

CURIOUS ABOUT THE HISTORIC HOUSE?

Use this guide to explore ten of its unique architectural and decorative features.

A Window Treatments

Luxurious fabric accentuates each window throughout the house. During the early 2000s, the galleries were remodeled to illustrate the evolution of American interiors, highlighting styles prominent in the 1800s. Taft staff looked at designs from the Federal period (about 1780–1820) in choosing this green silk blend glittering with gold flowers and laurel leaves.



B Carpets

During the renovation carried out between 2001 and 2004, wall-to-wall carpeting was installed in nearly every gallery. Made by the English firm Grosvenor Wilton, each pattern was chosen to complement the artwork on display. Interlaced designs popular during the Renaissance inspired the decoration you see here.



C Fireplace Mantels

To echo the building's 1820s architecture, the Taft's first director installed Federal-era wooden fireplace mantels salvaged from homes across the eastern United States. Six of these mantels grace the museum's collection galleries. Dating to the early 1800s, this mantel was recovered from a house in southern Indiana.



D Hidden Murals

In the 1860s, the central doorway to the Music Room replaced two separate entrances. The remodeling damaged three murals by 19th-century Black American artist Robert S. Duncanson. An ongoing conservation project seeks to uncover the mural fragments.



E Faux Grain Finishes

Between 2001 and 2004, artisans transformed the Duncanson Foyer's white trim with hand-painted faux grain. This illusion of fine hardwood trim and panels recreates the foyer's full interior design from the 1850s, when faux grain surrounded the murals.



F Ceiling Medallion

Dating from the 1820s or 1830s, the medallion decorating the Duncanson Foyer's ceiling features stylized leaves and eagles. A skilled craftsman created these designs in sections by pressing wet plaster into molds, allowing it to dry, and then attached the pieces into place.



G Dining Room

In 1910, the Tafts hired the architectural firm of Elzner & Anderson to enlarge the dining room and install a late-1700s-style plaster ceiling. Its design recalls the work of Scottish architects Robert and James Adam, who were inspired by ancient Greek and Roman motifs.



I Wooden Siding

First installed around 1820, the historic house's siding—made from old-growth pine with Douglas fir, poplar, and bald cypress wood added over the years—is flush-mounted so that its seams are barely visible. Painted creamy white, it was likely originally intended to emulate the appearance of marble. During exterior preservation in 2021 and 2022, the siding was removed, rehabilitated, and reinstalled to protect the building—and the Taft's treasures inside—from weather and water damage.



H Chandeliers

Nearly ten thousand crystals make these elegant chandeliers sparkle. The Taft purchased these two fixtures in the French Empire style (1800–15) from Chicago's Curtis Lighting Inc. in 1932, as staff prepared for the museum's opening.



J Portico

View from the front lawn of the museum

The portico features four columns and a triangular roof called a pediment. This architectural form originated in the design of ancient Greek temples. Physical evidence discovered inside the roof reveals that the portico was probably added to the house by 1840.



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