

Okie's Mark on Moore-Irwin

There is no other name more closely associated with the Colonial Revival Style than the name of Richardson Brognard Okie. Raised in southeastern Pennsylvania in the latter part of the 19th century, he had ample opportunity to see and fall in love with the simple yet elegant style of the houses built early in the Commonwealth's history. After working in a practice with H. Louis Duhring and Charles Ziegler for 20 years, he struck out on his own in 1918, specializing in the restoration of colonial era buildings such as the Betsy Ross house in Philadelphia, among many others. He was even selected as the architect for the reconstruction of William Penn's Pennsbury Manor with only the houses's foundation and a scanty historical record to guide him.

His respect for the original construction, careful attention to detail and personal style make Okie's work instantly recognizable from the overall look down to the smallest elements of design. Many of Okie's trademark features can be found throughout the Moore-Irwin House, as a result of two renovation/addition projects, one in 1932 and the other begun in 1944 and completed in 1946 after his tragic death on December 25, 1945. The designs for the latter project must have been among the last that he drew (fig.1.) In the following pages, we will note many features of Okie's style as they appear outside and inside the house.

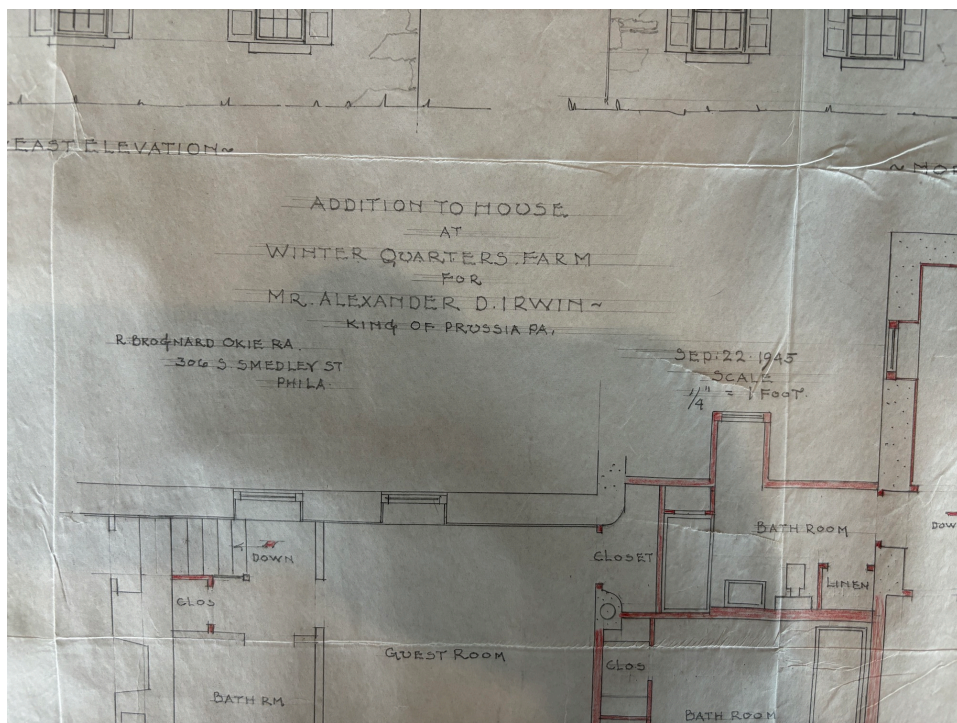


Fig. 1. Detail of plans drawn for the second addition to the Moore-Irwin House, dated September 22, 1945. From the R. Brognard Okie Architectural Papers. Photographed at the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg.

EXTERIOR FEATURES

Additive Style. The segmented, yet unified appearance of the house is one of the many indications of Okie's style. The 1932 addition forms an ell-shaped extension on the west side of the house, projecting southward with cross-gabled roof. The 1946 addition creates a broken roofline on the eastern side of the house (figs. 2-4.)



