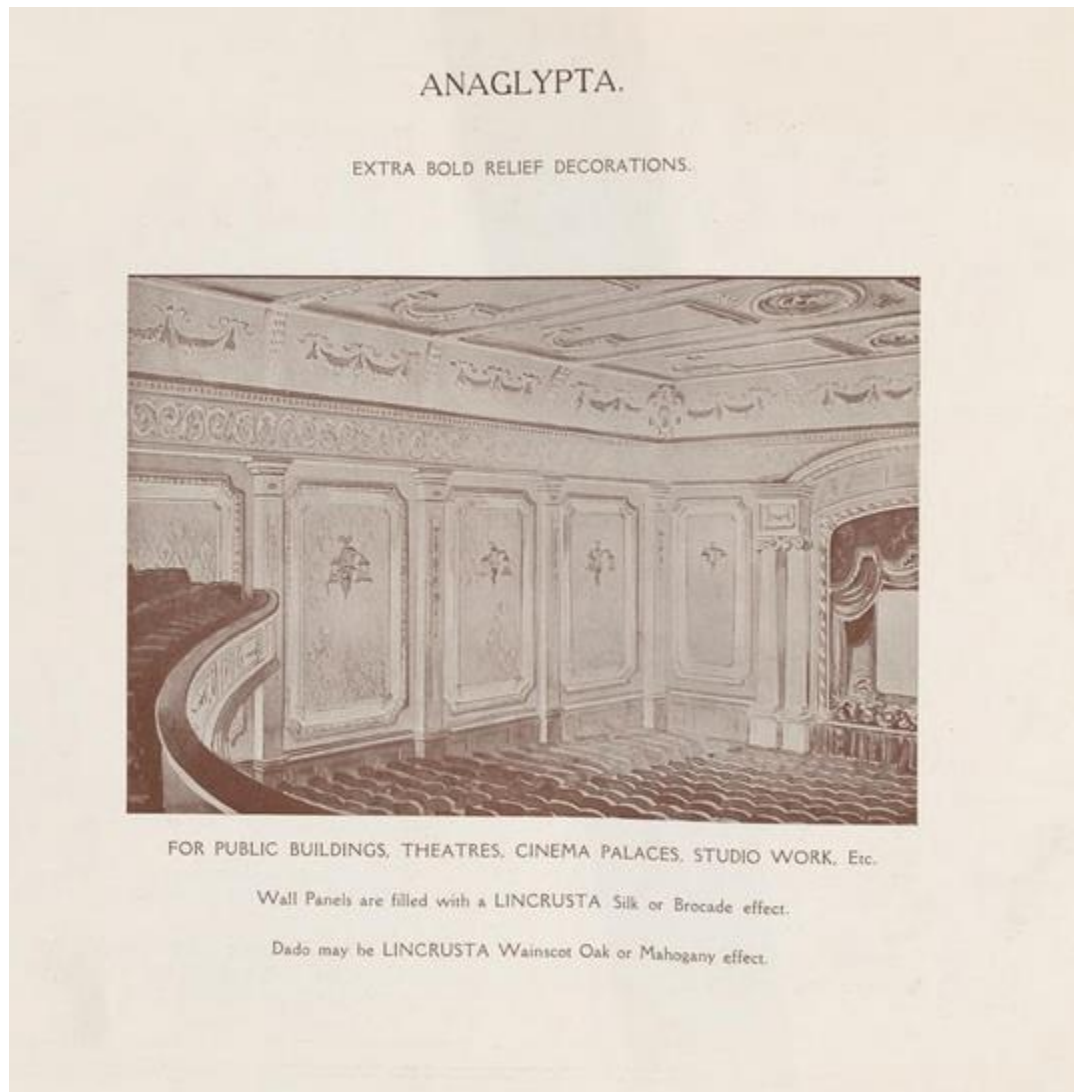


Figure 4.16: brochure advertisement for Anaglypta

There were a few other products similar to Lincrusta but without the same prevalence as Lincrusta or even Anaglypta. Cameoid, derived from *cameo*, which means paper in Latin, was invented in 1888 by former Lincrusta employee, D.M. Sutherland.<sup>37</sup> Cameoid was a hollow paper pressed into the desired relief or design, and like Anaglypta it did not have the same water-resistant properties of Lincrusta. Like other wall coverings, Anaglypta and Cameoid were part of a larger array of wall coverings from the same manufacturers who did not specialize in one type of wall covering. Examples of both are present in *Anaglypta: With Which is Incorporated the*

<sup>37</sup> Pamela H. Simpson, "Linoleum and Lincrusta: The Democratic Coverings for Floors and Walls," in *Exploring Everyday Landscapes* (U of Tennessee P, 1997), 281.

