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## CENTER FOR PALLADIAN STUDIES IN AMERICA



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### Letter from the President Bruce Boucher

Cost: \$5.00

DEAR CPSA MEMBERS,

On October 10th of last year, an enthusiastic audience joined us at the University of Virginia's School of Architecture for our first joint symposium with UVA's Department of Architectural History, *Approaches to Architectural History*. It was a crowded day, bookended by lightning talks from current students in the Master's degree program and a tour of the Academical Village by two specialists in historic preservation, Jody Lahendro and James Zehmer. It was particularly heartening to see so many younger people in the audience, and the quality of the student talks was impressive.

The presentations began with two complimentary talks by Professors Cammy Brothers of UVA and Howard Burns of the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa. Brothers, who is the Mario di Valmarana Associate Professor of Architectural History, discussed Giuliano da Sangallo's *Codex Barberini* and his conjectural reconstructions of ancient Roman ruins. Burns, the leading scholar of the works of Andrea Palladio, gave us a comprehensive survey of Palladio's modes of architectural drawing. Our own Calder Loth then gave a magisterial account of Book IV of Palladio's *Quattro Libri* as a source for American architecture, and CPSA member Travis McDonald, Director of Architectural Restoration at Poplar Forest, spoke thoughtfully about the challenges and issues facing Thomas Jefferson's private retreat near Lynchburg, Virginia as well as the challenges of dealing with historic houses. Between these two talks came a memorable one by Joseph Lasala, an architectural historian trained at UVA, on Jefferson's architectural drawings as palimpsests. The day ended with a reception at the University's Fralin Museum of Art.



Bruce Boucher

We are fortunate that Lasala's forensic analysis of Jefferson's architectural drawings is printed here as one of our main articles because his research should be better known. As you will read, Lasala

employed digital photo-enhancement technology to uncover drafting sequences and phases of design that shed new light on Jefferson's practice. In his article, Lasala focuses on Jefferson's plans for UVA's Rotunda, from which his analysis has produced remarkable results that shed new light on the genesis of the building; in particular, his study reinforces the role of Benjamin Henry Latrobe in shaping the design for the centerpiece of Jefferson's Lawn. It also "complicates" that role because of the pains that Jefferson took to conceal his indebtedness to Latrobe. Lasala leaves open the reason why, but his study makes a significant contribution towards better understanding the genesis of the Lawn.

Two articles on the historic house of Battersea in Petersburg, Virginia, round out this edition. Fellow CPSA Board Member John Zeugner gives us an update on this important but lesser-known Palladian gem dating from 1768. The

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### Plan now for 2016 Events:

#### Weekend Palladian Bus Tour:

Clarke, Frederick, and Warren Counties. April 16th & 17th with optional Sat. night in Winchester (see Page 15)

#### The Georgians in Scotland:

Architecture, interiors & landscape with Martin Randall Travel and CPSA; 9 days 20–28 June 2016 (see Page 14)

Continued from pg. 1 **President's Letter**

CPSA has been involved in preserving Battersea since 2005, working in collaboration with the City of Petersburg on stabilizing and restoring the fabric. Both Petersburg and the Battersea Foundation have made great strides in saving this important building. CPSA member Christopher Novelli also writes on Battersea and presents us with a perceptive analysis of the stylistic influences that informed its design. Novelli points out the derivation of the plan from Robert Morris's Select Architecture, which was a favorite source for Jefferson and other early American architects, and he also suggests a possible Jeffersonian connection at Battersea. In addition, the interior features elements drawn from William Halfpenny's popularizing handbook, and the whole design displays a sophisticated sense of choice in architectural sources. Finally, CPSA member Paul Ranogajec has contributed a thought-provoking review of Carroll William Westfall's recent book, *Architecture, Liberty and Civic Order*.

Meanwhile, we have a great tour of Clarke County, Virginia coming up this April. Centered upon the historic town of Winchester, the tour has been designed by the distinguished architectural historian and CPSA Board Member Edward Lay with Mariel Kalbian, who is an expert on the architecture of the upper Piedmont region. It will feature some hard-to-see

***Bruce Boucher has divided his career between education, scholarship and museum administration. He directs the UVa Fralin Art Museum, has written three important books, including "Andrea Palladio: The Architect in His Time," and he lectures widely on Palladio and other Italian artists and architects.***

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## A Forensic Look at Thomas Jefferson's Architectural Drawings

by Joseph Michael Lasala

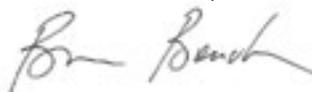
Many of Thomas Jefferson's architectural drawings were first published one hundred years ago in Fiske Kimball's pioneering book, *Thomas Jefferson Architect* (1916), and Kimball's analysis of the drawings has remained the benchmark on this topic for the past century. Today, however, using technology that was unavailable in Kimball's time, we can reexamine these same drawings forensically and discover new information about Jefferson's design and drafting methodology. In order for his designs to be built, Jefferson had to make drawings and calculations for virtually every architectural component. A lot of work went into preparing these cumbersome documents by hand, and if Jefferson needed to make a change to part of a design, he didn't always bother starting over from scratch. Instead, he might erase something and draw the new element on top; or he might attach an overlay to the sheet and cover the original detail with a revision. (Fig. 1) As a result, we architectural historians are left with all the intermediate layers and versions of Jefferson's drawings, and we can interpret his designs in a wider context as they developed over time.

I like to approach these archival drawings the way an archaeologist conducts an excavation—in this case, one that is paper-thin. With digital photo enhancement technology, it's possible to uncover the information that lies just beneath the

houses and buildings, including Annfield, Glen Burnie, and the Tuletries. More information can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. And speaking of tours, there are still places available on our Scottish Palladian tour this coming June from the 20th to the 28th. It has a full and exceptional program. For further information contact the tour organizers at: [www.martinrandall.com](http://www.martinrandall.com) or [info@martinrandall.co.uk](mailto:info@martinrandall.co.uk)

Finally, I must inform you that this will be my last letter as President of the Board of CPSA. As some of you may know, I have been appointed the director of the Sir John Soane's Museum in London, taking up my new duties there this May. If you don't know the Soane, you should. It is a historic house which contains the collections and designs of the great Neo-classical architect, Sir John Soane (1753-1837). Visiting the Soane is a unique experience, like stepping into the mind of a great architect at the turn of the nineteenth century. I hope to see you there.