Fig. 2. The north and west side of the house, looking southeast. On the right is the 1932 addition with dormer windows that break the roofline and cross-gabled roofline. The large chimneys are also visible. The 1946 addition is on the left side with two different rooflines, also with dormer windows that break the rooflines. Current photo.



Fig. 3. The south and east side of the house, looking northwest. On the left is the 1932 addition while on the right is the 1946 addition. Current photo.

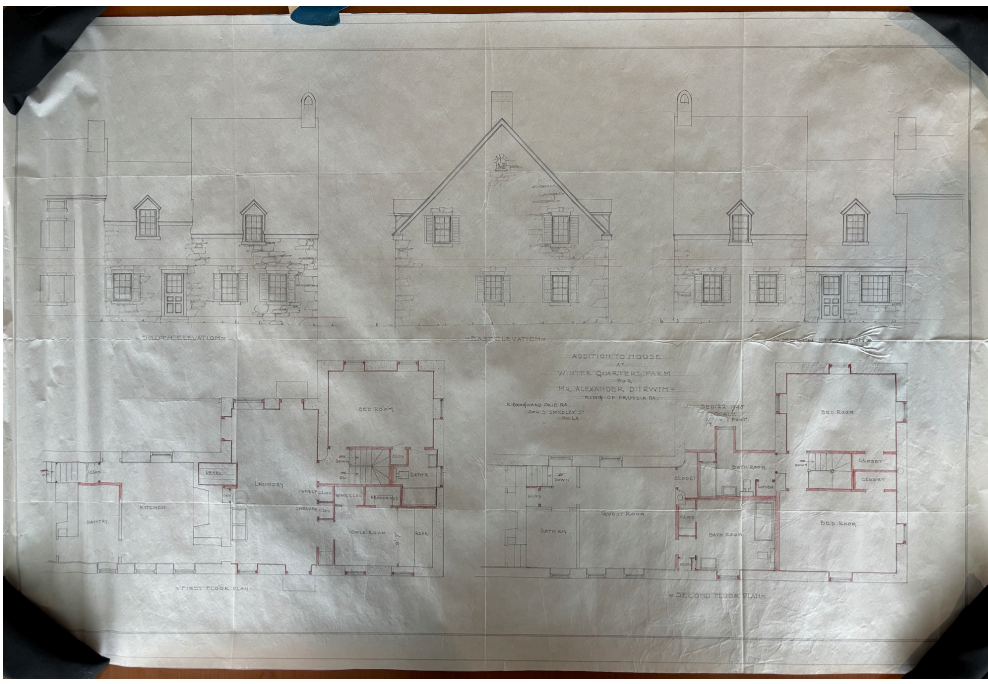


Fig. 4. Plans drawn for the 1946 addition showing the broken roofline. From the R. Brognard Okie Architectural Papers. Photographed at the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg.

Part of that additive style combines stucco on stone with clapboard on the 1932 addition (figs. 5 & 6), as well as on the 1946 addition (fig. 7.) The stucco on mesh that was added later is currently falling away revealing the original facade (fig. 8.)



Fig. 5. West side elevation drawing of the 1932 addition showing partial clapboard siding. From the R. Brognard Okie Architectural Papers. Photographed at the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg.

