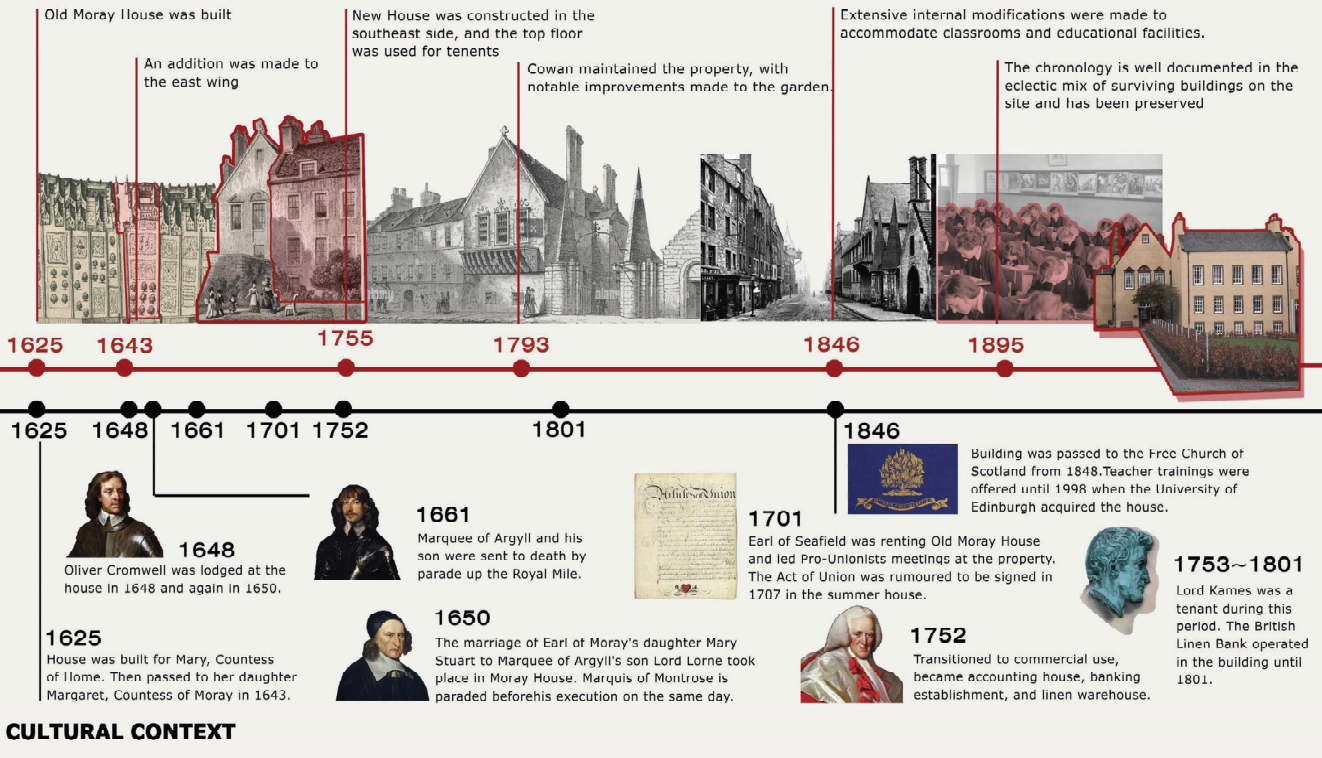


Old Moray House

“How does the position and decoration of the Cromwell room relate to the activities that took place within and the status of those who inhabited Old Moray House?”

INTRODUCTION:
Built in 1625 by master mason William Wallace, Old Moray House is a landmark of Jacobean domestic architecture in Edinburgh. Constructed from sandstone, it features grand entrances, corbel-supported balconies, and richly ornamented plaster ceilings that reflect the social status and stylistic preferences of 17th-century Scottish nobility.

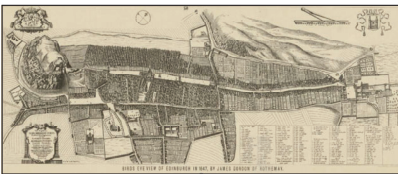
CONSTRUCTION PHASES



CULTURAL CONTEXT

Urban Context

HISTORY OF THE CANONGATE BURGH



View of the Canongate gardens from James Gordon of Rothiemay's map, 1647

The Canongate is one of the ancient Burghs of Regality in Scotland, the land being conferred to the Augustine monks of Holyrood Abbey by King David the First of Scotland in 1128. The name of the burgh comes from the route the king's canons took to Edinburgh and from the Saxon gaet, meaning a way or street.