With best wishes,



Bruce Boucher

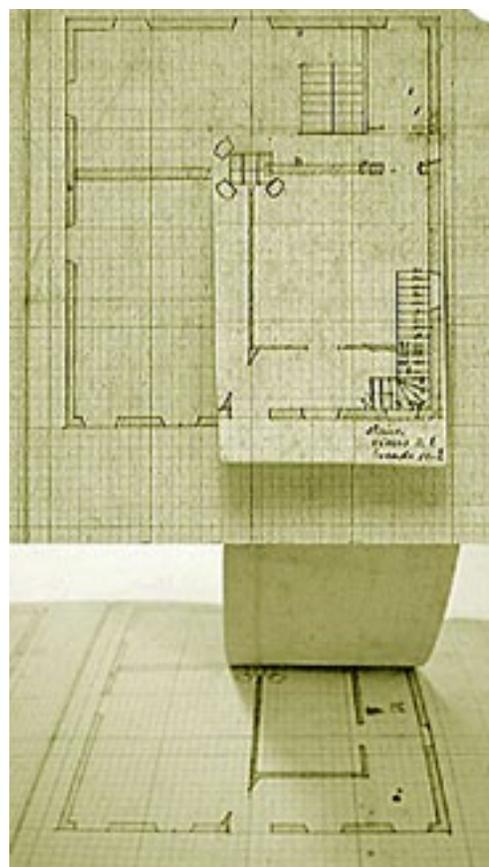


Fig. 1. Example of Jefferson's overlay technique for revising a drawing (*University of Virginia Pavilion III Historic Structure Report*, Mesick Cohen Wilson Baker Architects, 2006).

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drawing surface and reveal traces of ink and pencil that can't be seen when you only look at the top-most layer. By using this forensic approach, we can begin to untangle how Jefferson drafted his drawings: starting with a blank sheet, then poking holes in the paper to establish reference points, connecting those points with nearly invisible scored guidelines, followed by the ink lines...and then the inevitable adjustments and corrections, erasures, cut-outs, and overlays, all of which reveal an evolution of Jefferson's thought and design process.

Take, for example, Jefferson's drawings for the University of Virginia. These drawings have been reproduced in countless books and articles over the decades, but they only show a snapshot in time at the moment Jefferson stopped drawing and put down his pen. If we look deeper, we can see the drafting sequence in the layers of ink, pencil, and paper, containing different phases of the design. Sometimes, there are hidden surprises lurking within these layers.

One particularly revealing case study of forensic analysis involves Jefferson's drawings for the Rotunda. Beneath the surface of the Rotunda drawings and the notes on the back of the sheet, there are some intriguing details and hidden clues about the building's design origins. The Rotunda, perhaps Jefferson's crowning architectural achievement, was not part of his original "academical village" layout for the University of Virginia. It was the architect B. Henry Latrobe who suggested adding a domed central building to the complex when he responded to Jefferson's request for some quick sketches for the façades of the professors' houses, or "pavilions."

We know from the surviving correspondence that Latrobe provided much more than just some quick sketches. Unfortunately, his drawings for the university buildings have been lost, and we just have these tantalizing descriptions of them from his correspondence with Jefferson between June 28 and October 14, 1817:

Latrobe: "I have found so much pleasure in studying the plan of your College, that the drawings have grown into a larger bulk than can conveniently be sent by the Mail. I have put the whole upon one very large sheet...."

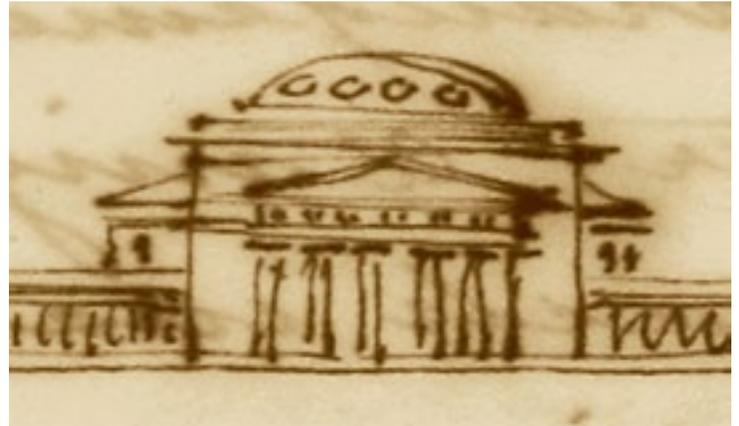
Jefferson responded on July 16: "I think your drawings had better come in the form of a roll by the mail...."

On August 12, Latrobe wrote, "On receipt of your letter...I suspended my drawing. It contained a plan of the principal range of building as I then supposed it, and seven or eight elevations of pavilions, with a general elevation of the long ranges of pavilions and portico. In this state I will send it to you."

Finally, Jefferson wrote to Latrobe: "Yours of the 6th is received, and with it the beautiful set of drawings accompanying it. We are under great obligations to

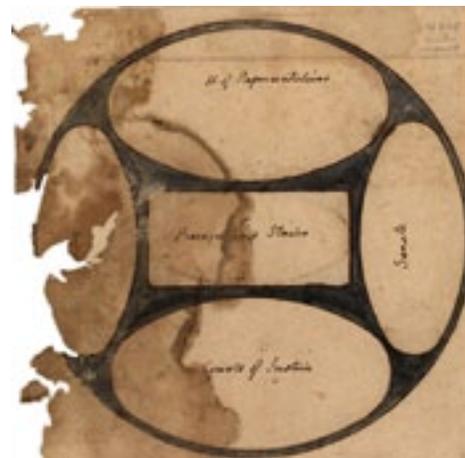
you for them, and having decided to build two more pavilions the ensuing season, we shall certainly select their fronts from these. They will be Ionic and Corinthian. The Doric now erecting would resemble one of yours but that the lower order is of arches, and the upper only of columns, instead of the columns being of the height of both stories...."

