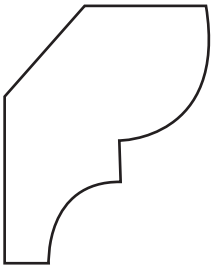
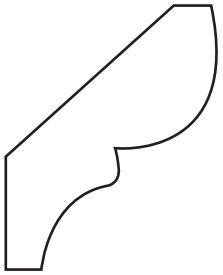


Unfortunately, in the decades after World War II, most moulding sizes and architectural ornamentation were minimized due to the popularity of the new International Style and modern mass production milling practices. What was a thick, sharp 8016 bed mould in the Standard Moulding Catalog, 1925 Edition (shown at left), is now the thinner and watered down version on the right. See also the door moulding comparison on the right side of page 5. As the mouldings during this period lost their sharp edges and classical shapes, their beauty, use and desirability diminished. Over the last decade, however, there has been a re-discovery and re-emergence of traditional and classical architecture and a revival of great mouldings.



Traditional Interior Millwork

Purpose. Function. Beauty.

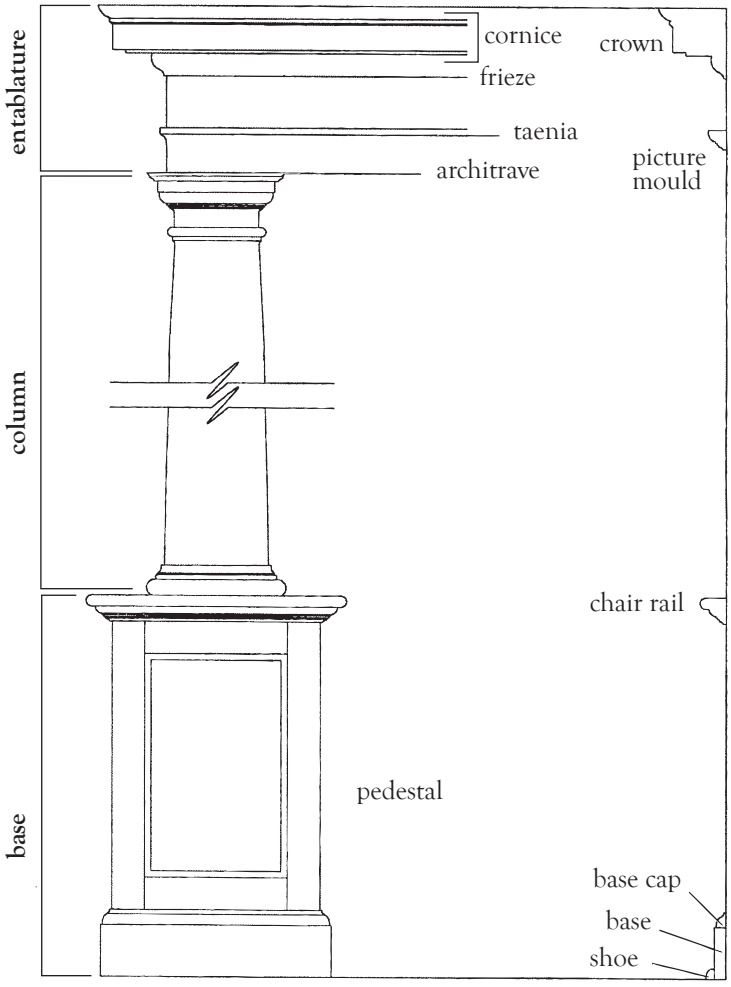
The primary purposes of interior mouldings are to visually reinforce the structural supports, to introduce scale and proportion to rooms, and to produce harmonious effects of light and shade. Done correctly, good mouldings enable visitors to read and understand the room – it just "feels right" and they can innately relate to the welcoming space.

Every element of traditional interior millwork is derived from the classical Orders and the location of mouldings is based on practical function. For example, casings cover the joint between door jambs and the drywall or plaster walls, the crown transitions between the ceiling and wall, and the base and shoe between the wall and floor – all areas that have a tendency to crack and open up as the building settles and shifts over time.

