

10 Restoring the Ceiling Panels



The ceiling panels had been overpainted with scattered flowers and orange borders.

The ceiling panels are constructed of Upson board nailed to a curved wooden frame. Upson board is made of dense laminations of cardboard. It is not known for durability or strength.

Cleaning to the original paint

When Rosa began restoring the ceiling panels, they had been overpainted with scattered flowers and orange borders. They were in poor condition. They suffered from stress delaminations and were riddled with stress lines. Rosa identified at least three layers of paint. She could see the original and second layers through the most recent layer. Her goal was to clean the panels to the original paint.

Rosa tested several materials for removing the upper layers of paint one layer at a time. She found the following ones ineffective: alcohol, acetone, dimethylformamide, a hair dryer, a heat gun, a pencil-sized butane torch, Savagran Kutzit liquid methylene chloride paint remover, Savagran paste methylene chloride paint remover, Methyl Ethyl Ketone (MEK) paint remover, and 3M Safest Stripper non-toxic paint remover.

Liquid substances that wet the Upson board or remained on it too long weakened the board and made it soft. The board was highly susceptible to peeling laminations, especially if it was damp or wet.

The product that worked best was Sears Heavy Duty Paint Remover. It was quick, effective, and somewhat controllable. Rosa brushed it on the surface in 6 x 6 inch squares using a 1-inch brush.

The ceiling panel has been moved to Rosa's studio and is ready to be restored.