Even though we're missing Latrobe's large sheet of drawings, we do have an earlier sketch from his letter to Jefferson dated July 24, 1817, in which he offers his own ideas for improving Jefferson's academical village layout, including the addition of a domed building as its central focal point. The sketch shows a cubical building with a six-column portico in front, additional porticoes on each side, and topped by a dome containing circular skylights. (Fig. 2) As Charles Brownell has noted, all



*Fig. 2. Latrobe's sketch of a domed, central building for the University of Virginia (Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress).*

of these features are found in Giacomo Leoni's drawing of Palladio's Villa Rotonda. Jefferson was particularly fond of the Villa Rotonda and had even used it several years earlier as the model for his entry in the design competition for the President's House in Washington. Ultimately, Jefferson based his Rotunda floor plans on another previous unbuilt design intended for Washington—his circular concept for the Capitol, containing oval-shaped rooms. (Fig. 3)



*Fig. 3. Jefferson's study for the U.S. Capitol (original manuscript from The Coolidge Collection of Thomas Jefferson Manuscripts at the Massachusetts Historical Society).*

Continued from pg. 3

As for the Rotunda's exterior, we now have evidence that the elevation design was inspired not only by Latrobe's sketch, but by a now-missing Latrobe drawing. That evidence is in Jefferson's own handwriting, and it's been hiding in plain sight all this time. The standard historiography about the Rotunda is that Jefferson designed it to be a half-scale version of the Pantheon as depicted by Palladio. But why are there so many discrepancies between Jefferson's design and the precedent in Rome, if Jefferson based his design on Palladio's drawing? (Fig. 4) On Jefferson's elevation for the Rotunda, there

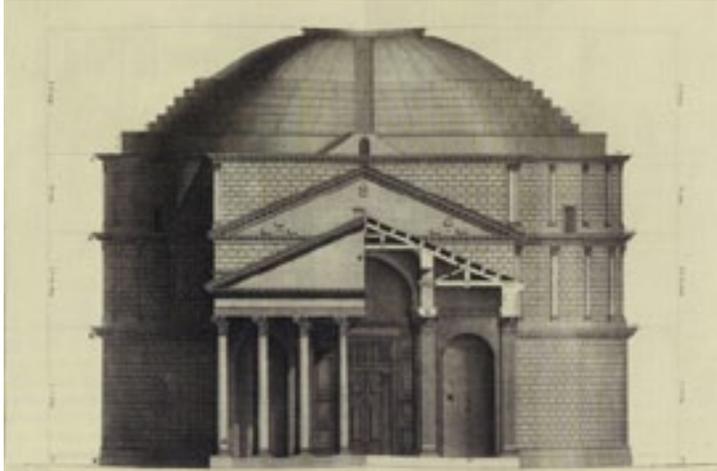


Fig. 4. The Pantheon as illustrated by Giacomo Leoni in the 1742 edition of *The Architecture of A. Palladio: In Four Books*.

is a curious ink mark in the top-right corner. (Fig. 5) Upon closer inspection, there are actually two layers of ink here.

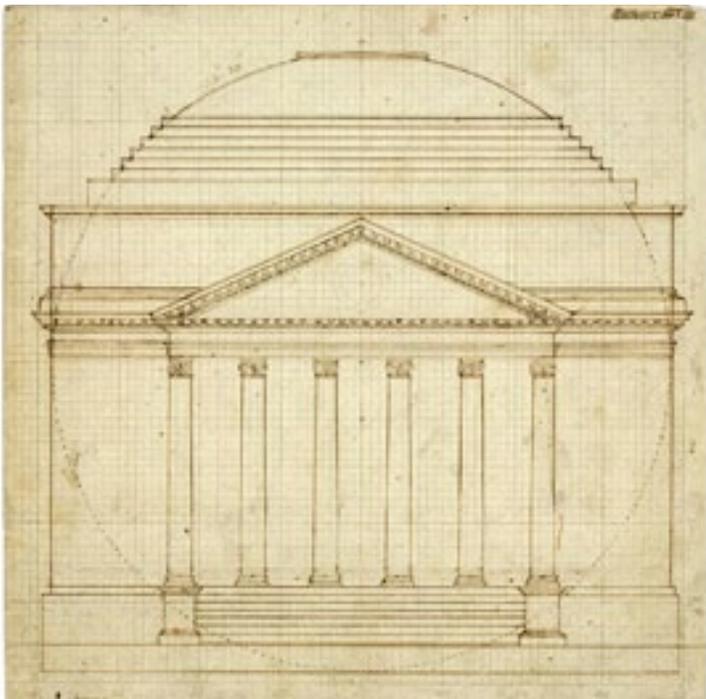


Fig. 5. Jefferson's elevation for the Rotunda (Jefferson Papers, Special Collections, University of Virginia).

Something was written in one shade of ink, and then crossed-out with darker ink. In order to decipher this concealed text, I made a high-resolution scan of the drawing and zoomed in

on that top-right corner. By applying several color filters and enhancing the contrast between the two shades of ink, I was able to read the long-hidden inscription, and it revealed another source for Jefferson's Rotunda design—a drawing by Latrobe. A numbered drawing, in fact: "Latrobe No. 6." (Fig. 6)



Fig. 6. Detail of Rotunda elevation drawing with original inscription revealed (Lasala).

We now have a plausible explanation for the many discrepancies between Jefferson's Rotunda and the Roman Pantheon, such as why the Rotunda has six columns across its front instead of an octastyle portico like the Pantheon; why it has one pediment instead of two; and why the proportional circle of the Rotunda, as represented by Jefferson's dotted line, is tangent to the exterior of the dome and walls instead of the interior of the space, as it is at the Pantheon. So now, not only do we know that Latrobe inspired the addition of the Rotunda to the university layout, but it appears that Jefferson's design for the Rotunda's elevation was likely based on a source identified by Jefferson as "Latrobe No. 6." The fact that it has a number suggests that it was one of several drawings on that large, now-missing sheet by Latrobe.

The discovery of this Latrobe inscription answers some questions, but generates new ones as well. Why did Jefferson identify a Latrobe drawing on his Rotunda elevation, only to cross it out? Could it be that somebody other than Jefferson was responsible for concealing Latrobe's name, perhaps to protect Jefferson's legacy? Actually, there are plenty of examples of Jefferson using this same redaction technique to cross-out text in other documents, and it's a technique he uses in his architectural specifications. (Fig. 7)

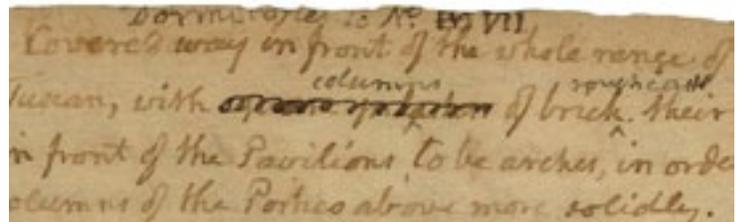


Fig. 7. Example of Jefferson's redaction technique (Jefferson Papers, Special Collections, University of Virginia).