The beauty and elegance of these mouldings are also found in their original functions: the crown acts as an interior cornice and provides an elegant termination to the room. The casing acts as an architrave and highlights and distinguishes the doors and windows.

The chair rail corresponds to the cap of the pedestal in the classical Orders, but also protects the paint and wallpaper from chair backs (which were traditionally pushed back against the wall when not in use). The base serves as the support for the pedestal on which the column would rest and must be proportional to convey such strength and support.

Drawing from:
Hull Historical Moulding Catalog



I found myself turning again and again to memories of older houses, and older rooms, and trying to understand what had made them feel so right, so comfortable. I also began to suspect, and in this I was not mistaken, that women understand more about domestic comfort than do men.

- Witold Rybczynski

Scale and Proportion.

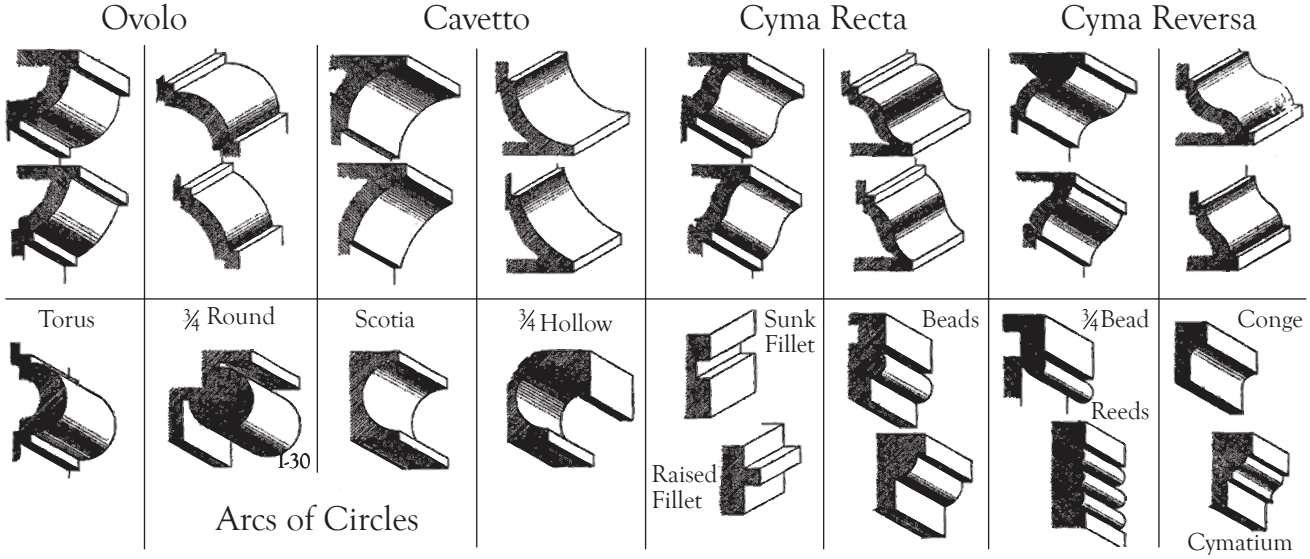
Though the Orders of classical architecture are today most often referenced to columns, these Orders provide a system of order, scale and proportion to buildings even when columns are not being used. The intricate proportions and relationships of height and width and sizes of the various elements of the classical entablature and pedestal provide us with guidelines for the sizing and massing of our interior mouldings. For proper proportioning that is pleasing to the eye, the height of the base and the size and detail of the architrave and cornice are based primarily on the ceiling height, but also on the importance of the room.

Classical architect and author Marianne Cusato suggests the following guide:

Ceiling Height	Crown	Cornice/ Built Up	Crown and Picture Mould	Casing	Base
8'	2½"	6"	8"	3½ – 4"	5½"
9'	3"	7½"	9"	3½ – 4"	5½"
10'	4"	8"	10"	5"– 6"	6¾"
11'	—	9"	11"	5" – 6"	8"

Classical Shapes of Mouldings

The early American architect and builder, Asher Benjamin (1773-1845), numbered the regular mouldings at eight: the *Ovolo* (or quarter round) and *Cyma Reversa* (or ogee), being strong at their extremities are fit for supports; the *Cyma Recta* (a terminating wave moulding) and *Cavetto* (or cove) terminate in a point and are designed to cover other members; the *Torus* (or half round) and *Astragal* (or bead), shaped like ropes, are intended to bind and strengthen the parts on which they are employed; and the *Fillet* (a small plane surface) and *Scotia* ("darkness", a hollow) are to separate, contrast and emphasize the effect of the other mouldings and to give a graceful turn to the profile.

