

SAWH oX25 – SAWH Online Exhibition 2025

‘AUTHENTICITY’

EDINBURGH

‘Authenticity’

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The ship of Theseus has been for a long time the exemplary philosophical case for authenticity, challenging the understandings of persistence and identity: ‘under what conditions does an object persist through time as one and the same object.’

“Now the thirty-oared ship, in which Theseus sailed with the youths, and came back safe, was kept by the Athenians up to the time of Demetrios Phalereus. They constantly removed the decayed part of her timbers, and renewed them with sound wood, so that the ship became an illustration to philosophers of the doctrine of growth and change, as some argued that it remained the same, and others, that it did not remain the same.”

(Plutarch, *Vitae Parallelae*)¹

Mereological theory of identity holds that the identity of an object depends on the identity of its component parts, i.e. an object continues to exist only if it is composed of all the same components as it was composed originally, therefore sameness is a necessary condition of identity. It thus allows even for a disassemblage of the object in between the start and end reference times, which means it basically allows for an interruption of existence of the object without loss of identity in the end. However, the mereological theory denies identity to objects that we otherwise see as persisting through time, albeit with changed component parts.

¹ Plutarch’s Lives, translated from the Greek by Aubrey Stewart and George Long (London: George Bell and Sons, 1894), xxiii.

Spatio-temporal continuity offers a more realistic alternative, i.e. a persisting object must have a continuous path through space-time, compatible with a change of parts, as long as the change is gradual and the form of the object is preserved throughout; thus the persisting object is diachronically identical (redefining the persisting object as a space-time worm whose stages bear the incompatible properties, rather than the worm itself) and therefore authentic.

The concept of archive, based on this idea of authenticity, was firstly theorised by Camillo Boito (1836 - 1914);² it necessarily implies a certain curating through the identification, selection and preservation of the material as close as possible to its authentic form, although comprising successive stages.

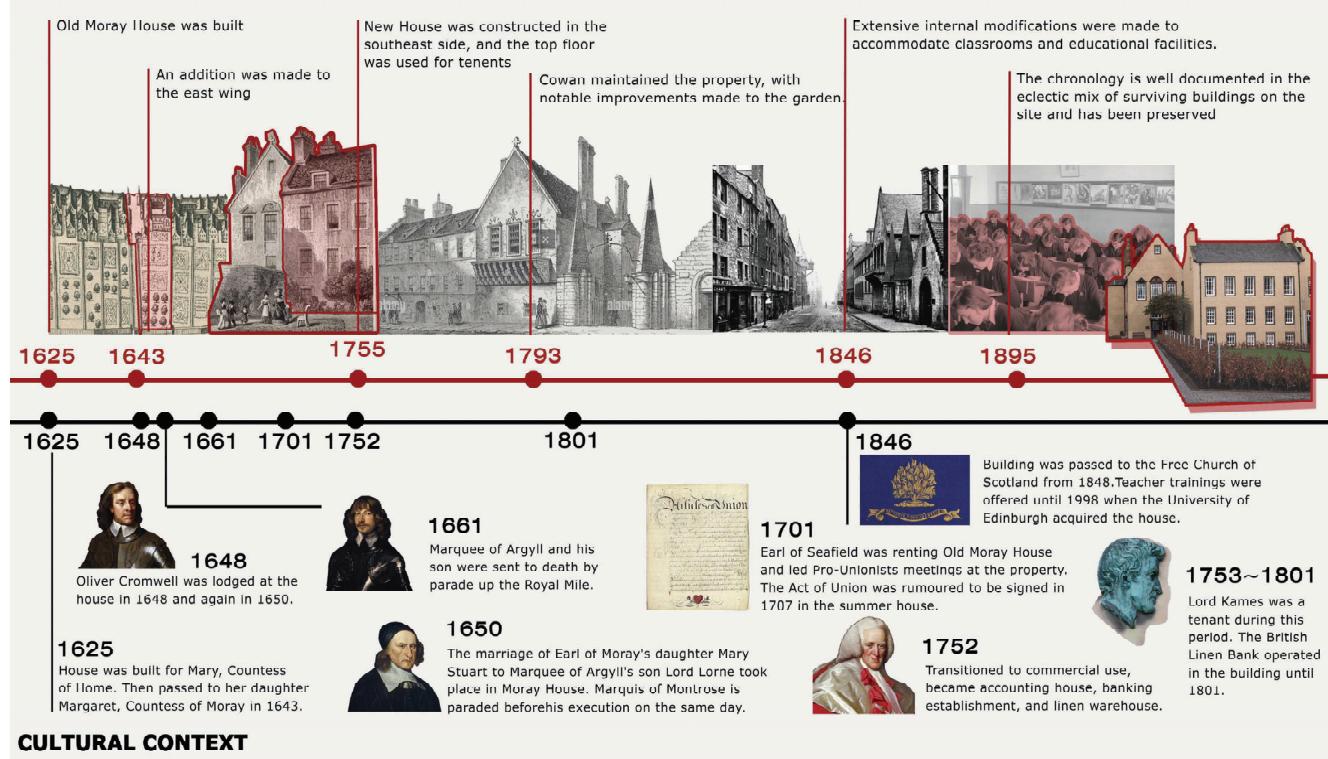
Today this approach is embodied by the Statement of Cultural Significance methodology, which is the basis for conservation and design intervention decisions, as illustrated here by the students of the MSc in Architectural Conservation 2024-2025 who have worked on Old Moray House, analysing the building’s fabric, as illustrated by both documentary sources and selective measured survey work, and informed by comparisons with other buildings within and beyond Edinburgh, as identified through research.

