

## Historic Preservation of Interiors – Defining Feature

*One of the keystone arguments within the preservation community is what is a “defining feature?”*



Architectural elements are often the most obvious choice and while many certainly qualify, a defining feature can also be a flooring surface or a combination of surfaces.

If an ornate ceiling can be classified as a defining feature within a historic theatre, church or court house, then it only makes sense that an ornate floor, carpet, ceramic or wood can and should achieve the same designation.

The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Preservation Projects address this issue. Within the published guidelines to preserve the interior of buildings, the guidelines make the following statement:

*“Identify, retaining and preserving interior features and finishes that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building, including columns, cornices, baseboards, fireplaces and mantels, paneling, light fixtures, hardware, and flooring; and wallpaper, plaster, paint, and finishes such as stenciling, marbling, and graining; and other decorative materials that accent interior features and provide color, texture, and patterning to walls, floors, and ceilings.”*

Clearly, the architectural features, as well as the interior finishes are individually and collectively important in defining the historic character of any building.