The intrigue concerning Latrobe's design inspiration for the Rotunda continues when we turn the drawing over and

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examine the other side of the sheet. Jefferson wrote his notes and specifications on the back of the drawings, and once again, there are additional layers of information here that are invisible to the naked eye until you start to dig and apply forensic techniques. On the back of the Rotunda drawing, we can see the words that architectural historians have used to identify the Pantheon as Jefferson's design source. "Rotunda, reduced to the proportions of the pantheon and accommodated to the purposes of a Library.... The diameter of the building 77 feet, being  $\frac{1}{2}$  that of the pantheon, consequently  $\frac{1}{4}$  its area, and  $\frac{1}{8}$  its volume...." But once again, something is missing from the historical transcript. Originally, these notes read, "Latrobe's Rotunda, reduced to the proportions of the pantheon...." (Fig. 8) In this instance, Jefferson used an eraser instead of a pen to remove the Latrobe reference.

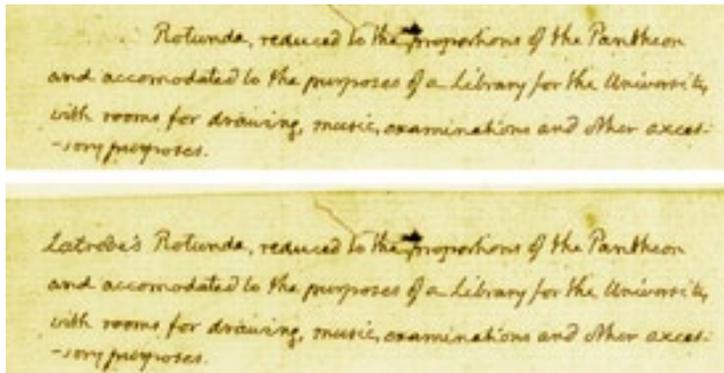


Fig. 8. Jefferson's notes on back of Rotunda drawing with erased word restored (Lasala).

So now we see that Jefferson originally identified Latrobe by name, not once, but twice on his Rotunda drawings. But then he removed both instances of Latrobe's name. Why? One possibility concerns a scandalous event that occurred around this time in Washington. Although Jefferson is the father of the University of Virginia, he wasn't the only one in charge of getting its buildings approved and built. There was a Board of Visitors who collectively made decisions about construction-related matters. This board included presidents Madison and Monroe, who, like Jefferson, worked with Latrobe on the U.S. Capitol's construction. By 1817, Latrobe's supervisor, Samuel Lane, an appointee of Madison and old friend of then-president Monroe, was actively trying to get Latrobe fired from the Capitol project. Latrobe and Lane argued frequently in White House meetings, and tensions reached a boiling point when Latrobe reportedly grabbed Lane by the collar and shouted, "Were you not a cripple, I would shake you to atoms, you contemptible wretch!" After this outburst in front of the president, Latrobe left Washington in disgrace, and that was the last—and lasting—impression that Monroe had of him. So then, it's no surprise that Jefferson crossed-out and erased Latrobe's name from his drawings—not just the Rotunda, but a number of the Latrobe-inspired pavilion drawings as well. The last thing he needed to do was reveal the source of these designs to Madison and Monroe, thereby instigating negative associations.

Not only are there additional layers of information hidden on the Rotunda elevation drawing and notes, there is also evidence of a preliminary design for the interior of the dome room library, which reveals how Jefferson originally envisioned this space. On the dome room plan we see a ring of 20 pairs of Composite columns, 40 columns in total. (Fig. 9)

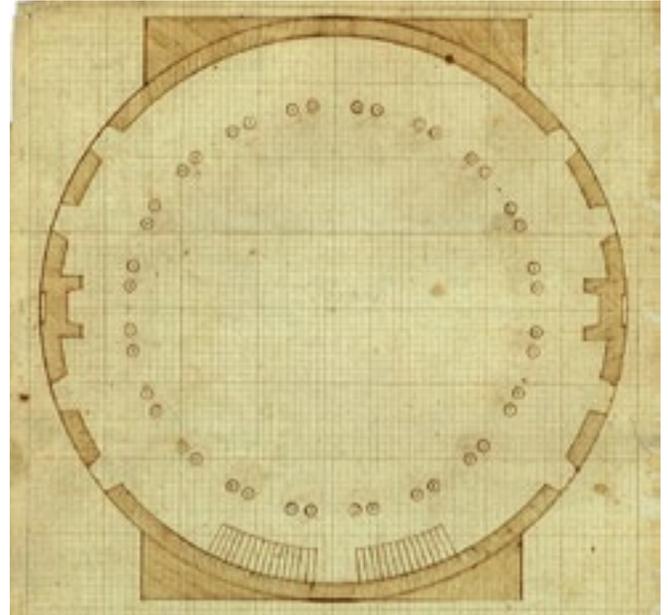


Fig. 9. Jefferson's revised floor plan for the Rotunda library showing 40 Composite columns (Jefferson Papers, Special Collections, University of Virginia).

But this was not Jefferson's original design for the library, nor was the Composite order his original choice. If you examine this drawing closely, you'll notice several smudges just inside the ring of coupled columns. Corresponding with these smudges is also a ring of tiny holes in the paper. These holes were made by the point of a compass, and the smudges are actually the remnants of an erased ring of 20 wider and taller Corinthian columns. (Fig. 10) With the rediscovery of this earlier design

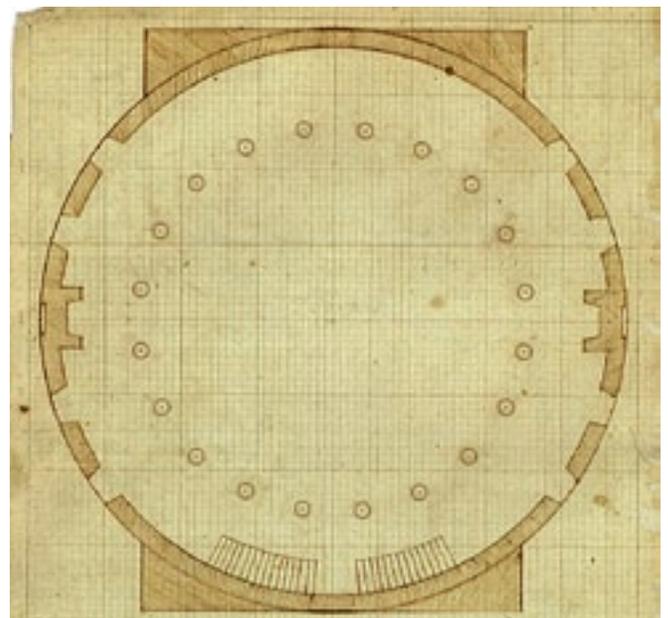


Fig. 10. Jefferson's original floor plan for the Rotunda library showing the 20 erased Corinthian columns restored (Lasala).

