

Appendix 17

This essay, prepared by Rodd Wheaton, Historical Architect, Rocky Mountain Region, concerns the furnishings of the ranch house and the cultural influences they reflect. Illustrations 7, 15, and 16 illuminate much of this text.

## FURNISHING THE RANCH HOUSE

In 1890 Augusta Kohrs undoubtedly oversaw the construction of the brick wing behind the original log structure, which, like its predecessor, is austere, belying the attention paid to interior detail. Completed with a furnace, a hydraulic ram for supplying running water, and a carbide gas generator "Gas Plant" for gas lighting, the wing was built by a troop of builders and finishers whose payments appear in the 1887-1892 *Day Book*. W. W. Reed was paid "for laying rock" December 4, 1889, and again in July 1890. In December "Robertson & Bonner" were paid for lumber. In September 1890 W. L. Law was paid for carpentry and Charles Forrest was paid "for 39770 brick." Hamile Christian laid 1,258 yards of plaster at forty cents per yard for a total cost of \$503.20. In January 1891, Thomas Laughlin apparently finished the plastering. One Mr. Keiser was paid \$50.00 for painting in October 1890, and a "Hardwood Carpenter" worked in the dining room in December. Finally, identified purpose cash outlays, which are rare, in January and February 1891 included the Bonner Mercantile Company, Butte, Montana, for carpets (\$483.62) and moulding.

The wing forms a "T" at the rear of the clapboarded *pieux en coulisse* log structure erected for John Francis Grant by, as noted in his memoirs, "McLeod the hewer" and "carpenter Alexander Pambrun." Grant also noted that the interior walls were finished with local slaked lime plaster at the cost of \$150.00 in 1862. (The ceilings, with exposed joists, were whitewashed.) Bearing some similarities to an article published in Deer Lodge City's *New Northwest* newspaper in 1887 entitled "Helping the Housewife, How Architects Should Plan the People's Homes," by Louis H. Gibson of Indianapolis, the wing contains a connecting "china pantry" between the dining room and kitchen; folding doors separating the dining room from the sitting room, the center of family activity at the ranch house; an easy flight of stairs descending to the basement; and several second floor bedrooms, each with a closet, interconnected *en suite*.

The trim of the wing is typical of stock millwork that could have come from a company such as the Rock Island (Illinois) Sash and Door Works, which was marketing several styles including the "head block and cap finish" corner block trim. Symmetrical in profile, this trim is set with a molded roundel within the corner blocks that extend beyond the head piece with a section of molding. Multipanel doors are hung below glazed transoms. The trim is painted in two tones, stained, or, as in the case of the dining room, varnished to match paneled oak wainscoting.

Oak is also the primary wood of the turned and paneled octagonal newel post, the molded railing, and the turned balusters of the stairway of the back hallway. Here the base coat of paint on the plaster walling is combed with circle motifs. Sprouting above the picture mold, within a frieze space, the combing reflects stylized flowers and foliage. (Considerably more elaborate, the "Copper King Mansion," built in Butte, has extensive combing work.)

The 1890 interiors contrast markedly with the earlier interiors, which are an expression of the vernacular craftsmanship utilizing local materials

in a manner recalling stylish details. The detailing complements the almost Greek Revival austerity of the exterior where attic "frieze windows," like those of the Kohrs' Upper Ranch House south of Deer Lodge, are enlarged into second floor windows.

The original interior partitions are constructed of vertical, beaded boarding, set with plain board trim and hung with four-panel doors, without panel mouldings, grained to imitate maple. Simple window trim with backband moulding and plain baseboarding contrast to later enriched picture moldings at ceiling height. Shallow closets, each with pairs of upper and lower hand-planed panel doors, open into the front master bedroom and the parlour. A champhered newel post, with a molded cap, receives a molded handrail set on square-section balusters, two to a step. The stairway originally rose to a single large room that was partitioned sometime after 1871.

The interiors were unified with several decades of accumulated household furnishings, though provenance of most is vague. *Day Book* entries generally do not mention purpose, although 1882 memorandums are of significance. Historical references in Grant's memoirs and Kohrs's *Autobiography* are equally scant. However, a time frame acquisition is provided that is augmented by Deer Lodge's *New Northwest* newspaper's social brevities items.