² Camillo Boito, “I nostri vecchi monumenti: Conservare o restaurare?,” *Nuova Antologia* 87 (1885): 480-506.

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?"

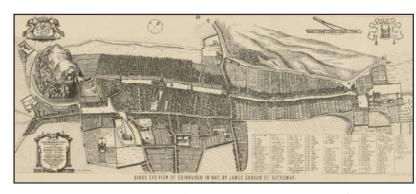
CONSTRUCTION PHASES



CULTURAL CONTEXT

Urban Context

HISTORY OF THE CANONGATE BURGH

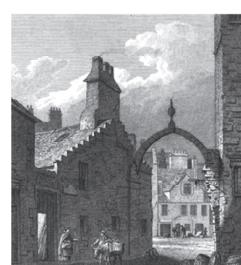


View of the Canongate gardens from James Gordon of Rothiemay's map, 1647

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.



THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

THE SCOTTISH
CENTRE
FOR CONSERVATION STUDIES

Old Moray House Building Assessment
MSc. in Architectural Conservation | Building Analysis | 2024-2025

Course leader: Dr. Ruxandra-Iulia Stoica
Tutors: Audrey Dakin, Christianna Veloudaki
Group A: Ayse Naz Ascioglu, Alexandra Breton, Kaylee Edwards, Yongyi Han
Juncheng Sun, Kayla Salmon, Caitlin Starr.



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



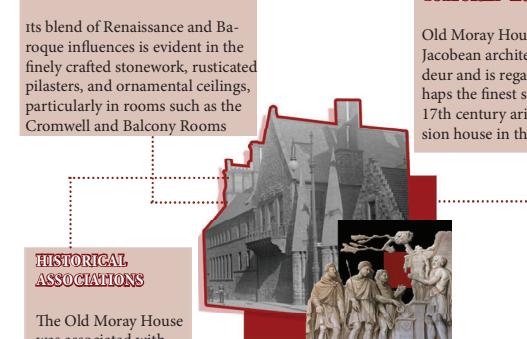
In the Cromwell Room, the Norries' usual subject matter of idyllic landscapes with classical monuments and small faceless figures, is replaced by detailed Greek mythological inspired figures with distinct expressions, animals, and symbolic objects.

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.



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.