Continued from pg. 5

version, we now know why Jefferson's notes on the back of the Rotunda drawings do not match the drawing that we see today and as the room was built, with 40 Composite columns. (Fig. 11) The notes relate instead to the original, erased Corinthian columns, where "to correspond with the windows there must



Fig. 11. Rotunda library as originally constructed (The Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia).

be 20 intercolonnations and that the intercolonnation may not be too large for the Corinthian order we must use an intercolonnation of 3 diameters...."

Ironically, Jefferson's original design for the library interior with a ring of 20 Corinthian columns is rather similar to the controversial library space designed by Stanford White after the original Rotunda interior was destroyed by fire in 1895. (Fig. 12) White's Rotunda interior was often derided for not following Jefferson's design, but, unbeknownst to White and his critics, that's precisely what his reconstructed library space achieved, thus going full-circle—literally and figuratively—to Jefferson's original arrangement and order of columns, traces of which remained on the drawing's surface for a future generation of architectural historians to uncover.



Fig. 12. Rotunda library as reconstructed by Stanford White (Special Collections, University of Virginia).

**Mr. Lasala is an Architectural Historian. He received his Masters in AH from the University of Virginia in 1992, and has written and collaborated on several books about the University's academical village and early Virginia architects.**

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## Battersea: A Search for Origins

by Christopher Novelli

**Mr. Novelli is the Tax Credit Specialist with the Va Dept of Historical Resources. He earned a bachelor's in graphic design and a minor in music from Florida State University (1990); and a master's in architectural history from the University of Virginia (1996).**

Now the focus of an intensive long-term restoration, Battersea is one of the earliest and best-preserved examples of a five-part Palladian house in Virginia and in the country. The design of the house is elegant in its simplicity. In plan and elevation, it was conceived as a string of five square (or nearly square) units: a cubic central block connected to flanking dependencies, or pavilions, by hyphens. Battersea can be traced to a family of eighteenth-century British house designs inspired by Palladio and his followers, yet a direct source remains elusive.

Battersea is picturesquely sited on a partially wooded bluff on the south bank of the Appomattox River, about one mile west of downtown Petersburg. (Fig. 1) The house faces south, overlooking a terrace beyond which was a formal garden. The land north of the house was once cleared and would have provided fine views of the Appomattox River.



Fig. 1. Battersea (c. 1768), Petersburg, Va., south façade (Novelli).

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John Banister III built Battersea as a suburban villa circa 1768. Banister (1734-1788) was a notable statesman who served in the House of Burgesses for Dinwiddie County from 1766



Fig. 2. Colonel John Banister III (1734-1788), (Courtesy of the Banister Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution).

until 1776. (Fig. 2) As a patriot during the Revolution, Banister played a prominent role as a signer of the Articles of Confederation. Besides his long career in public service, Banister was a mill owner and a tobacco planter and broker.

Since Jefferson owned copies of Palladio's *Four Books* and Morris's *Select Architecture*, and also had professional and family connections with Banister, it has been suggested that Jefferson may have influenced the design of Battersea. In 1769, Thomas Jefferson (who was nine years Banister's junior) was elected burgess for Albemarle County, and the two served together in the Assembly until revolution dissolved the colonial government. Banister's second wife, Elizabeth Bland, was related to Jefferson through the Blands and the Randolphs.

According to dendrochronology, the timbers were felled for the construction of Battersea in 1767. Battersea was probably designed, like other houses of the day, by the patron in tangent with his master builder. However, since no documentation survives regarding its design or construction, no individuals responsible for the design—other than Banister himself—have been identified. Since Banister had studied law at the Middle Temple, he would have been familiar with the new buildings in London. Whether Banister consulted with Jefferson regarding the design of his house remains a matter of speculation.

Battersea was a house of quality with fine Georgian detailing inside and out. Although its five-part form and floorplan have not changed since it was built, Battersea's original appearance was much more conventionally Georgian than it appears today, with exposed red-brick, Flemish bond walls. The rear (north)

elevation still retains the original window configuration (except for the added attic window on the west pavilion) and reflects the original look of the house. (Fig. 3) Small porticos similar to



Fig. 3. Battersea, north elevation, *Historic American Buildings Survey, 1941.*

the existing ones marked the entrances on all four sides. Battersea's north and south elevations were once identical, giving the house an additional layer of symmetry.

Battersea's five-part floorplan echoed the formal layout of British Palladian great houses which contained an entrance hall and saloon in the central block with enfilades of rooms extending to either side on a cross axis. (Fig. 4) The perfect alignment of the door openings at Battersea provided dramatic interior views through the full length of the house. (Fig. 5) Originally,

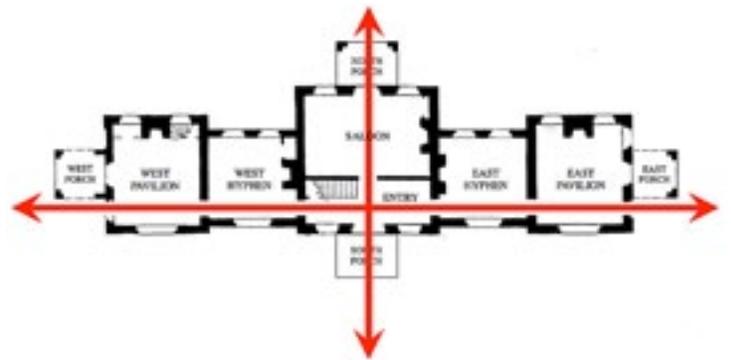


Fig. 4. Battersea's cross-axial floorplan.



Fig. 5. View of Battersea's enfilade of rooms looking east (Novelli).