Grant recalled that "At first I had only home made furniture but about four or five years after I bought Capt. Lebarge's freight and among the lot there were some parlor chairs. I paid twenty dollars each for these chairs and ten dollars each for four other chairs." Remaining in the house, and located in the front bedroom, are a pair of transitional side chairs that may have been part of this set. Similarly, a "Grecian Style" lyre pedestal, folding-top card table, and a utilitarian kitchen pie safe, complete with pierced tin panels, are thought to be part of the original Grant furnishings that were all presumably purchased by Kohrs in 1866.

While in Cincinnati in January 1868, Kohrs acquired a consignment of billiard tables, one of which may have been in the "large hall" of the second floor noted in the *New Northwest* in 1871. This article observed that "The residence of Mr. Kohrs is one of the largest in Montana, having seven finely furnished rooms on the first floor, besides a magnificently furnished parlor and a spacious dining room." At that date the house undoubtedly reflected the taste of Conrad Kohrs who, enroute to Iowa in December of 1868, bought a parcel of furnishings before meeting, courting, and marrying Augusta Kruse. The consignment was picked up on the return trip up the Missouri River and arrived at Fort Benton with the Kohrs who were met with an extra wagon for transporting the "furniture and other articles that I had purchased in St. Louis and brought up on the boat with us."

While noting the battle against bedbugs, Kohrs recalled that "We had an old home made bed; strings of rawhide stretched across in place of springs, a straw tick for a mattress," and continued, noting that "There were no carpets. The floors were all pine and were kept spotlessly white by scrubbing." Most likely the 1871 newspaper observation also reflected the expertise of Augusta Kohrs's needlework. In the fall of 1869 she won "1st premium" for a sofa cushion at the Territorial Fair of 1869 and for an "ottoman cover" in 1870, probably the Thracian horseman petitpoint located in the parlour. Any subsequent entries were less publicized.

The family spent the winter of 1871-72 in Germany, establishing a pattern of traveling to the homeland and retaining strong ties where it is apparent that Augusta's family still resided, though Kohrs's mother and stepfather had emigrated to Davenport, Iowa. What influence this first German trip, Kohrs's excursions to California in 1873 and 1874 to visit his sister, and the family trip to the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition may have had on the household furnishings is moot. Certainly Augusta Kohrs was exposed to stylish East Coast American and German interiors; and interest in the latter, at least, was perpetuated by a subscription to *Der Bazar*. Copies dating from the late 1870s remain at the ranch.

In October of 1880 the family departed for a twenty-month stay in Hamburg, Germany, where the children were enrolled in German schools. Kohrs recalled that during his first winter there they frequently attended the opera and concerts and noted that his second winter there "was even more enjoyable and delightful than the previous one." On the family's return, in the fall of 1882, Kohrs met them in New York where "We did some shopping, buying articles my wife wanted, among them some Rogers Silverware, the first we had." Traveling home through Chicago, furniture and carpets were purchased for shipment by railroad that, by 1882, extended nearly to Deer Lodge. The ease of transportation undoubtedly had much to do with the acquisition of the new furnishings, which, according to a September 26, 1882, entry in Kohrs's memo book, included a "Parler set," two bedroom suites, a bookcase, a mirror, "Dining Chares," a "Music Stan," and springs and mattresses. Linoleum for the kitchen and dining room were also mentioned during this period.

Shortly after their return to Montana, Kohrs recalled that a fire in the floor of "the south room," presumably the parlour, caused little damage because the furniture had been carried out, but carpets, "lambrequins and curtains" had to be replaced and two rooms had to be replastered. No mention was made of wallpaper.