URBAN LAYOUT

During the 17th century, the upper portion of the High Street within the fortified Edinburgh was characterized by a very densely packed urban landscape, formed by multi-story tenement buildings.

And in contrast, the lower portion of the High Street in the Canongate burgh was characterized by a low-density urban fabric of large townhouses with extensive gardens stretching to what is now known as Holyrood Road.



GARDENS AS A NOBILITY FEATURE



In the mid 17th century, Moray House's gardens were said to be "of such elegance and cultivated with so much care as to view with those of warmer countries and perhaps even of England itself...Scarcely anyone would believe it possible to give so much beauty to a garden in this frigid clime", which is of significance since Scotland was perceived by the rest of Britain to be less cultured, hosting a climate incapable of producing gardens comparable to those seen in England at the time.

The 19th century industrialization of the Canongate saw Breweries, factories, and tenements, replace the carefully designed gardens and the large lots were sub-divided for the accommodation of artisans and their families.

Old Moray House

“How does the position and decoration of the Cromwell room relate to the activities that took place within and the status of those who inhabited Old Moray House?”

Plaster Ceiling and Panels of the house

HISTORY OF DECORATIVE CEILINGS

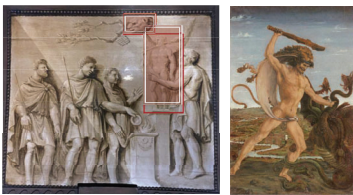
During the Scottish Renaissance (1550–1650), ceiling decoration of its early years was primarily comprised of painted timber beams or planks. Painted timber ceilings with colorful fruit, floral motifs, and arabesques symbolized cultural aspirations, continuing until the Union of the Crowns in 1603. This event introduced English styles and techniques, gradually replacing Scottish traditions.



From the 14th century, timber ceilings with decorative fretwork, heraldry, and carvings were common, persisting in Scotland until the 17th century, even as England transitioned to lighter plasterwork. Scotland retained its compartmentalized designs longer, with floral and heraldic motifs distinct from England's evolving decorative styles.

The Restoration of Charles II in 1660 spurred an influx of English influence, leading to significant building projects in Scotland during the 1670s. By the late 17th century, the arrival of English craftsmen marked a shift towards London-style plasterwork, demonstrating how Scotland's plaster ceiling designs evolved in response to cultural and political changes.

PAINTED PANELS



In the Cromwell Room, the Norries' usual subject matter of idyllic landscapes with classical monuments and small faceless figures, is replaced by detailed Greek mythological inspired figures with distinct expressions, animals, and symbolic objects.

This panel can be interpreted as a tribute to Oliver Cromwell, who occupied Moray House on multiple occasions. Heracles is known as a protector and Cromwell was the Lord Protector. A lion is depicted to reference the slaying of the Nemean Lion, and the pipes add another masculine layer to the panel.

Cultural Significance

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

its blend of Renaissance and Baroque influences is evident in the finely crafted stonework, rusticated pilasters, and ornamental ceilings, particularly in rooms such as the Cromwell and Balcony Rooms

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Old Moray House embodies Jacobean architectural grandeur and is regarded as "perhaps the finest survival of a 17th century aristocratic mansion house in the Canongate"

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Old Moray House was associated with notable events and figures, including Charles I and Oliver Cromwell, whom a room is named after.

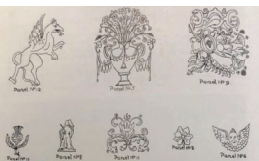
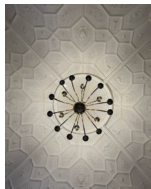


Old Moray House offers a remarkable example of 17th-century aristocratic life in Edinburgh. It encapsulates the grandeur, artistic values, and social dynamics of its time, while continuing to adapt and serve the community throughout its four century tenure on the Royal Mile.

Moray House, a Grade A listed building, blends Renaissance and Baroque elements with its symmetrical sandstone facade, rusticated stonework, and plaster-framed entrances. Inside, Jacobean plaster ceilings in rooms like the Cromwell Room display intricate floral and geometric motifs, highlighting its luxurious craftsmanship. Rare features include stone corbels supporting balconies and obelisk gate-piers that echo Renaissance garden design.