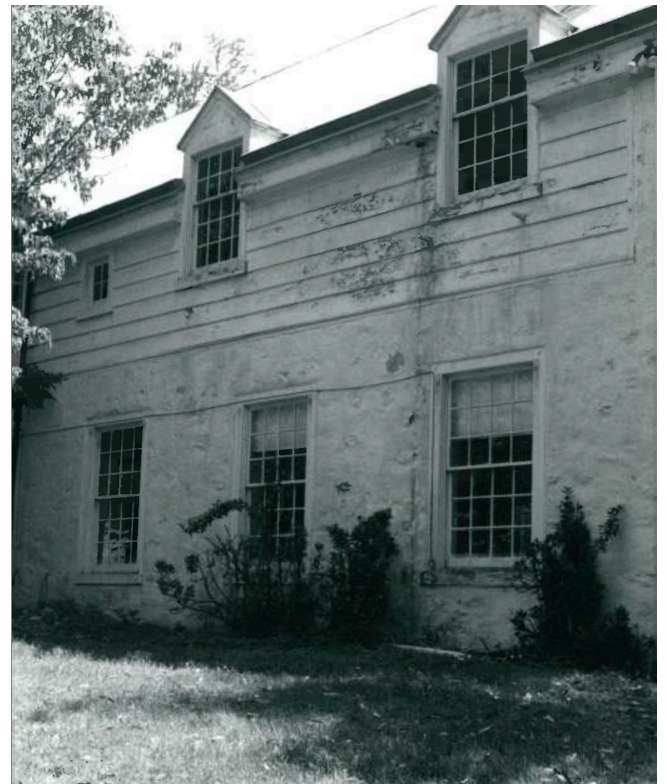


Fig. 6. The west side of the 1932 addition showing the clapboard and stucco on stone construction as well as dormer windows that break the roofline. Photo by Dave Broida in 1979.



Fig. 7. Clapboard siding on part of the 1946 addition on the left in the photo. Current photo.



Fig. 8. The southwest corner of the 1932 Okie addition showing the falling away of the stucco on mesh, revealing the intact original stucco on stone. Current photo.

Prominent chimneys. The 1932 addition has two large chimneys, one at the eastern end of the house, and the other at the southern end of the addition. The chimney in the 1946 addition is not as large, as this area of the house was servant's quarters (figs. 9 & 10.) Date stones on or near the chimneys were also a feature of Okie design, and one is visible on the 1946 addition (figs. 11 & 12.)



Fig. 9. Chimneys of the 1932 addition. Current photo.



Fig. 10. Chimney of the 1946 addition. Current photo.

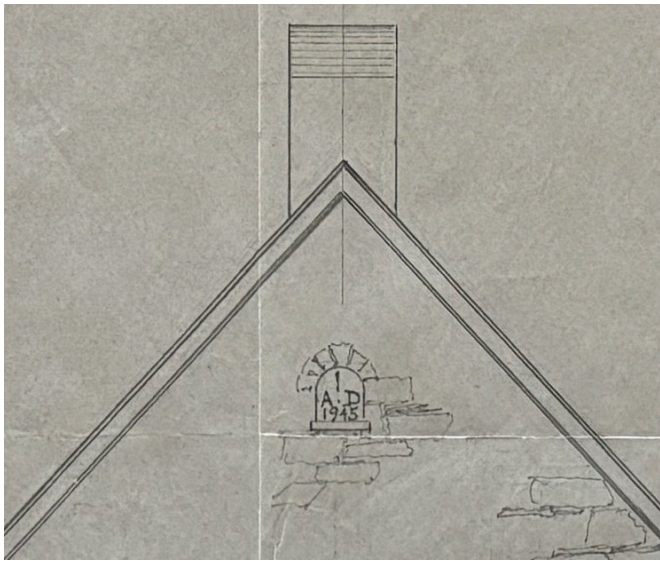


Fig. 11. Detail of plans drawn for the 1946 addition showing the date stone. From the R. Brognard Okie Architectural Papers. Photographed at the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg.



Fig. 12. The date stone as it currently appears, surrounded by stucco on mesh that was added much later and is beginning to fall away. Current photo.

Dormer windows that break the roofline. The 1932 addition is lined with seven such windows, three on the east side and four on the west side (figs. 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 & 9.) The 1946 addition has four, two on the north face and two on the south (figs. 13-15.) Unfortunately, the windows themselves have been replaced with modern windows.



Fig. 13. Detail of plans for the 1946 addition, showing the north face of the servant's quarters. From the R. Brognard Okie Architectural Papers. Photographed at the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg.