Undoubtedly much of the furnishings date from this period, for the next specific mention of furnishings in the *Autobiography* was not until 1900 when Kohrs wrote: "In the spring we went east to purchase some articles my wife wanted for the new home" in Helena. However, most certainly dining room and bedroom furniture was purchased for the wing, which is suggested in conjunction with noting that in the fall of 1890, while in Chicago, Augusta "overdid while shopping." At that time she was surely aware of current Eastern trends, having traveled to St. Louis, Hot Springs, Arkansas, and New Orleans in 1885, and having spent a month in New York City in 1888, and returned there in 1889 by way of Chicago.

Thus, following the April 1891 wedding of Anna Kohrs to John Boardman, "One of the most brilliant weddings ever celebrated in Montana," the recently completed house provided a suitable setting for the reception. According to the *New Northwest* the "wedding dinner was served in the large dining room" amid festoons of foliage and vases of flowers. In May of 1894 a party was given at the house and Kohrs recalled that "There were eighty present. The sitting room was large enough to accommodate four sets and dancing continued until half past five in the morning. . . ."

Finally, concerning external influences, the family departed for Naples from New York in January 1898. Proceeding on to Port Said, a felucca was hired for a fifty-six day tour up the Nile River. Returning to Italy by way of Sorrento, Pompeii, Rome, Florence, and Venice, the family traveled to Vienna. Augusta and daughter Katherine spent nearly seven weeks at Carlsbad before rejoining Kohrs and son William in Munich, after which Switzerland and Germany were visited before returning home in mid-July from Hamburg. Probably while in Egypt, a large Turkish flatwork wall hanging was acquired that was hung in the sitting room. This probably represented one of the last purchases for the house before the move to Helena.

Kohrs wrote that "Deer Lodge had changed so much . . . that there was little to hold us here, so in the fall of 1899, I concluded we would go to Helena for the winter and then if we liked it, take up our residence there." After renting the D'Acheul House for six months, Kohrs purchased it as a surprise wedding anniversary gift for Augusta. The Kohrses having left the ranch, the interiors retained an 1890-1900 appearance in style and arrangement. During this decade the parlour and dining room were formally photographed. The historical photograph of the parlour looks into the "Music Room," set with the Weber upright and ebonized "Renaissance Revival Style" piano draped with an embroidered red velvet piano scarf and complete with a purple velvet upholstered, ebonized swivel stool. Unseen is the ebonized music cabinet, undoubtedly purchased in 1882 to match the piano, in front of which lies a bear rug.

Though the larger room is set somewhat out of vogue with a rectangular center table of "Creative Revival Style" derived from Renaissance Revival sources, the photographed room essentially reflects a very stylish interior of 1890-1900. The theme is set by the red and gold floral Wilton-type carpet, typically laid in strips and bordered, the light ceiling, and the plain walls. (Earlier parlour carpeting, a bold scroll and floral pattern in reds, blues, and black on a light background, remains in a second floor bedroom.) Presently the walls are papered with a brown and gold Faux brocade floral-foliage print, but the photograph reflects the original dark green with black pinstriped wallpaper. An assortment of Fancy, or Quaint, chairs and small stand tables, some naturally finished and some gilded, suggesting Sheraton, French Louis, and Venetian Italian sources, define the stylish interior, nearly masking the older pieces of the two rooms. Dating from 1882 is a seven-piece carved walnut and burl parlour suite, in the Creative-Renaissance Revival Style, upholstered in red cut velvet. Two large closed and rolled arm easy chairs, one of which is seen to the left of the piano, and four smaller chairs match a divan. All with spring seats and backs, this basic set was augmented with a red velvet upholstered armchair and a blue velvet banquette chair of the "Turkish Style," which were quite *avant-garde*. These "exotic" chairs are ornamented with needlework insert panels and wool and silk tassels.