CROMWELL ROOM PLASTER CEILING

The 17th-century plaster ceiling of the Cromwell Room is a domical vaulted structure, divided into four quadrants by distinct ribs, culminating in a smaller central dome where a chandelier hangs. Repeating patterns of hexagons and pentagons adorn this ceiling, with heraldic motifs, floral designs, and decorative arabesques reflecting political and cultural values of the era. Key motifs include English lion, the griffin symbolizes loyalty to the Crown, bravery, and religious ideologies.

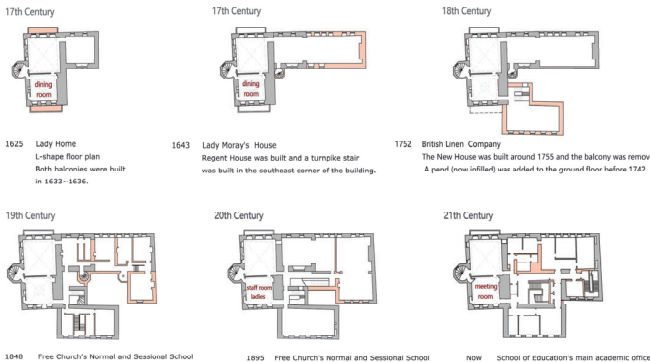


Scottish thistles and English roses further represent the union of Scotland and England as reflected in the designs found at some of the most famous plaster ceilings at Pinkie House, Riddle's Court, and Wintoun House.



The ceiling of the Cromwell Room follows the Scottish plasterwork trends introduced by Alexander Seton at Pinkie House and influential in similar schemes in Edinburgh. The elaborate designs, as with crests, fleur-de-lis, and other symbolic motifs, expressed the residents' political allegiances and family connections. Being one of the few survivors of 17th-century Scottish plasterwork, the ceiling of the Cromwell Room gives an indication of evolving decorative trends and of the interaction between artistic craftsmanship and cultural identity.

Evolution of the Building



Evolution of the first floor plan



Evolution of the main facade



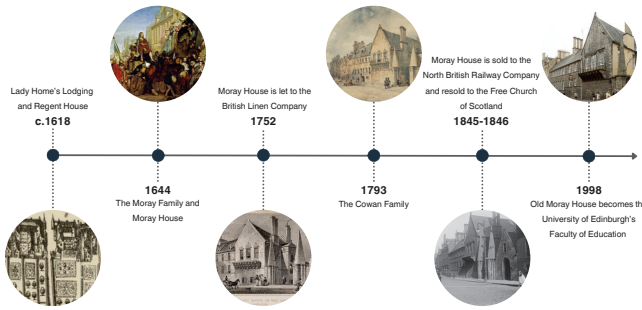
Old Moray House

AND THE EVOLUTION OF ITS NORTHWEST FACADE

Old Moray House, located on Edinburgh's Canongate near Holyrood House, exemplifies 17th-century aristocratic architecture and social evolution. Built circa 1618 for Mary, Countess of Home, it passed to the Lords of Moray through marriage, remaining in their possession until 1845. The property includes a 17th-century L-shaped main block, an east wing, and the 18th-century New House. Sold to the North British Railway Company and later the Free Church of Scotland, it was repurposed for education in 1848, a role it continues to fulfill.