Continued from page 7

the saloon was envisioned as a perfect square comprising the entire 30- by 30-foot central block. However, after construction began, the decision was made to insert an entry for receiving and screening visitors.

The entry contains the house's greatest concentration of original Georgian interior detailing. (Fig. 6) The original



Fig. 6. Battersea entrance passage (Novelli)

Chinese lattice staircase is the chief architectural feature of the house and one of the finest surviving examples of its type in Virginia and the Mid-Atlantic. The stair shares similarities with a design on plate 50 of William Halfpenny's *Rural Architecture in the Chinese Taste* (1755). The adjacent saloon was the largest room in the house and may have originally been used for formal dining. To the right of the entry, the east hyphen and pavilion appear to have served as formal rooms, with the doorway between them originally aligned with the entry. To the left of the entry, the west hyphen and pavilion may have functioned as service and private areas. Before Banister died from an unknown illness in 1788, he replaced the original one-story south portico with a much larger two-story portico which extended nearly the full width of the central block, thus making the south façade the primary elevation.

Architecturally, Battersea is a rare example of a pre-Revolutionary War, five-part Palladian villa, one of the basic manifestations of Palladianism which spread up and down the east coast and west into neighboring states during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Battersea's five-part massing reflected architectural trends in Britain and America during the 1760s—namely, the rise in popularity of the villa, or to be more precise, the image of the villa. In Virginia, the first glimmer of Palladian influence appeared in the construction of the second Williamsburg Capitol, with its double portico, around 1750. By circa 1760, a very few houses in Virginia started to distinctly resemble Palladian villas. Mount Airy (1760-64), in Richmond County, is believed to have been inspired by plate 58 in James Gibbs's *Book of Architecture* (1728), while Tazewell Hall (c. 1758-62), in Williamsburg, closely resembled the seven-part villa shown on plate 3 of Robert Morris's *Select Architecture* (1755). (Fig. 7) These



Fig. 7. Robert Morris, *Select Architecture* (London, 1755), Plate 3.

two books played a key role in transmitting the image of the five-part Palladian villa to the American colonies and fomented two strands of five-part Palladian residential design in America. The first, houses inspired by Gibbs, usually featured a massive central block with flanking dependencies which were separate buildings brought forward to form a courtyard and sometimes were connected to the main house by narrow, curved walkways called quadrants. The second group, houses inspired by Morris, were strung out along a single axis with the dependencies incorporated into the main body of the house as attached wings. These houses tended to have long façades which resembled a line of boxes.

Battersea is associated with two Virginia houses believed to be derived from plate 3 of Morris's *Select Architecture*: Tazewell Hall and Brandon. (Figs. 8 and 9) Like the illustration, these



Fig. 8. Elevation drawing of Tazewell Hall, Williamsburg, built 1758-1762 (Mills Lane, *Architecture of the Old South: Virginia* [Savannah, 1987], 76).



Fig. 9 Brandon, Prince George County (Calder Loth)

houses had symmetrical seven-part profiles and single-pile plans with a saloon in the central block. Tazewell Hall was one of the first distinctly Palladian houses built in Virginia, erected for John Randolph II, a lawyer, statesman, and older cousin of Thomas Jefferson. Constructed of wood with weatherboard siding, it was longer than the main hall of the College of William and Mary and would have been one of the principal buildings of Williamsburg. With its pedimented portico, it also resembled

Palladio's seven-part design for a Villa of the Ancients as illustrated in his *Four Books*. Brandon, in Prince George County, is the closest surviving stylistic relative of Battersea, although it is also a seven-part house. It was built by Nathaniel Harrison II for his son, Benjamin, over a long period of time: the wings were started around 1750 but the central block was not begun until after 1795. Like Battersea, it was built of brick. Since Benjamin Harrison was one of the "esteemed friends" named by Banister in his will as an executor of his estate, Banister would have been familiar with Brandon.

A search for a direct source for Battersea's design yields few leads. Battersea is not closely modeled after any particular design by either Palladio or Morris. Palladio depicted a number of five-part villa designs in his *Four Books*, such as his design for the Villa Barbaro, but none of these is a close match. Battersea bears a closer family resemblance to plate 3 of Morris's *Select Architecture*, which is most apparent when one views Battersea's rear (north) elevation (Fig. 3), which still retains its original window configuration. Yet the house depicted in plate 3 has seven parts, not five, and contains no enfilades of rooms. The seven-part designs of Tazewell and Brandon, as well as their lack of enfilades, would seem to rule out the possibility of direct parentage.

One candidate is a drawing for a five-part house in plate 19 of William Halfpenny's *A New and Complete System of Architecture* (1749). (Fig. 10) The central block as well as the

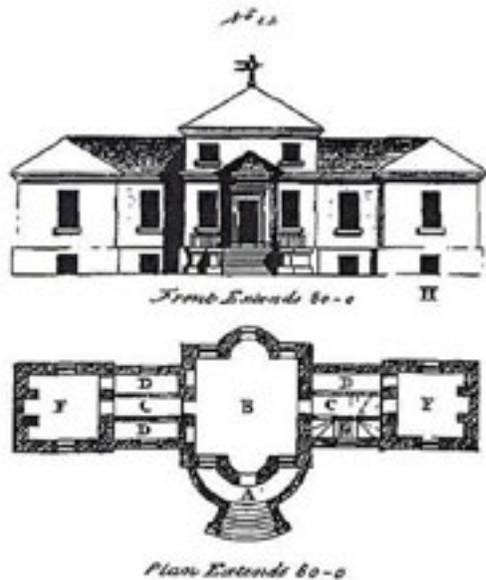


Fig. 10 William Halfpenny, *A New and Complete System of Architecture* (London, 1749), Plate 19.

overall conception of the house appears to be derived from Morris's designs. The Halfpenny illustration represents the closest match to Battersea yet found in a patternbook source, yet there are obvious differences, such as the use of projecting bowed bays on the central block and the proportionally shorter wings.