Completing the furnishings from the 1880s are several New Grecian-Creative Revival pieces of furniture, including a hanging walnut whatnot cabinet, or "mirror" etagere, with an extended curtain top, an ebonized picture display easel, and a walnut combination bookcase and writing desk. All typically have carvings, incised lineal designs, and applied panels, moldings, and jigsaw work commonly attributed to the influence of Charles Eastlake. An embroidered velvet

lambrequin hung from the whatnot cabinet and suggests window lambrequins that once may have hung from the ebonized and brass finialed rods, undoubtedly over lace curtains and roller shades. Opening the glass doors of the 1882 bookcase, with its gold plated and bright-cut brasses, a sample of the Kohrs' conventional literary taste is provided. Included are the *Farmers Barn Book* (1867), a set of *Waverly Novels* (1900), *The Works of Louise Muhlbach* in seventeen volumes translated from the German (1890), works of Sir Walter Scott and Washington Irving, *Rollins History* (1936), *Famous Women of the French Court* (1900), *History of Illinois* (1854), and twenty-four volumes of *George Eliot's Works* (1908).

Though somewhat old fashioned for the 1890s, the photographed room is personalized with a variety of items, including the photograph album on the center table with its battenberg lace runner. The glass banquette lamp is no longer in the collection. Additionally, there is the photogravure portrait of the Kohrs' daughters by L. C. Layton, one of a pair in flat goldleafed New Grecian frames; assorted figurines, particularly of children; and assorted framed engravings, such as "The Old Mill," printed by S. J. Parkhill and Company, in a white enameled and gold gesso frame that hangs over the piano. Elsewhere, vases such as the French St. Cloud item, signed "A. Valent," a pair of Majolica vases, and a Rogers Group, received prominent display on the bookcase as photographed circa 1900.

The room, heated with a nickel-plated Acorn stove, model number 252 in the Floral Acorn pattern, was lighted with seven small electric ceiling fixtures with cutglass globes and six symmetrically-placed bracketed wall gas fixtures with brass arms and etched glass globes. Due to the solidness of the log walls and the thinness of the board partitions, the brass piping of the wall fixtures was exposed.

The second interior photograph, of the dining room, indicates an overall quality of the exotic, though the oak furnishings reflect various late 19th-century revival styles, including an "Elizabethan Style" extension dining table with massive turned legs. All complement the "Colonial Revival Style" multipanel wainscoting, capped with a cushion frieze, matching the door and window openings with fluted jamb facings, and a roundel relief band. The most notable feature of the room is the built-in "Queen Anne Style" corner sideboard containing drawers, cupboards, and semicircular glazed display cabinets containing, among other items, several pieces of Rogers Triple (silver) Plate bright-cut hollowware, and a Haviland pitcher and sugar bowl monogrammed "CK." The set of twelve ladder-back chairs are an inspiration from the New Grecian-Colonial Revival Style and have cobbler seats upholstered in brown leather. These furnishings, as reflected in material and scale, were almost certainly purchased for the room in 1890, which, judging from the photograph, was finished in the high style of creating three distinct wall planes.

Above the wainscoting, dark, plain wall covering, now replaced by a light beige foliate wallpaper, extends to a gilded picture molding set below a highly ornamental cavetto cornice-frieze. The Adamesque-Colonial detailing in gilding on a dark background contrasts with the light ceiling. At the canted bay window with Adamesque pattern lace curtains, light filters over clay potted plants. Here a ficus rubber plant, parlour palms, and a flowering maple, among geraniums, are set on an oak library-type table and on low benches within the bay.

Floored with plain ancaustic octagonal tiles, the bay projection contrasts with finished wooden flooring, partially and most fashionably covered with a large twelve- by eighteen-foot Bakhtiari-type carpet. This carpet sets the exotic theme emphasized by the appliqué and embroidered table covering and by the three-panel, oak framed, hand-painted chinoiserie servant screen. Framed oil paintings and prints complete the room, which is centered with a magnificent Creative-Renaissance Revival chandelier. Brass arms support etched globes for gas lights and tulip-shaped globes for electric lights above a coal oil lamp with a dome shade. The room was heated by forced air through the floor grille.

The third important interior photograph, taken on the occasion of a 1904 legislative committee meeting, provides a glimpse of the sitting or living room. Unlike the dining room, which lost its cornice-frieze in the 1940s, the paper-mache cornice of this room has remained, albeit under paint, like the ceiling paper that contrasted to plain walls and painted woodwork. A Near Eastern pattern portiere, hung at the height of the transomed doorway, conceals the conservatory doorway and suggests similar coverings for the windows.