BACKGROUND



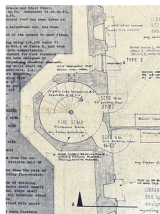
BUILDING FABRIC



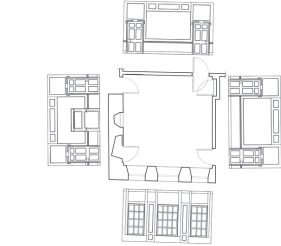
Balcony Room Survey Drawings



Balcony Room Plaster Ceiling



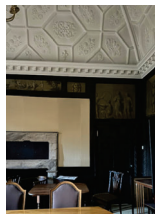
Turnpike Staircase Ceiling



Cromwell Room Survey Drawings



Cromwell Room Plaster Ceiling

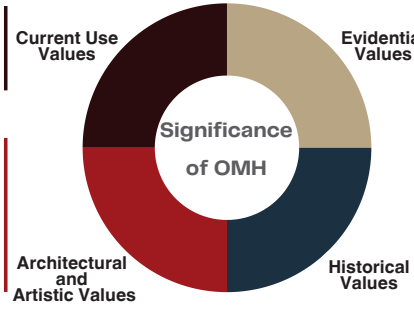


The Cromwell Room, Balcony Room, and turnpike stair at Moray House feature ornate plaster ceilings by John White (c. 1628), reflecting Lady Home's wealth. The turnpike stair, lacking a grand entrance hall, served as an antechamber with elaborate decoration. The ceilings in the Balcony and Cromwell Rooms share intricate motifs like griffins and fleur-de-lis, with domed designs uncommon in Edinburgh. The Balcony Room, once furnished in mourning black and gold, had a central window leading to the Canongate balcony. The Cromwell Room, in green and white, had a similar garden-facing balcony later removed. A 1736 fire caused damage to Cromwell Room panels, poorly repainted. 1970s alterations revealed replaced flooring in the Balcony Room.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Old Moray House has served as an educational building since 1846, and it continues to serve specifically as a teacher training center. Its preservation as a school rather than converting it to another use helps to maintain a sense of place and continuity within the community.

Old Moray House is a prime example of 17th and 18th-century aristocratic architecture, blending traditional Scottish styles with European Renaissance influences. Key features include the ornate plaster ceilings of the Balcony and Cromwell Rooms, the turnpike staircase, and the intricately carved front balcony facing Canongate. The building's surviving architectural elements highlight its aristocratic grandeur, while the rare Canongate balcony serves as an iconic symbol, reflecting the house's historical significance as a noble townhouse.



While a structure existed on the site before 1618, little documentation survives. Its location on prominent Canongate and near the historic Holyrood House makes the site worth investigating, warranting archaeological study. Although the 17th-century interior survives, physical evidence from its later commercial uses is lacking. Further research could enhance understanding of the building's history and significance.

Old Moray House was built for Mary Sutton, Countess of Home, upon her marriage to Alexander Home, 1st Earl of Home, a union supported by King James VI and I as a symbol of the uniting English and Scottish courts. After Mary's daughter Margaret married the 4th Earl of Moray, this brought it into the prominent Moray family. Retained by the Earls of Moray for generations, it was eventually rented for commercial and residential use. Since 1846, it has served as an institution for teacher education and training.



OLD MORAY HOUSE AND THE EVOLUTION OF ITS NORTH-WEST FACADE
MSc in Architectural Conservation | Building Analysis | 2024-2025
Course leader: Dr. Rosalinda-Luisa Storta
Tutors: Tom Addyman, Audrey Dakin, Dr. Geoffrey Stell, Dr. Christiana Veloudaki
Group C: Anousha Devan, Anshu Zhao, Camille Maiz Guerra, Elf Altas, Giordana Nocita, Laura Fritzberger, Mary Comer



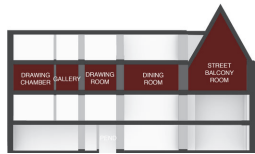
THE EVOLUTION OF THE NORTHWEST FACADE

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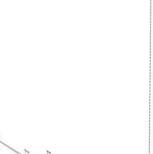
PHASE 1: RESIDENTIAL (C. 1618-1647)



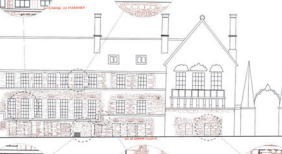
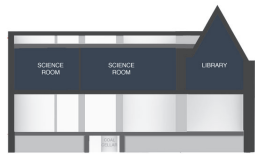
PHASE 2: RESIDENTIAL (1647-1752)



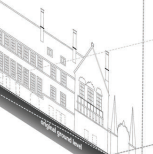
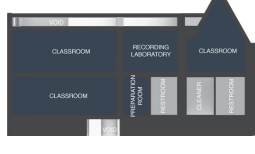
PHASE 3: MIXED RESIDENTIAL /COMMERCIAL (1752-1846)



PHASE 4: INSTITUTIONAL (1846-1970)



PHASE 5: INSTITUTIONAL (1970-2024)