*Best Selection in High Relief Designs of Cordelova, Cameoid, and Salamander.* The designs are very similar to those in other publications, but with an interesting picture at the front of the catalog.



*Figure 4.17: brochure advertisement for Anaglypta and Lincrusta*

Figure 4.17 is an advertisement for Anaglypta and Lincrusta applied in the same space. This suggests that Anaglypta and materials might be sufficient wall coverings in their own rights, but they are not necessarily replacements for Lincrusta.

Lincrusta's biggest competition was perhaps the most established and prevalent wall

covering, wall paper. While Lincrusta and other materials received praise for their unique characteristics in durability and sanitation, wall paper was still unmatched in its color and range of prints. *Home Decoration*, a magazine featuring a collection of wall paper designs by Alfred Peats from 1908 took full advantage of color printing to showcase its products. In an opening summary, the catalog states: "...our chief aim has been to bring home practical schemes to our readers- who generally accept them as a safe source of authority in decoration- we have endeavored to fortify our claims by abundant proof in the pages that follow." And they do, because the rest of the catalog contains colorful wall paper samples with suggested uses. As mentioned in the literature review, magazines during this time period attempted to become the authority for readers when it came to decoration, fashion, and politics. *Home Decoration* was no exception. First released in 1905, it had distributed almost 100,000 copies in North America by the time the wall paper collection was in circulation.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Alfred Peats, "Alfred Peats Prize Wall Papers," *Home Decoration*, 1908, .

