Gypsum lath (gyp lath) was used for interior gypsum plaster work before gypsum board was introduced in the latter part of the 1960’s and became more popular than gypsum plaster in the early 1970’s. Gyp lath is made similarly to gypsum board except that it has a multi layered face that is highly absorptive and fibrous to quickly absorb the moisture of wet gypsum plaster which reduces slump or sag. The fibers adhere with crystals that form in the setting gypsum plaster thus producing a permanent bond. Gyp lath was originally made in sheets 16 inch X 48 inch and came plain (Fig. 11) or perforated (Fig. 12). The perforations generally produced better fire resistance than plain gyp lath. This is due to better keying where the gypsum plaster embeds through the panel at the perforation.

Today gyp lath is made in sheets 2 foot X 8 foot, the same size as core board. It is thought that the low demand for gyp lath forced manufactures to shut down the dedicated 16 inch belt line. Therefore, when a gyp lath run is required to be made, manufacturers can use the 24 inch core board belt with minor modifications. Gypsum plaster is applied over the gyp lath in a monolithic base coat, followed by a thin finish coat. Unlike gypsum board where only the joints, angles and fasteners are treated (except gypsum board Level 5) gypsum plaster over gyp lath creates a complete plaster cladding over the joints in the gyp lath.

The Metal Lath Manufacturers Association Technical Bulletin No. 4, dated April 1958, suggested expanded metal lath be applied to joints of gyp lath where particular stress was anticipated, particularly in wood frame buildings where lumber shrinkage was likely to occur. Joints that occur in normal runs of framing where no particular stresses were anticipated to occur needed no preparation once the gypsum base coat fully bonded to the gyp lath. Gyp lath can be applied with clips, nails, staples or screws. Fasteners should be driven through the gyp lath at a right angle and set flush, not drawn so as to break the face paper. Fasteners should not be applied closer than 3/8 inch. to the edge of the gyp lath panel.

Only gypsum plaster can be applied over gyp lath. Portland cement plaster does not develop the microscopic crystals found in gypsum plaster that are essential for a permanent bond to the fibrous face material of gyp lath.