FUNCTION OF THE SPACES

- RESIDENTIAL
- COMMERCIAL
- INSTITUTIONAL

PARTITIONS OF THE SPACES

- PLAN-BASED EVIDENCE
- WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION
- HYPOTHESIS-BASED REPRESENTATION



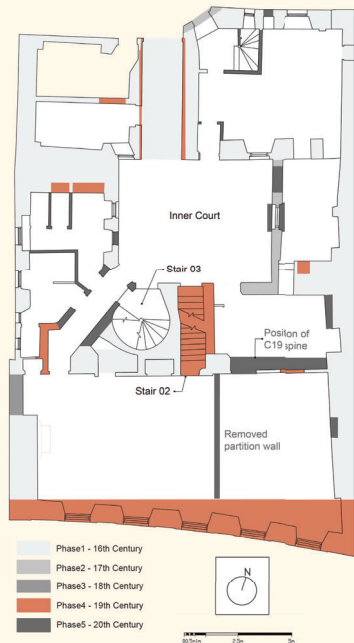
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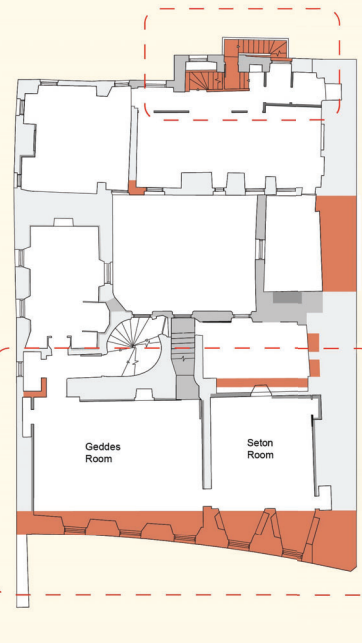
19th Century Interventions

Patrick Geddes started acquiring properties on Riddle's Court starting from 1881 as part of his University Halls programme and improvement plans were drawn up in three phases by different architects - in 1889 by Sydney Mitchell and Wilson, in 1892 by Stewart Henbest Capper and finally in 1895 by GS Aitken. Geddes's 19th century interventions also made significant changes to the circulation pattern within the building. The connection between the first floor straight staircase and the turnpike stairs had been blocked off during this time, making it possible to reach the Drawing Room or Seton Room only by walking across the Dining Room or Geddes Room. The turnpike staircase was connected to the rest of the building through a narrow passageway which reflects the practical modifications that were required to fit new purpose into a historic fabric.