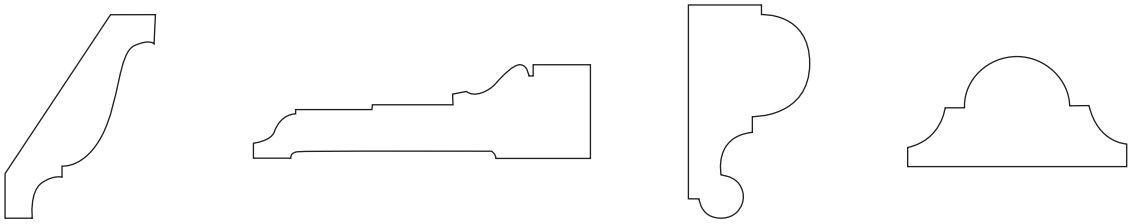


If the mouldings are only composed of parts of a circle and straight lines they are called Roman. If a moulding is made of part of an ellipse, parabola or hyperbole, it is considered Greek. Many of the Greek patterns were based on the proportions God created in the nautilus shell.

The timeless and classical beauty of mouldings arises, according to Benjamin, from the play of shadows, reflected light, relief and contrast from plane surfaces, and in the beautiful variety and graduated levels of light and shade. This requires in such mouldings, lines of distinction, sharp edges, and thickness to provide deep curves and accurate shapes (not simply abstract combinations as are so often seen in today's stock mouldings).

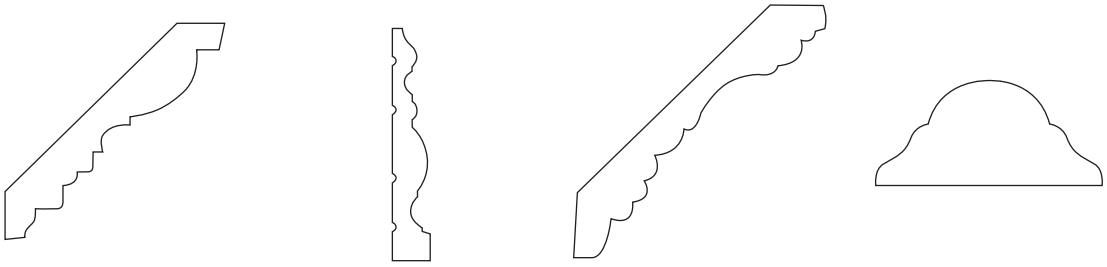
Keys to Beautiful & Interesting Mouldings:

1. Simple design, with flat fillets or astragals (beads) separating any curved profiles.
2. Sharp edges, for crisp sharp shadow lines to mark boundaries between profiles.
3. Deeply cut incisions in thicker mouldings to both define the profiles and create variations in tone with reflected light and shadows.
4. Substantial in size and detail, but properly proportioned to room and other elements, to decorate the home and draw attention to the structural form.



Moulding Elements to Avoid:

1. Compressing too many profiles into the moulding, either slurring them together or simply creating ruled lines of identical tones.
2. Rounded or eased edges that don't clearly define the different profiles and minimize the shadow effects.
3. Shallow cuts out of thin moulding that destroys sense of depth and detail.
4. Small, thin mouldings simply to hide joints and seams and blend in, rather than emphasizing the doors, windows, floors and ceilings they surround.



"Stock" vs. "Custom" Mouldings

Standard mouldings readily available at your local lumberyard are now mass produced and typically imported from high-speed planing mills in Chile or elsewhere. These recognizable profiles are often manufactured with finger-jointed pieces or MDF, and are generally known as "Stock" or "Commodity" mouldings. Although stock mouldings are generally less expensive than custom run profiles, a builder should take considerable care in selecting these. We have included some of today's most popular stock profiles in the back of this catalog (pages 39-44), but as you will note, they often contain some of the above elements to be avoided.