Fig. 14. The north face of the servants quarters as actually built with later stucco on mesh added and door changed. Current photo.



Fig. 15. The south face of the 1946 addition. The dormer windows are just visible under the tarps. Current photo.

INTERIOR FEATURES

Large fireplaces with highly carved surrounds. The fireplaces in the 1932 addition are quite large and have highly detailed carved surrounds. The fireplaces in the circa 1820 portion of the house also received the same treatment (figs. 16-23.)



Fig. 16. Fireplace at the east end of the c. 1820 portion of the house. Current photo.



Fig. 16. Fireplace at the west end of the c. 1820 portion of the house with the carving shown in the plans below. Current photo.

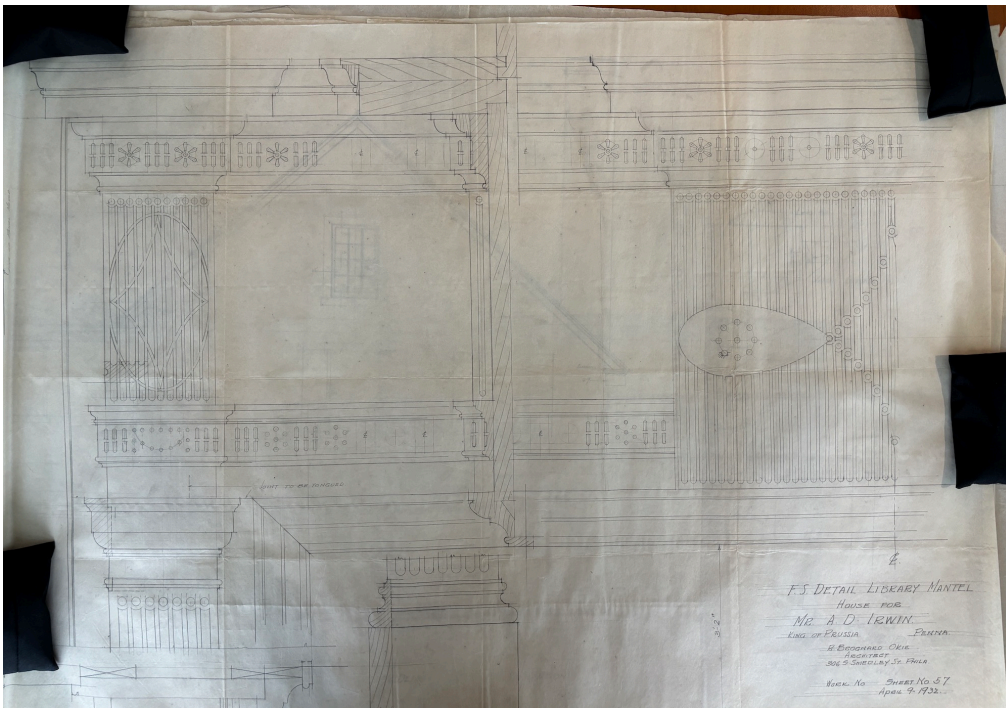


Fig. 17. Plans showing the detailed carving for the fireplace at the west end of the c. 1820 portion of the house. From the R. Brognard Okie Architectural Papers. Photographed at the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg.



Fig. 19. Large fireplace and windows downstairs in the 1932 addition Current photo.



Fig. 20. Plans for the large fireplace and windows downstairs in the 1932 addition From the R. Brognard Okie Architectural Papers. Photographed at the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg.



Fig. 21. Closer detail of the large fireplace downstairs in the 1932 addition Current photo.