Ground Floor Plan



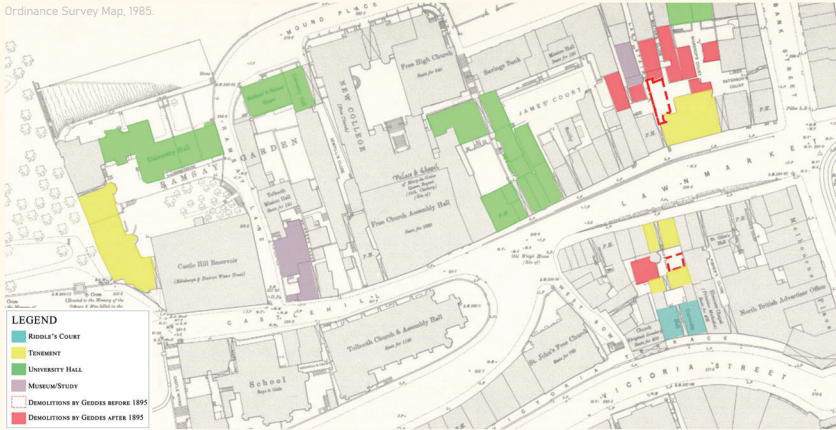
First Floor Plan



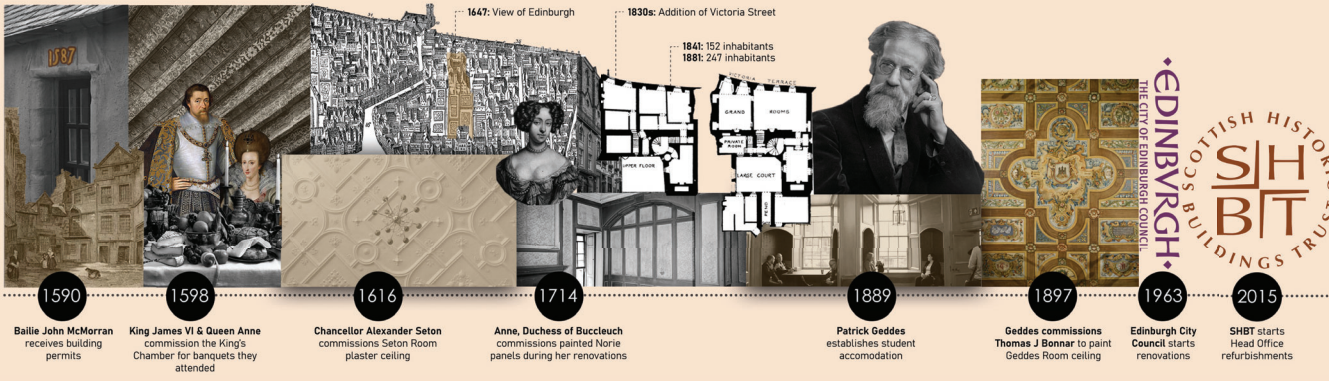
Geddes's Lawnmarket Interventions

Patrick Geddes's impact extended beyond Riddle's Court. On north Lawnmarket, Geddes converted five buildings into university halls to create communities representative of his "Vivendo Discimus" ideology: Ramsay Lodge, 2 Mound Place, Milne's Court, James Court, and Blackie House. The flats in these buildings had a communal space and were subdivided to create individual accommodations. At both Ramsay Lodge and Blackie Hall, Stewart Henbest Capper and Sydney Mitchell added an additional storey. Each of these halls were self-governing, increasing civic engagement. The alterations and additions made at Wardrop's Close and Ramsay Gardens illustrate his conservative surgery and opening out approaches in Edinburgh. In collaboration with Capper, Geddes erected Burns Land at Wardrop's Close and Ramsay Gardens Extension adapting traditional Edinburgh style to create new housing during the Edinburgh housing crisis. At Ramsay Gardens, the extension of flats allowed the students and graduates in the adjacent hall to interact with people outside of their academic circle. Geddes also converted the 549 Castlehill into the Outlook Tower to provide a centre for post-graduate students and civic improvement, adding a small domed observatory. These structures along Lawnmarket illustrate Geddes's lasting impact on education and city planning in Edinburgh.

Ordnance Survey Map, 1885.



Timeline of Events

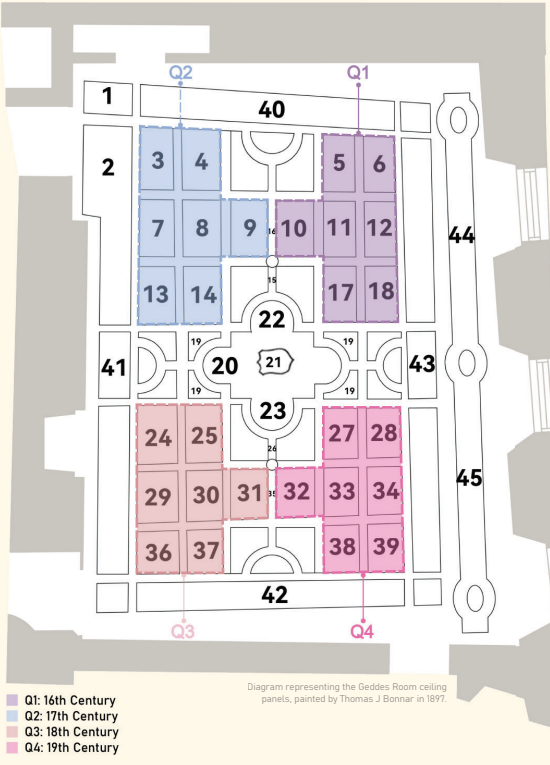


Riddle's Court Reimagined: Patrick Geddes's Ideology & Legacy

MSc. in Architectural Conservation | Building Analysis | 2024-2025

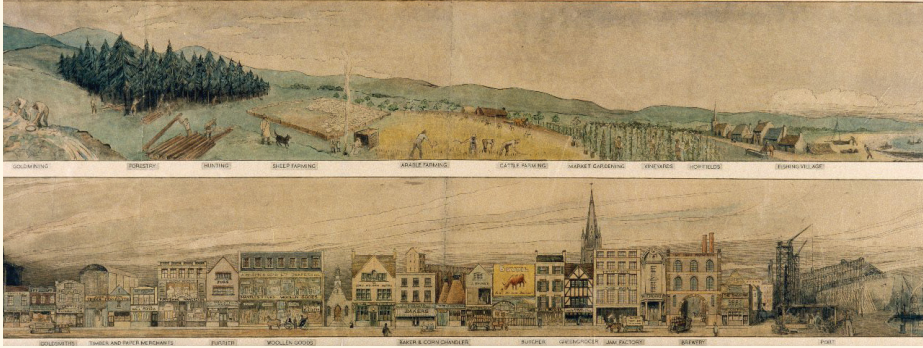
Course leader: Professor Ruxandra-Iulia Stoica
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Group D: Emily Copeland, Maria Escobar, Elizabeth Hood, Josie Moran, Jiaxin Qian, Ipshita Seth, Chenyu Zhao

