



INFORMATION from the OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

With which are now incorporated The Battleship Oregon Museum, Oregon Geographic Names Board, Old Oregon Trails Association and Oregon Landmarks Committee

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Established in 1873

A new series of fabrics and wall coverings whose designs are more than a century old are enjoying renewed popularity among U.S. and European decorators--thanks to a house restoration project undertaken by the Oregon Historical Society, Portland.

In 1962 the Society accepted the job of restoring the graceful Bybee-Howell House on Sauvie Island, where the Willamette River joins the Columbia. It was opened to the public for the first time last year and re-opens this year on May 18.

Every aspect of the restoration was carefully researched by the Society and by the American Institute of Designers, Oregon Chapter, which acted as consultant.

As a result of this thorough study, Brunschwig & Fils, Inc., internationally known New York design house, produced the "Bybee-Howell Collection," fabrics and wallpaper based on remnants of material and scraps of paper found on the walls of the ante-bellum house.

In the collection are four historically inspired fabrics and two wallpapers, all of them available through decorators throughout North America, and in Paris, where a surprising knowledge and interest in American decorative and primitive arts exists.

The fabrics include "Camas Landing," a brick red, gold and black natural linen print suggesting thistles, ferns and camas leaves.

"Sauvie Island Border" is a distinctive print of olive, blue, mustard and brown.

"Mary Anna," a favorite Howell family name, describes a pink and white feathery fabric with a diamond design.

"Wyeth Country," a flower and leaf design, commemorates the founding of Fort William in 1832 on Sauvie Island by Bostonian Nathaniel Wyeth, an ancestor of the contemporary painter, Andrew Wyeth.

The two wall coverings, both used in the home's bedrooms, are "Fleurettes," a warm, gold tracery of petite flowers, and "Rosebud," named after one of Colonel Bybee's favorite race horses.

The house, which is easily reached by a short drive from Portland (the Island is reached by bridge), is beautifully furnished throughout.

It is registered as a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service.

Begun in 1856 by James F. Bybee, the house is reminiscent of a New England country house, or the type of elegant home that might be found in the central Mississippi Valley.

Bybee was a Kentuckian who took up a claim on Sauvie Island in 1847. In 1848 he left for the California goldfields, where, as history relates, "he made a fortune."

On his return, he and his wife, Julia Ann Miller, laid plans for the two-story, nine-room house. It was completed in 1856.

Framing timbers were hand hewn at the site; stone came down by scow from the falls at Oregon City; and the molding, window frames, doors and mantles were handmade of cedar. Even the burnt orange bricks used in construction were made on the Island by a brick company still in business today.

In 1858 the walls of the house were plastered--the first to be so finished in the Oregon Country.

That same year the Bybees moved out. No one knows why.

The next owner was Benjamin Howell, a Sauvie Island postmaster, and it remained in the Howell family until 1961 when Multnomah County purchased the property from the widow of Benjamin's grandson, and the house came into the ownership of the Oregon Historical Society.

The house and its grounds, filled with original fruit and ornamental trees, are now a county park, and will be open to the public through October.