Another candidate is a tantalizing c. 1770 elevation drawing for a five-part house which is part of the Skipwith family papers

at the Virginia Historical Society. (Fig. 11) This might be a drawing of a lost wood-frame Brandon which was an immediate

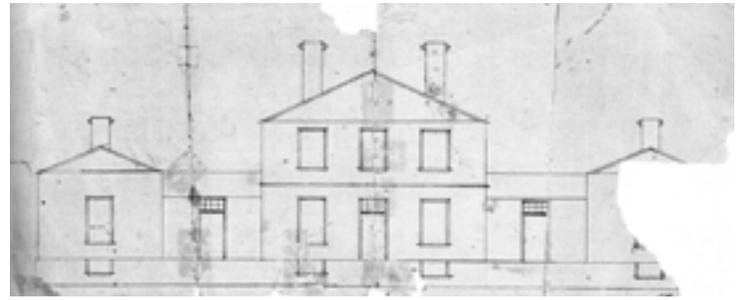


Fig. 11. Unidentified drawing for a 5-part house. (Skipwith Collection, Virginia Historical Society).

neighbor of the larger brick Brandon and which was drawn on an 1810 Mutual Assurance Society policy. Since the date of neither the Skipwith drawing nor the lost Brandon in the 1810 policy is known, it is impossible to say whether these (or the house itself) pre-dated or post-dated Battersea and which may have influenced the other. Interestingly, the central block of both Battersea and the lost Brandon measured 30 by 30 feet. In recent years, another lost five-part Palladian house has come to light: Ryland Randolph's house on Turkey Island overlooking the James River, believed to have been built in the 1760s and destroyed during the Civil War. Excavations of the foundation between 1999 and 2001 indicated that it also had a central block which measured 30 by 30 feet.

In 1823 or 1824, John Fitzhugh May purchased Battersea from Banister's heirs. May served as the representative for Petersburg in the Virginia House of Delegates from 1825 until 1829 and was also a judge of the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals. May gave the house a Federal-style makeover both inside and out; his modifications, however, were entirely cosmetic in nature since the original five-part form and plan of the house were left intact.

On the exterior, May rebuilt all four porticos, replacing Banister's giant south portico with the existing one-story structure. The Roman Doric order May employed was similar to that illustrated in plate 13 of Asher Benjamin's patternbook, *The American Builder's Companion* (1811). May completely reconfigured the fenestration on the south elevation, installing three-part windows on the hyphens and Palladian windows on the pavilions. Additionally, May installed an elaborate fanlight transom and sidelight assembly at the main entrance. Evidence also indicates that he added the exterior stucco. The stucco and Palladian windows greatly enhanced Battersea's original Palladian design and speak to the long afterglow the Palladian Revival enjoyed in America, decades after it had gone out of fashion in England.

On the interior, May updated the formal rooms with finely crafted architectural decoration, including deeply molded plaster ceiling cornices, marble mantels, and finely carved window and door casings. May converted the east hyphen and pavilion into double parlors by bricking in the original doorway between them and opening up a wider, more centrally-positioned doorway with paneled double doors. Since

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later owners focused on introducing modern services and never remodeled, the house looks today much as it did in the 1820s.

Battersea appears to have been derived from the family of houses based upon Morris's plate 3, inspired, in part, by existing buildings like Tazewell or some now-lost prototype. The lost wood-frame Brandon and the Ryland Randolph house were part of the context, but without firmer dates their roles are indeterminate. Battersea's five-part design was probably the idea of a gifted gentleman amateur—someone with an interest

in pure geometric forms who had access to Palladio, Morris, or Halfpenny and who had been to England and admired the enfilades of rooms in English great houses. Battersea represents a refined and original synthesis of ideas from Palladio, Morris, and perhaps Halfpenny, copying none but reinterpreting their ideas within the context of eighteenth-century American vernacular building traditions. The elegant harmony and simplicity of Battersea's symmetrical cross-axial plan and elevations gives it a unity and power which makes it truly unique.

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## Battersea Restoration Progress

by John J Zeugner, AICP  
Battersea Foundation Board Member

*"It is the Virginia landmark at the top of the list of buildings deserving preservation which has not yet been restored"*—

Architectural Historian Calder Loth, speaking of Battersea.

CPSA has been helping save Battersea since 2005, when Leslie Naranjo, Petersburg's preservation planner, invited the Board to tour the site and villa and meet with Petersburg city officials. The city purchased the home of Petersburg's first mayor and its 37 acres on the Appomattox River in 1986 to avoid its sale for redevelopment as a housing subdivision, but it had little funding available for preservation. Shortly after this meeting, CPSA donated \$2,500 (which the city matched) towards restoration efforts and requested that Virginia's Department of Historic Resources elevate Battersea's Historical Register designation to 'nationally significant' because of renewed interest in the influence of Palladio's *Four Books on Architecture* and Anglo-Palladianism on early Virginia architecture. The VDHR complied with this request.

Naranjo and city officials formed a non-profit corporation - Battersea, Inc. (the name was changed to Battersea Foundation (BF) in 2009) - to save the estate while assembling professionals with state-wide preservation connections and extensive experience in saving landmark buildings to comprise a Board of Directors. Since 2006, the Battersea Foundation Board has been raising funds, directing stabilization projects, and exploring future development options to enable Battersea to be self-sustaining. Currently, the BF (which purchased the property in 2011) sponsors several public events and cultural programs on site each year, and its friends continue to research the property's rich, diverse history as well as the social and cultural contributions of the Battersea's various owners.

Stabilization of the villa has been slow due to lack of funds. In the late 2000s, the entire roof and drainage system were repaired, enabling the masonry structure to dry out after decades of water infiltration. Structural consultants Keast and Hood identified the top ten high-priority stabilization needs, and Battersea's Technical Panel reviewed and tweaked their recommendations to match Battersea's unique structure and construction methods.

Recent restoration projects include the reconstruction of the main facade's porch using structural steel, composite materials

(not noticeable from ground level), and custom wooden architectural elements fabricated in Petersburg. Consultants from Colonial Williamsburg advised on the restoration which was based on existing visual evidence, including the configuration of the portico, the appearance of the balustrade, and the proportions of the Doric columns. Ultra-violet-proof window shields (like storm-windows) were also fabricated to protect most of the building's original windows.

The stucco, originally applied in the late 1820s and reapplied over the decades, managed to conceal many of the signs of structural failures, such as problems with the jack arches, lintels and sills of half of the basement windows; several vertical cracks in the walls from the roof to the sub-surface "foundation;" and significant settling at the outside corners of the pavilions. Stabilization work started at the eastern and western pavilions. A Petersburg architectural firm, Enteros Design PC, designed the free-standing buttressing beams which stabilize the bulging exterior walls, where the corners are sinking, of the western pavilion. (Fig. 1) These are anchored by large weights which rest on the ground beside the building rather than being anchored in the ground, which would have required extensive archeological investigation. These buttresses can be reused when stabilization work shifts to the eastern pavilion.