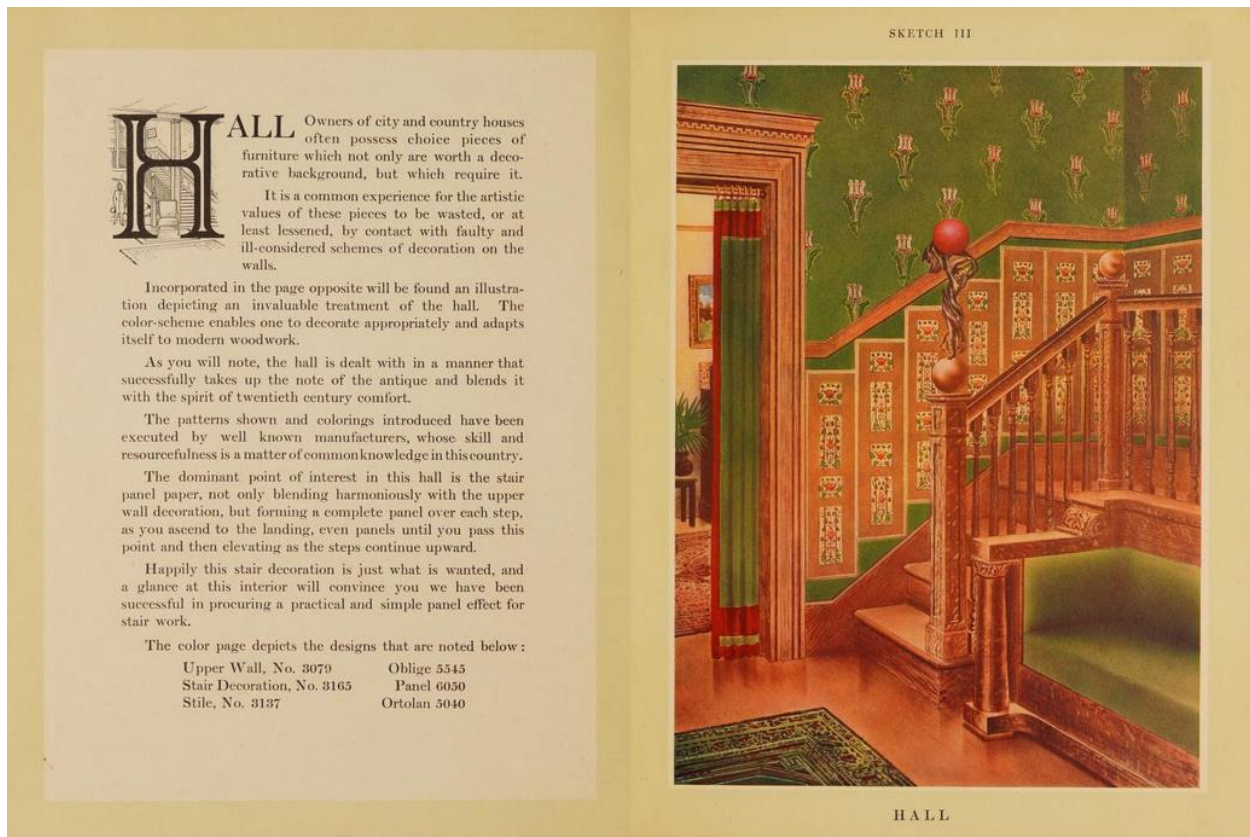


Figure 4.18: magazine advertisement for wallpaper

*Home Decoration* sold wall paper in the same manner other publications sold Lincrusta, by making it a must-have. The advertisement in figure 4.18 states: “Owners of city and country houses often possess choice pieces of furniture which not only are worth a decorative background, but which require it.” This suggests that using wall paper is not even a choice. Wall paper is a requirement, or else the rest of the furnishings will seem out of place. Wall decoration brings harmony to the rest of the room. The advertisement is colorful and vibrant and gives the reader a great representation of the product.