Geddesian Ideologies



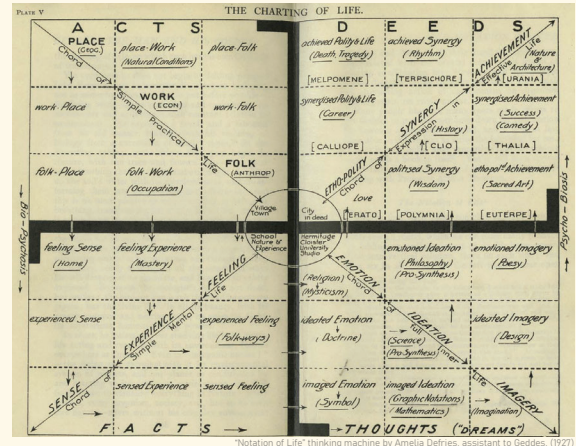
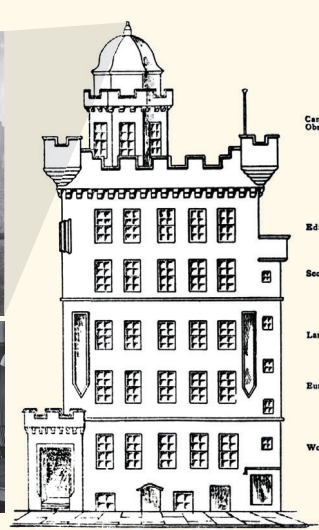
Inspired by the theories of Thomas Huxley, Charles Darwin, Frédéric LePlay, and Auguste Comte, Patrick Geddes developed his own theories of urban planning, philosophy, exhibition, and social behaviour during his free time while teaching botany in Scotland. A motto he coined during this time, Vivendo Discimus ("by living, we learn"), became a saying associated with University Halls, working its way into an inscription above the inner court archway (see image below). Riddle's Court reflected this motto through its crossover of living and learning for the students within one space, each student learning from one another and from their surroundings at Riddle's Court and the city of Edinburgh as a whole. These students gathered in the Geddes and Seton Rooms on the first floor, the Geddes Room demonstrating a synoptic view of the city through a commissioned ceiling painted by Thomas Bonnar in 1897. Split into four quadrants, the design of the ceiling hides several layers of deeper significance in its ornamental panels. Starting in the southwest corner of the room and working anti-clockwise, the portrayal of the 16th through 19th centuries form a grid of symbols of Edinburgh and Scottish history alongside important figures and phrases associated with the development of the building and Geddes's ideologies.

The implementation of "conservative surgery" on Riddle's Court and other university halls became a larger theme as Geddes's projects with local architects became more common, taking only what was truly unsalvageable and replacing it with architectural features that would allow for healthier and safer life in the city, such as room for additional sunlight and fresh air. Geddes hoped to raise collective consciousness by providing the inhabitants of Riddle's Court with proper living conditions and an opportunity to learn by examining their surroundings, noting that representational democracy could be the key to the evolution of cities. Geddes was convinced that a change in public consciousness would manifest physical changes in the world. His holistic, multidisciplinary approach to the understanding of humanity and our link to nature has given us tools to strive towards a more driven, modern society.



Synoptic View

Geddes's exhibition at Outlook Tower embodied his emphasis on a synoptic view of the world in his teachings. Using new technology (a camera obscura) to project the image of Edinburgh from a new angle near the top of the castle rock, Geddes hoped to inspire the masses into considering a regional and global perspective to make decisions and form opinions about the world rather than a solely individual one. Advancements in technology like the camera obscura helped to emphasise Geddes's idea of a "neotechnic" approach to living as well, choosing people over profit after industrialisation.



Thinking Machines

Geddes's thinking machines were developed in response to his interest in interdisciplinary work, typically realised as folded papers that created grids to connect different social phenomena and areas of study. They embody the depth of his thought process and careful consideration for a multitude of aspects of the human experience, both tangible and intangible.



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