Plaster Ceiling and Panels of the house

CROMWELL ROOM PLASTER CEILING

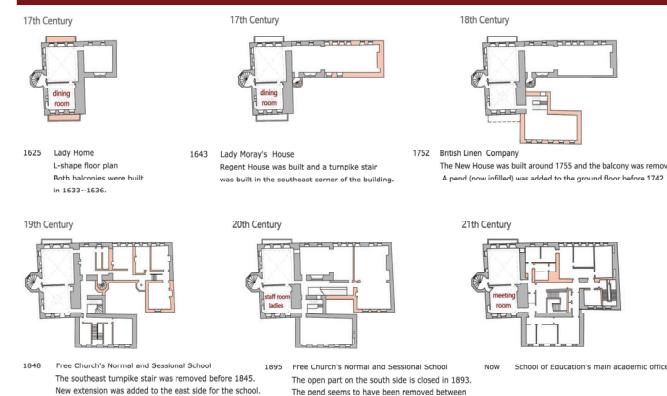
The 17th-century plaster ceiling of the Cromwell Room is a domical vaulted structure, divided into four quadrants by distinct ribs, culminating in a smaller central dome where a chandelier hangs. Repeating patterns of hexagons and pentagons adorn this ceiling, with heraldic motifs, floral designs, and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



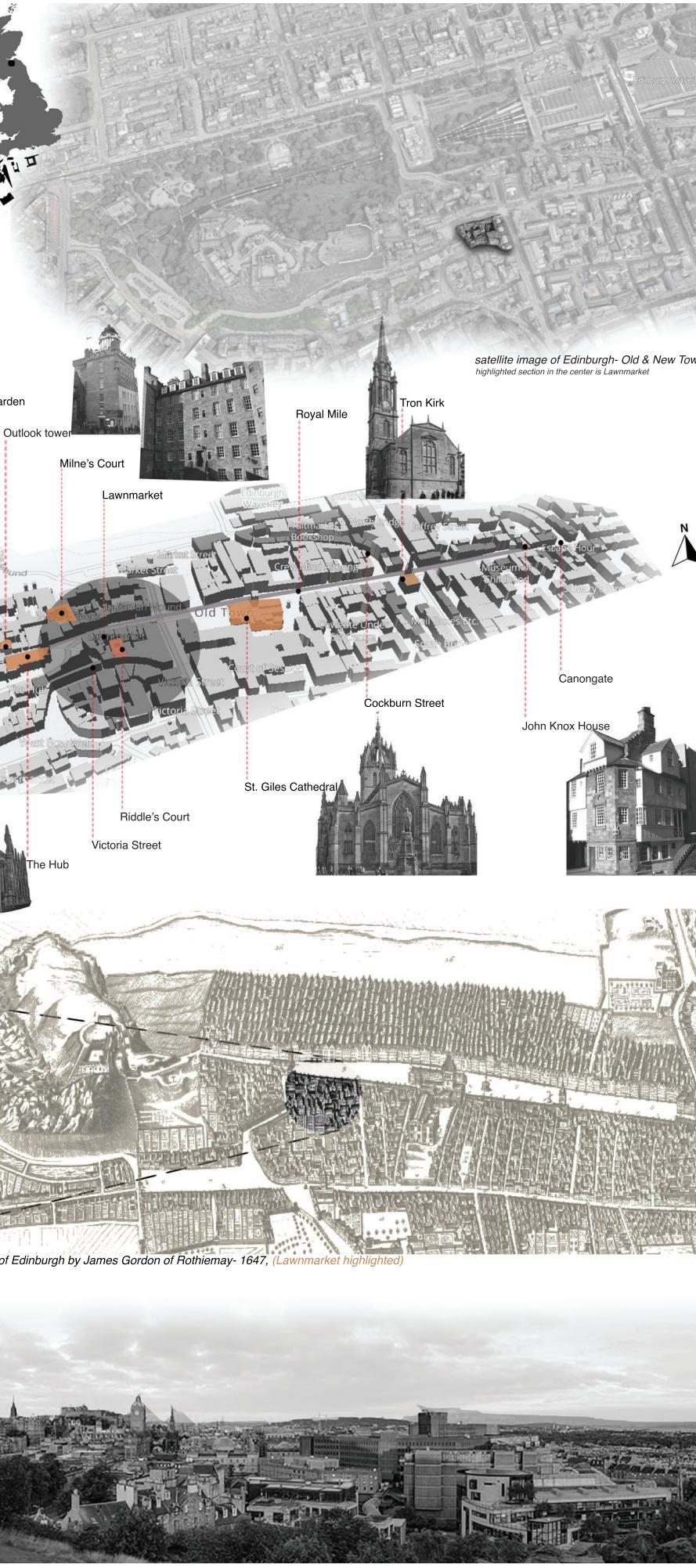
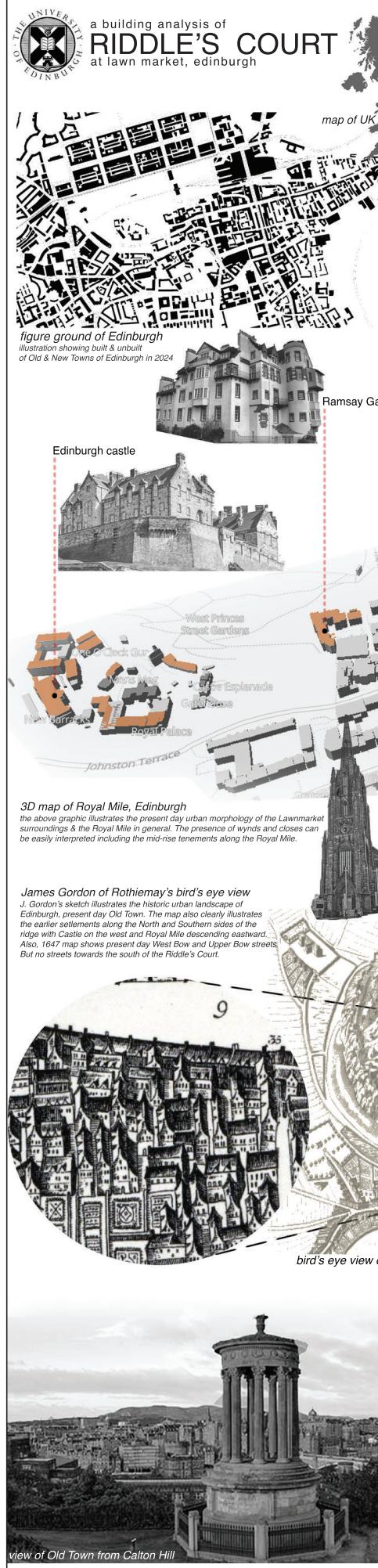
Evolution of the main facade