Centered in the room, and covered with a machine-woven "plush lap rug," is an oak library table, a Creative Revival piece with carved and turned legs. Around the table are an assortment of easy chairs. Conrad Kohrs sits in a spring seat armchair, which was destroyed but is similar to the parlour Turkish chairs. Elsewhere, there are straight-back, black leather upholstered spring seat walnut side chairs of the New Grecian Style dining room suite purchased in 1882. Like the 1890 dining room chairs, the crest rails are carved. Comfort and casualness permitted a walnut platform rocker; a "Golden Oak Style" rocker with carved or pressed work; a small, armless mahogany rocker seen in the foreground; and a tapestry upholstered chaise lounge, all protected with needlework antimacassars. The strip Wilton-type carpeting, which reflects the popularity of Japanese design, was removed at a later date and was partially reused in an upstairs hallway.

The room is centered with the electrified Colonial Revival gas chandelier and hung with assorted framed prints. Notable is the grouping of three pictures centered around the wall-mounted gas fixture. Here is a classic example of an arrangement of pictures, the informality of which survived well into the 20th century.

Unfortunately the other rooms of the house were not photographed. However, the collection of remaining furnishings is typical of the period, though the 1878 patented Moore Desk in the office is a unique survivor. With a walnut swivel chair, the Creative Revival walnut desk, with spindeled galleries and burl panels, opens to provide a complete working office with a filing cabinet, writing surface, compartments, and drawers. Similar to so-called "Wells Fargo" or captain's desks, it is set within a "manly" room with plain, dark red wall-papered board partitions and a Japanese-style painted bamboo-edged ceiling. The room is hung with an assortment of equine and hunting prints and several naval views, one copyrighted in 1885. Of particular note is the red "velvet-type" carpeting with small beige floral motifs, which contrasts to the rich lime-green and pale blue floral pattern carpeting of the front bedroom. Also laid in strips, without any border, the bedroom carpeting reflects the work of English designer William Morris.

The bedroom, papered with a white print wallpaper, contains a typical matching bedstead, with "AK" monogrammed linens, and a mirrored dresser, in carved walnut in a Creative Revival Style with burlled panels probably dating from 1882. The suite's washstand, or commode, which like the dresser has a grey fossil marble top, was originally relegated to the downstairs bath where a zinc-lined bathtub remains as well as evidence of a pull chain tank for the original water closet. A Colonial Revival walnut highboy with burlled veneer and surmounted by a vitrine cabinet, along with a walnut wardrobe, complete the major standing furniture in the bedroom, which is heated by a Forest Acorn Stove, model number 20, manufactured by Rathbone Sard and Company.

Miscellaneous furnishings, probably remnants of the earlier set of furniture purchased in St. Louis, include the tapestry upholstered French Antique Style rocker, and a Renaissance Revival, marble topped center table. The intimate atmosphere is reflected in the small gravure souvenir framed print of the "Mona Lisa," and in a velvet framed arrangement of pressed flowers.

Along with several additional Creative Revival bedroom suites of oak, walnut, maple, and cherry, the 1885 John Bielenberg upright folding bed (which appears to be a mirrored wardrobe), the Monarch kitchen range, and the Creative Revival hall tree (noted separately in 1882 in the memo book) and Gothic-Elizabethan chair of the Persian pattern, velvet-type carpeted front hall, the Kohrs collection represents a time capsuled survival of late-19th-century domestic furnishings that are the accumulation of one family and the taste of probably one person--Augusta Kohrs. By 1900 Augusta Kohrs was thoroughly Americanized in taste as evidenced by the occasional evidence of Germanic culture and in comparison with photographs of similar contemporary rooms published in William Seale's *The Tasteful Interlude* (New York: Praeger, 1975). The inlaid tilt-top Swiss table, the beer steins, or the elaborate cuckoo clock, reportedly from the Helena house and now in the pantry, are exceptions and rank as novelties. More importantly, here are branding irons, Conrad Kohrs's leather chaps, a wolf skin robe, and the proverbial set of longhorns, commemorating the acculturation of the American West.