Torn Apart

One of the reasons I fell in love with that colonial in Boardman was because of the wallpaper. Eight rooms with papered surfaces of patterned antiquity, intermixed with ornately decorated hallways and staircases, were only interrupted by brightly colored tiled bathrooms, cedar closets, and a paneled library. From the first walk-thru during the showing of the two-story in Ridgewood Estates, my then fiancé intended to destroy the house’s history.

Upon receiving the keys, he began ripping up carpets and tearing at the wallpaper. Demolished the built-ins, brick fireplace, and vintage light fixtures. His idea of spending Valentine’s Day was to gut the kitchen, wrenching out countertops and cupboards, and scrapping coppertone-colored functioning appliances. Above all else, he hated that wall covering. He intended to smother each room with layers of drab colored latex and five coats of oil paint on all the hard wood trim.

The wallpaper, unlike me, was strong, still almost perfect, and fought against us. The chemicals and glue ran down like the tears on my face as we peeled the exquisite art from the surface it had been morphed to for 70 years. Chunks of plaster joined the muck and slid toward the eighteen hundred square feet of hardwood floors yet to be refinished. The bare plaster walls in the master bedroom exposed a penciled signature, the identification of the paper hanger.

Dated 1939, those cursive marks were all that remained of the artist’s work. The deed stated the house was constructed in 1940, additions were added in the 1970s, but the wall art held on and survived the previous owners who had built their forever home. Other renovations and updates to the electrical and plumbing were completed, but nothing compared to the destruction of 2008. By  
the time he was done with the remodeling, like the original appeal of the house, I was gone.