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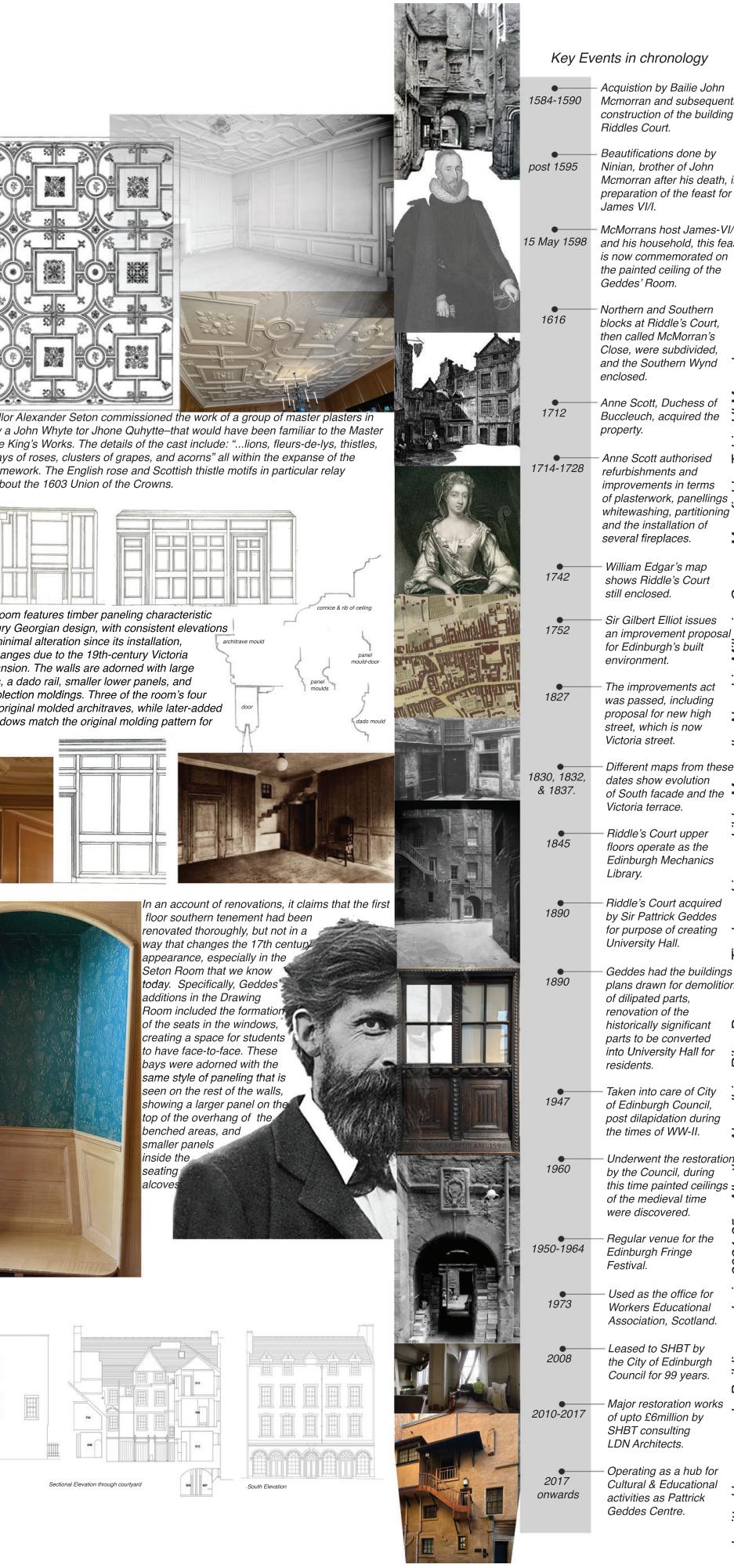
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submitted by: group b, Building analysis 2024/25; Alkothar Almroth, Riley Doyens, Tianhong Liang, Libby Maxwell, Nooshin Millani, George Moorfield, Tabie Ul Mursaleen

