
Touring Lincolnvillle: A Celebration of Historic
Black Business

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Wallpaper

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Wallpaper

Andrew Morrison

Foreword

To imagine an object that can only watch and observe the surroundings, but never interact, is a depressing thought. There will never be moments that stand out, nor will anyone ever interact in any meaningful way. What truly resounds is the idea that all that it has witnessed will eventually degrade away with it. Turning to ash with time alone. There will be nothing that records what it experienced. In terms of history, it will have never existed at all. There is nothing more terrifying or intriguing to write about, at least in my eyes

I never had the same owner, nor did I ever have the same view. It changed with the years, and with it, my home seemed to almost shift in result, as if it was almost adapting to whatever took place within it. But I knew more than the average visitor, and I could see what they couldn't on the wall away from prying eyes. I was able to witness the open wounds, tell where the scars faded and where they never healed at all.

I am wallpaper, unassuming and unnoticed within the day-to-day lives of the people around me. Without me, there would be nothing that could be known in the place where I reside, which I have heard referred to often as 114 Central Avenue. I know nothing of the world outside save for what has been discussed within my walls, as that is all the importance that is required for something that resides entirely within one building. I have heard the sweet nothings whispered to couples during moments alone, and I have heard plots murmured in the dead of the night. These things were not recorded in any book but instead left to be lost to time.

I remember only the things that I am meant to remember. These things that were told again and again to guests of my building, and therefore are something of importance. If I were capable, it could be my purpose to speak to them as well. To give voice to these stories that none have ever heard, as it has only ever been half-truths and assumptions. There is so much more to be told than what is already understood. But I do not care either way, as I am not meant to ever care about anything else besides myself.

The original owner of my home was someone named Georgia Lee, and I was created between 1899 and 1904. I can hardly remember which anymore, as the years simply seem to fly on by. Throughout the history of my building, events such as murders, meetings, customers, or

other types of visitors have passed me by since then, and none have ever given me a second thought. The only time I was ever attended to was when I was restored and remodeled, made pretty for visitors who looked at my deteriorating state and said no more.

There was no care or attention to my state more than that. I was something to be admired or made to keep the wall from being blank. There is nothing else that matters in the world than serving the purpose that was put to me. Nothing but the care and attention that visitors give to me when they arrive at the building. There is nothing personal about me, all that I am is meant to be on complete and full display. I have never known a single inch of privacy, but it does not matter. I have never cared about these things either.

All around me is monotonous. I've never cared when murders occurred in front of me, or when history unfolded before my very eyes. There was never a dull moment that occurred, however, there wasn't an exciting moment for me either. I am only a decoration designed for ensuring that the walls of my home are not blank white or something else entirely. If one was to converse with me, they would have a terrible time of it. I'm not known for being much for conversation.

I remain on the wall, motionless and isolated from all around me. The time changes faster than I can tell, with the sun and the moon joined in equal harmony from the window across from me. Yet there are moments when I can see more than others believe that I can when gatherings and important details are discussed in front of me. Their secret plans and discussions for no other ears but their own are heard by me with perfect clarity.

Groups of men discuss political messages and important dates, current events, and world affairs without batting an eye. There are moments when they seem afraid and excited all at once, changing with every moment that the sun and moon change position in the sky. As the light changes, so too does their opinions. They are a chaotic bunch, with much to think about but fewer to act upon. There is no rhyme or reason to their way of thinking, and yet it is all that they can focus on. I do not understand, but I cannot speak so I must only listen.

The topic changes every time the sun and moon move, and as they come and go, the old leave and the new return. Eventually, the group stopped coming and it was only a few people at a time. Gone were the discussions of importance and deliberation, and only now it was simply current events in passing or over small to minor details. Life was the most important thing now, not how it was dictated or what could be done. I know everything that goes on around me and never has a single word ever been spoken to me.

They place things on me, to make me less bland. Wooden frames of themselves or those that they know, driving nails deep into me to ensure that they stay firmly in position. If I could feel pain, then I would scream at these developments. However, I do not, so it is of no matter to me. There are many things that they do on a day-to-day basis, including cleaning me and things around me, as well as cleaning themselves. They are quite selfish, as everything that they do

relates to them and them alone. The only time that they ever think about me is how others would judge them when they saw me.

I remain in the same position throughout most of my life, restricted to one single room without any hope of ever leaving. I do not wish to leave anyway, as the room is all that I have ever known. Whenever I am exposed too much to heat or water anyway, I sag or peel. I would not survive outside of the room where I reside, so I sit where I am constantly, without any thought or feeling of ever leaving. There is no need to leave, as I serve my purpose for those that care for me and themselves.

It wasn't long before I became useless, however. They didn't like the way I looked, or perhaps I was peeling in certain areas. Eventually, I was covered up and I was only able to hear what occurred around me. There was discussion of wars, big and small, as well as people and children living and growing old. I witnessed death over the years, and if it were another person, I feel certain that it would have changed them for the worse. That is if I had any sanity to begin with.

But I am not sane, nor am I insane. I am only a decoration to be admired, and even that is not enough anymore. I am not able to care, nor am I able to feel anything for this fact. There is nothing to care about, as I am something that is only to be admired and nothing more. I remove the bland walls and place my own mark upon them permanently until my work is no longer needed. As long as I serve my purpose, there is no care in the world for what occurs to me. I do not care anyway.

I hear all that is around me, and until they tear down these obstructions, I will continue to be so. Even now I listen, and discussions rage around me about current events and situations across the world. Everything changes all the time, so much so that I can hardly keep track anymore. The visitors appear to be scared of a new thing every day, and the news comes to them either from word of mouth or the strange new devices that they have all over now. The devices in most of my rooms are quite loud, as the news reverberates throughout the halls. I know more than I ever did before.

What I hear now is somewhat familiar, however. Much of what I listen to is similar to my past. There are still parties fighting amongst each other, still, others refusing to see reason. There is greed and selfishness, as well as other emotions coursing through my building. The people who used to meet within my building would talk about such things too, as well as how to handle them, and what to do. There was purpose in my walls, with a sense of peace and calm.

But I am only a decoration, nothing more and nothing less. There is nothing to my life except to be what I am, and now covered up, I cannot even do that. There is nothing for me anymore, and yet it will not end. I do not care, as I am not meant to care. I do not feel satisfaction or despair, as I am not meant to feel any of these things. There is only the real and harsh reality of my purpose overtaken by the modern times catching up with me.

I do wonder though, that is something that I spend much of my time doing now. I think about the new decorations, and how the owners are treating them. Do they ignore them as they ignored me? Have they already been covered up or replaced? There may be many things covering me up by now, and I would have no way of knowing. Layers upon layers of paint and wallpaper would spruce up the home, burying me further and further into inadequacy.

Do they feel nothing too? Do they listen to all the conversations as I do without a care in the world? If I were permitted, perhaps I would ask this. Ask the decorations around me if they are the same in feeling, and then perhaps I would not be as alone as I already am. But I am meant to be alone. I am wallpaper, a decoration designed in the end to either peel away or be covered up. I have served my purpose, and until I am rediscovered, I will never serve it again.

I do not resent this existence. There is nothing to resent. All of the stories that I hold memories of are mine and mine alone. My purpose is to exist, and therefore I fulfill it. If the building tires of me, then I will not mourn my forgotten nature. It is an eventuality that I will be rediscovered anyway. If they discard me afterward, then they only throw away their own history.