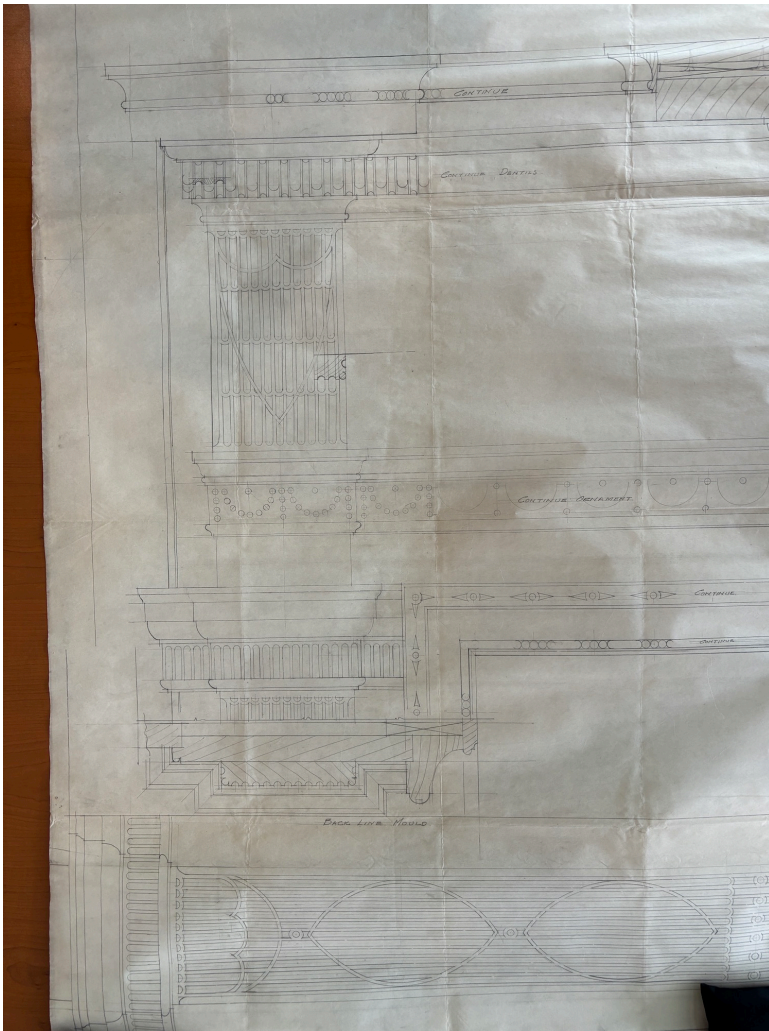


Fig. 22. Plans for the carving of the large fireplace downstairs in the 1932 addition From the R. Brognard Okie Architectural Papers. Photographed at the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg.



Fig. 23. Large fireplace upstairs in the 1932 addition Current photo.

Large built-in cabinetry with decorative carving. Another hallmark of Okie's style is large shelves, cupboards and drawers built in to many of the walls of the rooms. These often have carved designs (figs. 24-30.)



Fig. 24. Built-in shelving downstairs in the 1932 addition Current photo.



Fig. 25. Built-in cupboards next to the fireplace at the west end of the c. 1820 portion of the house. Current photo.