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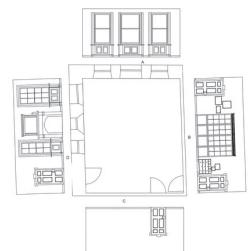
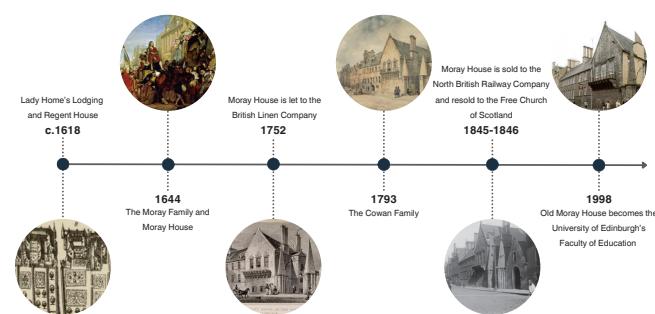


Submitted by: *group b, Building analysis 2024-25: Aikoother Almoiani, Hiley Dovents, Jianhong Liang, Libby Maxwell, Nooshin Milani, George Moorten, Table UI Mursaleen*

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.

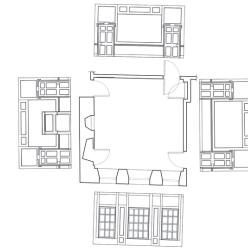


Balcony Room Survey Drawings

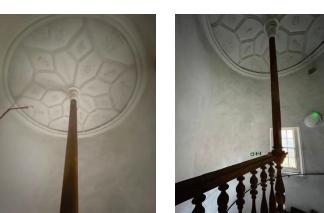


Balcony Room Plaster Ceiling

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.



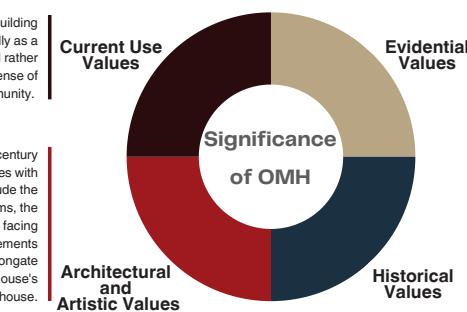
Cromwell Room Survey Drawings



Cromwell Room Plaster Ceiling

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.