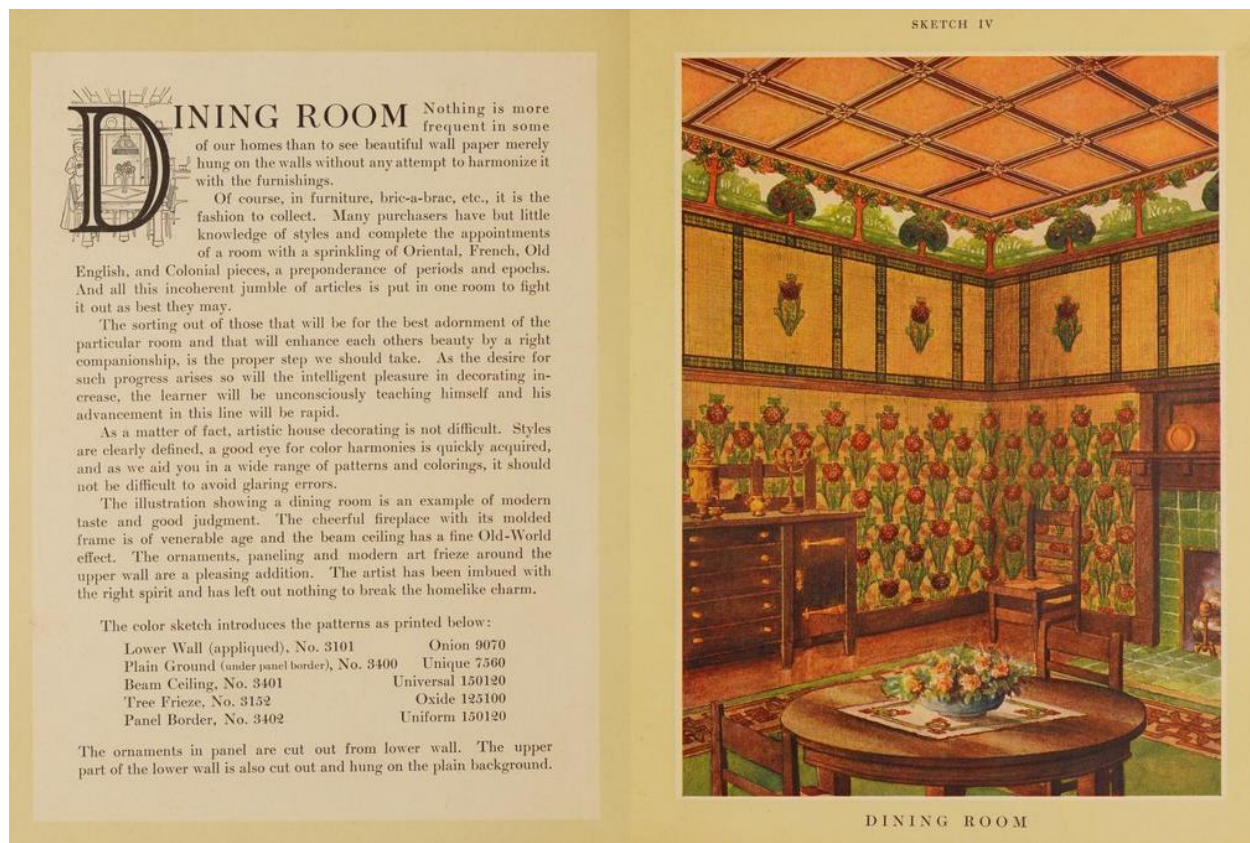


Figure 4.19: magazine advertisement for wallpaper

*Home Decoration* also addresses the concern that the average person might not possess the design skill to choose the right paper for a cohesive design. The publication states: “As a matter of fact, artistic house decorating is not difficult. Styles are clearly defined, and a good eye for color harmonies is quickly acquired, and as we aid you in a wide range of patterns and colorings, it should not be difficult to avoid glaring errors.” This is a smart approach which does not intimidate potential customers, and it is a similar strategy used in advertisements for Lincrusta. The idea in both scenarios is to position the product as artistic, fancy, and elegant, but also achievable for average people. This is done for Lincrusta by highlighting its value and for wall paper by making it mistake-proof.

## **Chapter 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In concluding this thesis, it is important to explain why exploring Lincrusta's advertisements is important to Historic Preservation. Lincrusta is a product born at the intersection of very important moments in history- the Victorian Era and Germ Theory. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century it was suddenly important and nearly required for homes to feature high art and be as sanitary as possible, two things that are seemingly at odds. Lincrusta provided a solution for both issues and not just for the wealthy. Lincrusta existed to look expensive while being exceedingly valuable. Manufacturers took advantage of the advances in printing technology to reach a wider audience and position Lincrusta as the cure-all for the unique problems facing interior decoration in the Victorian era.

When considering advertising materials, preservationists may gain a better understanding of the product's importance and how much or often it was used. It was not just a wall covering, but a significant invention that was so ubiquitous it appeared in opulent and austere spaces alike. Historic Preservation ensures the long-term care of important objects, artwork, buildings, and customs. Things are not important in a vacuum but rather gain their significance by their context and association. Lincrusta represents a time when people all over the world faced growing pressure to present their homes as more than just domiciles while also trying to reconcile with the new-found, invisible enemy of germs. If the request came to an interior designer today for an artistic wall covering which must be durable, affordable, and most of all sanitary, Lincrusta should be the first and most obvious choice. If that same request came in 1850, the solution would not be apparent.

Despite the multitude of important qualities, great care is evident in Lincrusta's advertisements to avoid coming across as too good to be true. Instead of putting all of Lincrusta's features into each advertisement, they were carefully selected with the goal to appeal to particular audiences. Some advertisements focused on the sanitary qualities and presented Lincrusta as a great material for hospitals or bathrooms, and others highlighted Lincrusta's elegant designs which made it suitable for parlors, libraries, and dining rooms. While there are differences, many advertisements do share a few of the same qualities, most notably the value of the product. Lincrusta is durable, long-lasting, easy to maintain, and much cheaper than the materials it imitates. Lincrusta's desirability is not necessarily a result of what it was, but rather how it was marketed to consumers. Other materials found a niche' to focus on, but no other material was as all-encompassing as Lincrusta.

Mentioned earlier, the time period this thesis focuses on is about 1877-1940, or from Lincrusta's invention through the beginning of World War II. That's because there was a push to conserve materials for the war effort, and many of the original design templates for Lincrusta were melted down to be used elsewhere. Andy Sarson, Lincrusta Production and Technical Manager, states: "the designs we see in the catalogs and brochures from manufacturers cannot be replicated because they no longer exist. The only evidence we have of these designs outside of the brochures are of instances where they are still installed in homes and buildings, which must be carefully preserved."<sup>39</sup>

### ***Recommendations***

With my research I have determined that there is great potential for analyzing marketing materials as a Historic Preservation strategy. This research can serve as a guide for researching

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<sup>39</sup> Sarson, Andy. January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024.



other products or materials whose specific marketing indicates its importance during a time in history. While this thesis focuses on Lincrusta, this type of research can be applied to any number of products that were marketed through magazines and brochures. Future work should start with reviewing magazines from any time period and looking for themes. Once a theme emerges, the contextual research can begin. Sometimes there might not be any significant findings, but there is always a reason behind a marketing strategy. Lincrusta is not as ubiquitous as other wall coverings such as wallpaper, but upon further investigation it is revealed that Lincrusta was a very unique product with a broad application meant to solve a very unique predicament in interior decoration during the Victorian Era. The current literature on Lincrusta adequately details its history, material composition, and application. In providing analysis of its marketing, this thesis introduces new information about Lincrusta and establishes a new technique for identifying historically-significant products and materials.

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