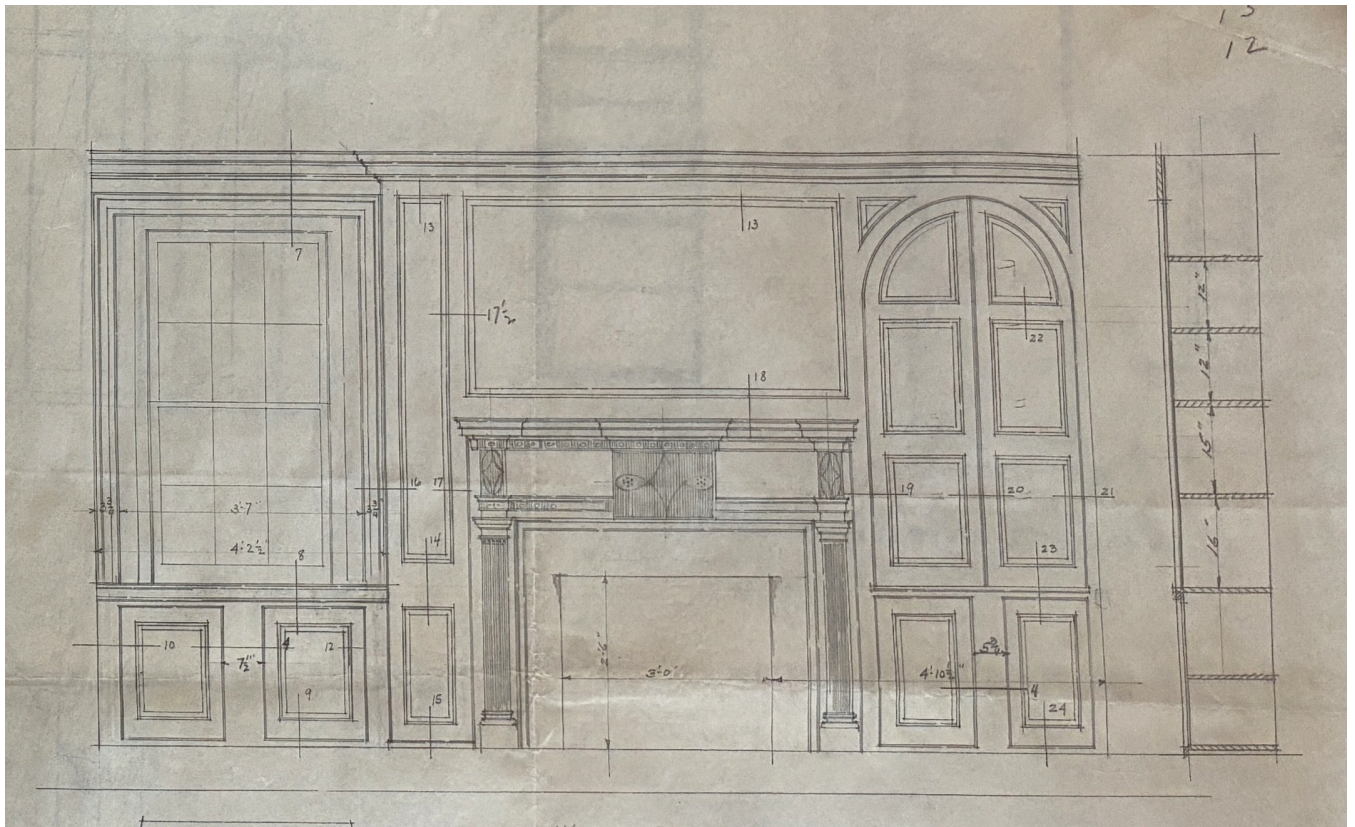


Fig. 26. Plans for the built-in cupboards and fireplace at the west end of the c. 1820 portion of the house. From the R. Brognard Okie Architectural Papers. Photographed at the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg.



Fig. 27. Built-in shelving and cupboards downstairs in the 1932 addition. Current photo.



Fig. 28. Built-in shelving and cupboards downstairs in the 1932 addition. Current photo.



Fig. 29. Built-in shelving upstairs in the 1932 addition. Current photo.



Fig. 30. Built-in cupboard and drawers upstairs in the 1932 addition. Current photo.

Rounded corners and arched passageways. There are rounded and arched corners in many parts of the house, as well as arched passageways in the 1932 addition (figs. 31-35.)



Fig. 31. Arched ceiling with curved corners upstairs in the 1946 addition. Current photo.



Fig. 32. Curved ceilings around the eyebrow windows upstairs in the c. 1810 portion of the house. Current photo.



Fig. 33. Curved edges around the doorway upstairs in the c. 1810 portion of the house.. Current photo.



Fig. 34. Arched passageway downstairs in the 1932 addition. Current photo.