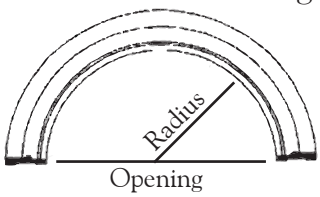
"Custom" run mouldings are locally manufactured to exact specifications in job lot quantities. The architect or builder has complete flexibility in the design of custom mouldings and they can be run out of any desired wood species. Standard or previously used patterns are often referred to as custom runs if needed in stain grade wood. With typical one to two week lead times, more planning is required for their use. Although the material cost for custom mouldings is somewhat higher, when combined with the installation and finishing costs (which usually remain the same for either), the overall budget impact is more than offset by the dramatic visual and aesthetic improvement of custom mouldings over stock. See the inside back cover for more details on custom mouldings.

Radius Wood Mouldings

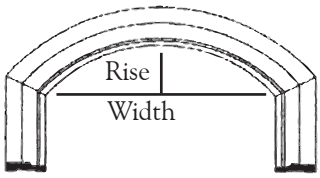
In addition to "straight" moldings, Davis-Hawn manufactures full radius, eyebrow (or segmented arch) and elliptical casings, radius header jambs, convex and concave crowns, bases and panel moulds, paneled cased openings and many others. Davis-Hawn is North Texas' experienced manufacturer who can provide solutions to all your radius moulding needs.

Full Round Casing

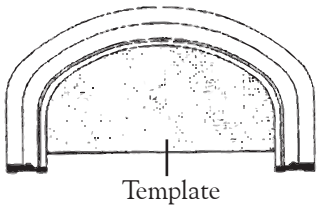
Half Round Casing



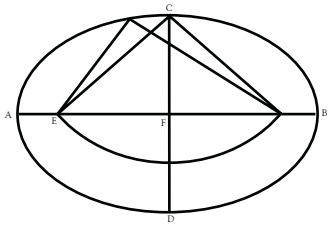
Eyebrow Casing

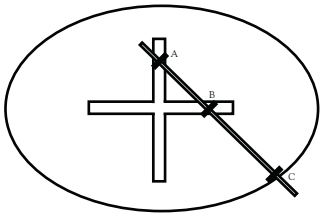


Elliptical Casing



When ordering moulding for half circle or a full circle, we need to know the inside radius (taking the desired reveal into account). When ordering an eyebrow, we need the width and height or rise from the spring-line. Elliptical curves generally require a template. For radius crown or base moulding, we need the wall's radius and whether it is concave or convex.





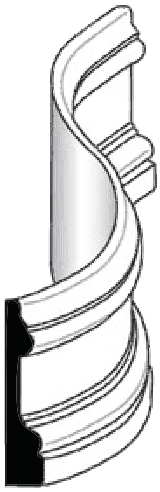
The two most common methods of laying out an ellipse in the field are shown above. The first is known as the "string method" and the second makes use of an instrument called a trammel. Both methods utilize major and minor axis measurements (based on opening width and rise above the spring line) for accurately laying out what many like to refer to as a true ellipse. The art of manufacturing and installing elliptical moldings is even more difficult than the geometry and layout may suggest. We utilize CAD, CNC, specialty moulders, shapers and years of experience (including over 5,000 radius openings) to properly measure and produce beautiful curves.

Flexible Mouldings

Many standard profiles of flexible mouldings (known as "flex mould") are available in stock for certain applications. However, for flexible radius casings, custom profiles and most crown applications the flex mould must be manufactured to the precise radius specified by the architect or builder. Please allow 2 to 3 weeks lead time for such custom work.