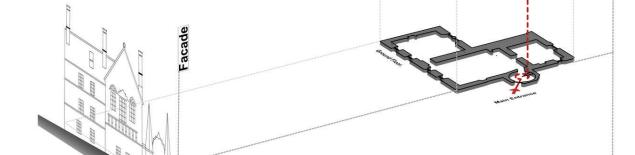
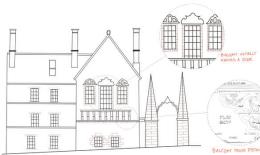
While a structure existed on the site before 1618, little documentation survives. Its location on prominent Canongate and near the historic Holyrood House makes the site worth investigating, warranting archaeological study. Although the 17th-century interior survives, physical evidence from its later 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.

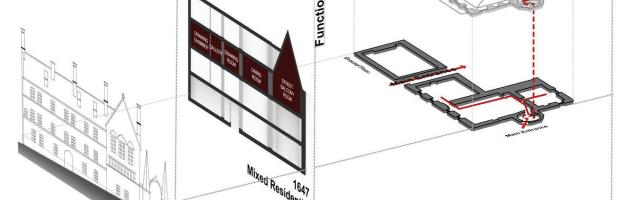
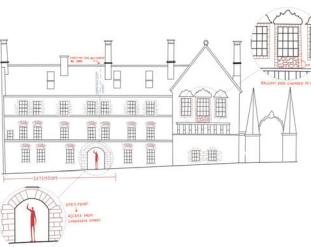
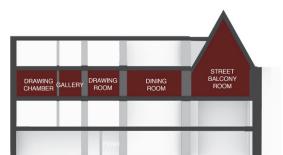


THE EVOLUTION OF THE NORTHWEST FACADE

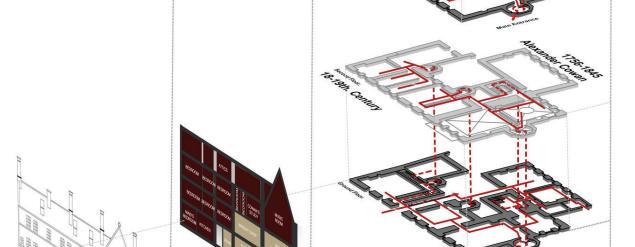
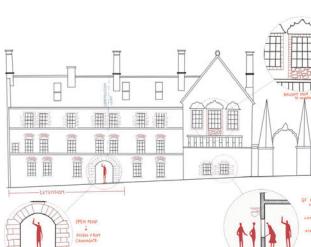
PHASE 1: RESIDENTIAL (C. 1618-1647)



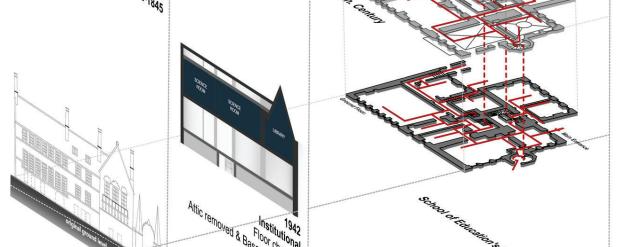
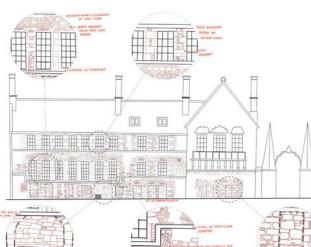
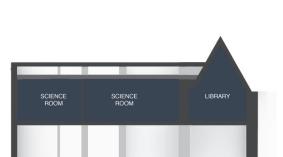
PHASE 2: RESIDENTIAL (1647-1752)



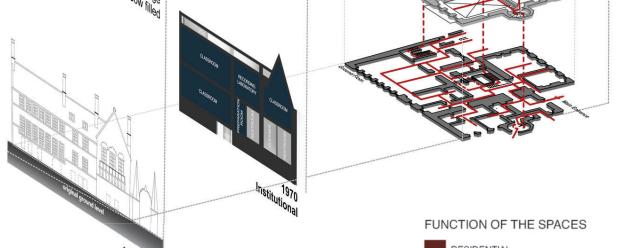
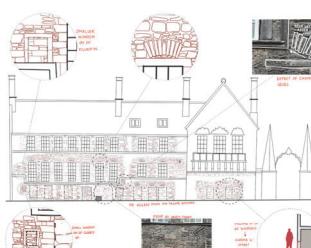
PHASE 3: MIXED RESIDENTIAL /COMMERCIAL (1752-1846)



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