Fig. 34. Arched passageway upstairs in the 1932 addition. Current photo.

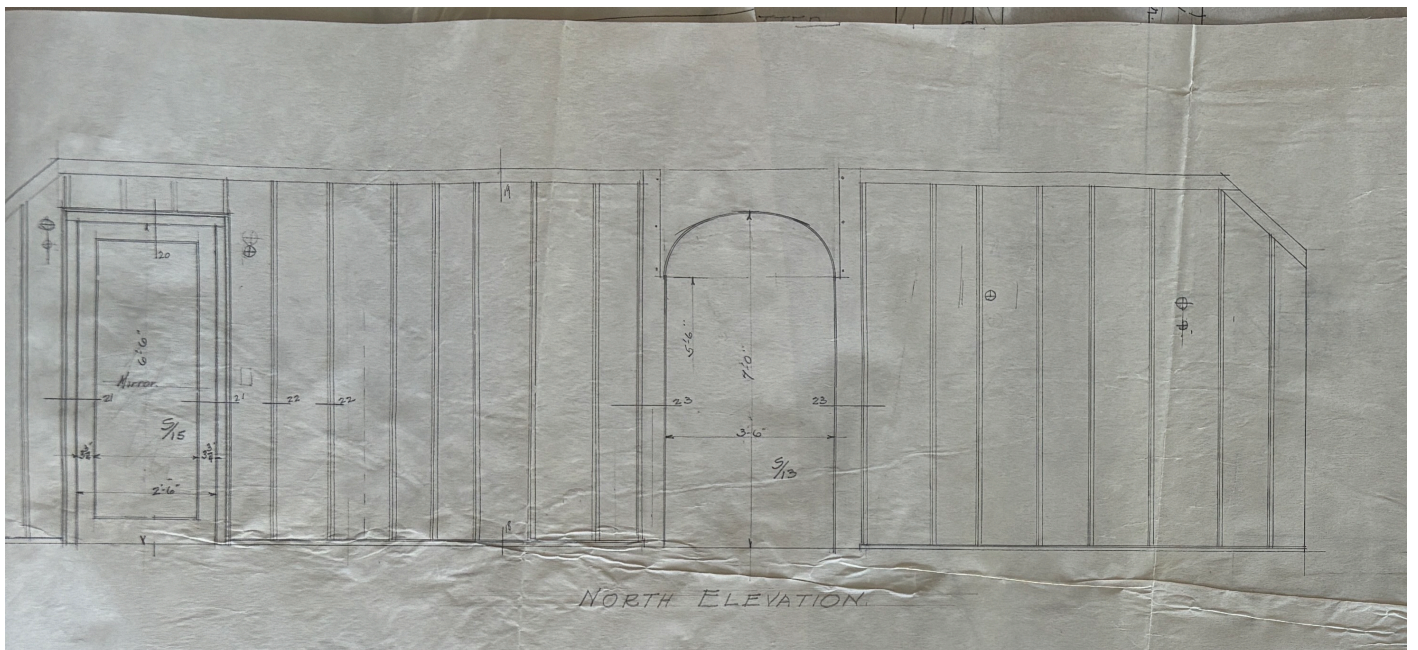


Fig. 35. Plans for the arched passageway upstairs in the 1932 addition. From the R. Brognard Okie Architectural Papers. Photographed at the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg.

Antique style hardware. Okie's attention to detail can be seen in the very specific instructions for the hardware in the house. There are no less than six handwritten pages of notes that were sent to the hardware contractor. These include metal hinges, doorknobs, closet and cabinet door handles, latches, escutcheons and drawer pulls, many of which can still be seen throughout the house (figs. 36-44.)