Flexible Mouldings offer several benefits:

- Extremely easy to install as one piece
- Big savings in labor and material costs verses wood
- High quality detail in paint grade and stain (gel) grade



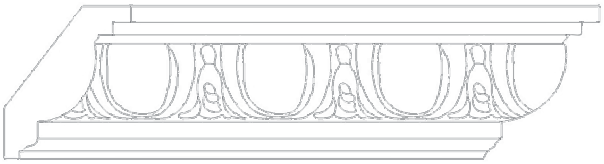
Convex Crown

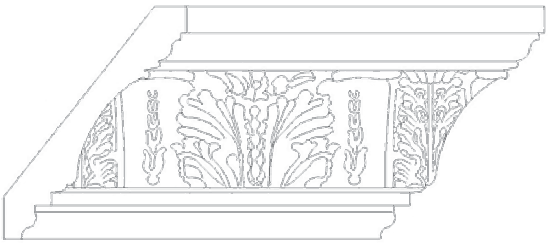
Concave Crown

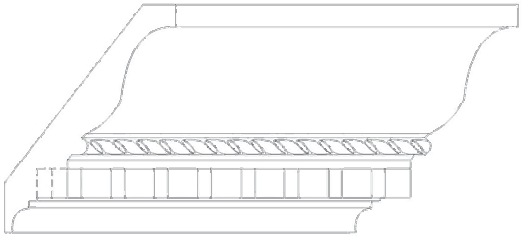
Embellished Hardwood Mouldings & Woodcarvings

by White River

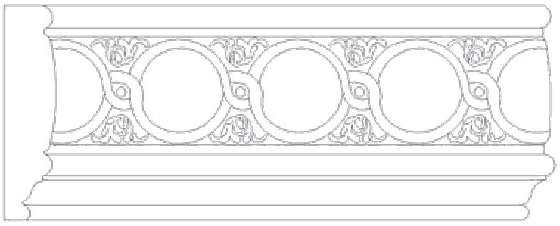
In early American fine homes, craftsmen hand chiseled and carved very ornate, detailed mouldings along with the simpler planed mouldings. Even today, these embellished mouldings can be used to enhance and accentuate rooms that may require an extra touch of sophistication and detail. White River offers a fresh, classical approach to your moulding needs. Mon Reale represents the highest relief and greatest definition of solid hardwood moulding. A fine-grained overlay, contoured to traditional hardwood moulding, creates a look of unsurpassed elegance.

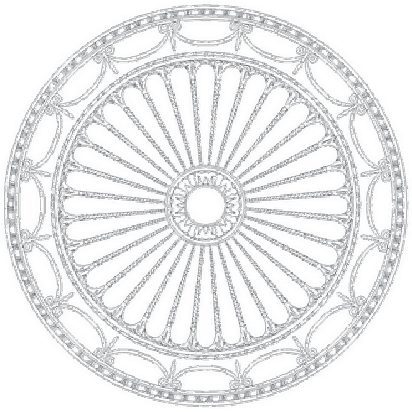
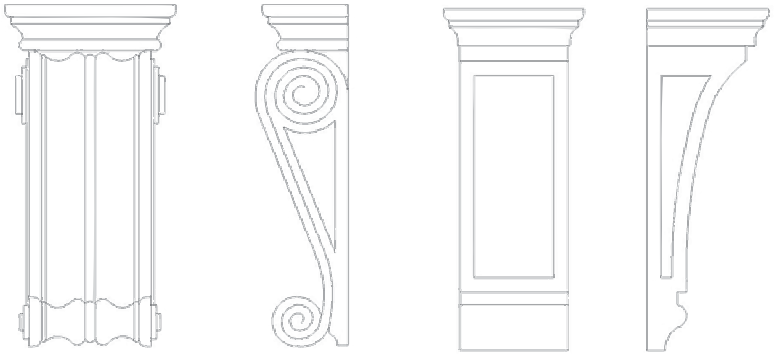






Many of today's moulding styles have their roots in Ancient Greece. Egg and Dart is an ornamental enrichment of the ovolo moulding and is found in both Ancient Greek and Roman architecture. Acanthus leaf mouldings started appearing in Athens around 450 BC. Dentil and Running Coin mouldings are found as early as 500 BC and were used throughout the Renaissance.



The ceiling can make a statement about a room, and a ceiling medallion can add visual appeal and a unique style to any room. These old world elements are generously cast and highly sculptured.

Corbels can be elaborately carved or classically simplistic, either style makes a nice architectural accent.