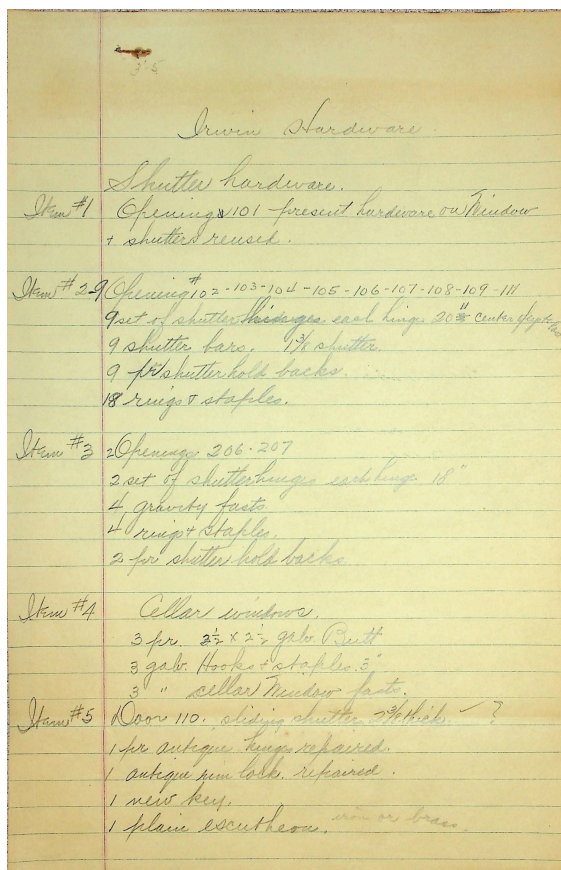


Fig. 36. One of six handwritten pages of notes for the hardware subcontractor. From the R. Brognard Okie Architectural Papers. Photographed at the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg.

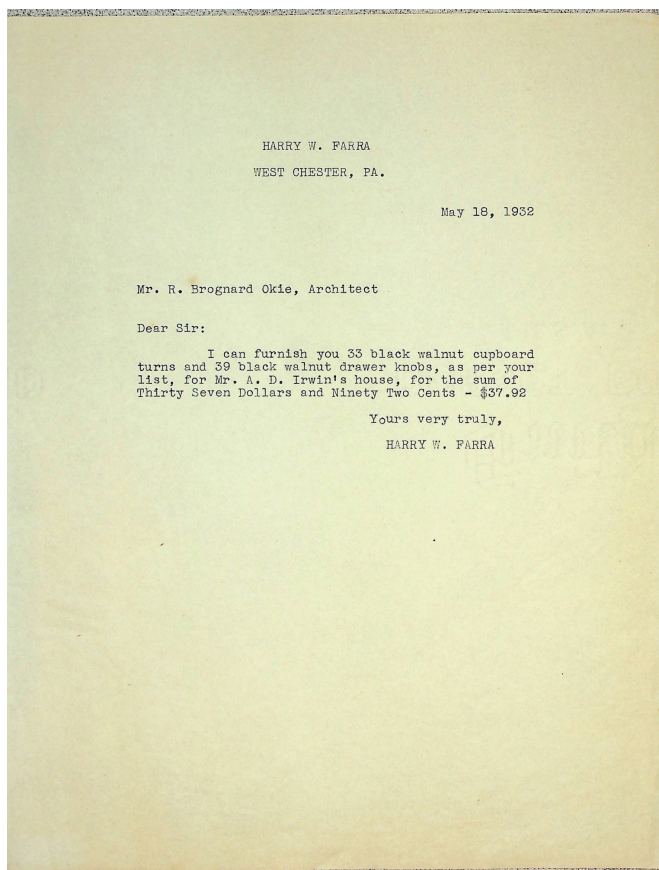


Fig. 37. Reply from the hardware subcontractor concerning the black walnut cupboard turns and drawer pulls. From the R. Brognard Okie Architectural Papers. Photographed at the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg.



Fig. 38. The black walnut drawer pulls in the house. Current photo.



Figs. 39-44. A selection of hardware from throughout the house. Current photos.