Fig. 1. Free-standing buttressing beams stabilize exterior walls of western pavilion (Zeugner).

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Current restoration work is focused on repairing the basement windows and doorways into the three basements; (Fig. 2) repairing exterior walls and deterioration at first and second



Fig. 2. Repairing basement doorway and ground floor window of eastern pavilion (Zeugner).

floor window openings; strengthening deficiencies in the basement walls; shoring up fireplace hearths; and replacing and/or repairing the foundation's sill-plates and ground floor joists. Much of this work was underwritten by Petersburg's Cameron Foundation. Restoration work has also started in the building's interior. In the entrance foyer, the plaster walls have been repaired and partially painted (to test the color scheme patches with our 2011 paint analysis), the woodwork is being prepared for painting, and the north and south doors have been finished with a faux wood-grain treatment.

The building's obsolete heating system was removed in 2014. A December 2015 gift from a BF Board member will enable electrical power to be routed underground to re-electrify the building and set the stage for temperature and humidity control within the building. Grants will be requested in mid-2016 for the installation of a complete HVAC system with the guidance of the Battersea Technical Panel. Climate control will allow work to proceed inside the building year round, and several preservationists in Petersburg have offered to restore room interiors. Does this effort interest you? Or do you have some 1820s-1830s Virginia furniture that you would like to donate?

Another stabilization project is starting on the site: located just southwest of the villa is a brick greenhouse/orangery, built circa 1835. (Fig. 3) Originally, it had a south-facing wall of windows which are now gone, but there are clear photographs of them. In the early 20th century, the structure was converted into a garage with an entirely open east wall. (Fig. 4) Due to the crude conversion, the constant vibration of trucks and cars, and the building's delicacy, the structure is in on the verge of collapsing.

A \$25,000 grant from the Roller-Bottimore Foundation last year stipulated that \$25,000 in matching funds must be raised. This challenge, too, was accomplished before the end of the

year, and the pro bono draft plan developed by Enteros Design will stabilize and repair the orangery, partially restore the southern window wall and the framing of the door originally in the center, and provide interpretive signage. The Battersea Technical Panel will be visiting the site in late February 2016 to advise on the final scope of work and recommend a clerk of the works. The Battersea Foundation hopes that work will be under way by the time of the annual Revolutionary War reenactment on Battersea's beautiful, virtually unaltered late-18th century landscape on the weekend of April 16 and 17. Please visit our website [batterseafound.org](http://batterseafound.org) for information about this event and to learn more about Battersea. The Battersea Foundation invites you to visit and encourages your interest and support.



Fig. 3. West and south walls of Orangery. Plywood now covers elevation once clad with greenhouse glass; tar-paper covers a large crack (Zeugner).



Fig. 4. East wall of Orangery. Note the segmental arch window on the west (interior) wall; the east wall (now open) probably contained an identical window prior to building's alteration as a garage (Zeugner).

## Book Review

Carroll William Westfall,

*Architecture, Liberty and Civic Order: Architectural Theories from Vitruvius to Jefferson and Beyond.*

Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2015. 220 pp.; 24 b/w illus.; \$104.95

Paul A. Ranogajec

This book is the *summa* of Carroll William Westfall's quest for "an abiding and lasting code of architecture," first broached in his previous book, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism* (Yale, 1991). There is much to criticize in contemporary architecture, but Westfall proposes that we can return to the right order of things by retrieving the purportedly timeless truths expounded in exemplary theoretical works of the classical tradition. He believes that we moderns have been deceived by a pervasive intellectual error he labels "historicism"—an approach to history that denies immutable truth - leading us to "treat buildings as cultural products of an irreversible sequence of disconnected civilizations" (x). Westfall rejects the art-historical method of "posing questions about the relations between objects, their makers, their users, and the relationship of all of those to social processes." Instead of historical difference, Westfall proposes first principles which individual agents accept or reject.

The book's fundamental proposition, based on natural law theory, is that the True, Good, and Beautiful are knowable by everyone through the right use of reason in accord with nature, from which certain moral and other principles, including those governing architecture, are derived. Natural law theory holds that nature endows us with a unitary and decisive capacity for reason, and that, properly deployed, this gives all people access to an objective understanding of universal principles. Westfall sees natural law as the foundation of classicism, and he develops this into two axiomatic premises: classical architecture imitates nature so as "to serve the enduring, human quest for the beautiful in things made, the good in things done, and the true in things known" (3), and it contributes to "the civil order that imitates nature's moral content as it facilitates the citizens' pursuit of happiness" (177). He summons Cicero (via Alexander Hamilton) to censure those readers who might resist his claims: "only disorder, strong self-interest, passion, or prejudice can refuse assent to any of this" (109). Duly chastised, the reader is left with a stark moral dualism: good, eternal classicism, or bad, contingent modernism. Westfall's conception of historicism, and much of his natural law, comes straight from Leo Strauss, who condemned modern historical understanding for insisting that the situatedness of our knowledge denies access to eternal truths that he believed are otherwise plainly available to reason. For Strauss,

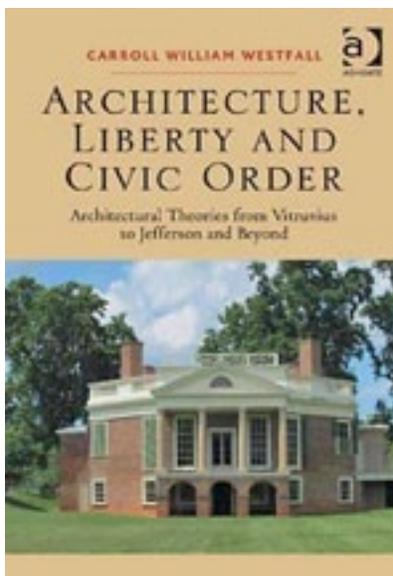
this meant a descent into nihilism. Westfall's revanchist architectural solution runs parallel to Strauss' return to Platonic metaphysics. The imperative is to restore the imitation of nature's eternal order, which Westfall considers the true basis of the classical tradition: this is what "the classic treatises on architecture teach" (ix). By reading these treatises today, we are to retrieve these truths and "luxuriate in perceiving beauty in architecture and receiving happiness" (51). The historiographical approach is not just one of radical continuity; it is one of a historical, cosmic certainty: the great figures of classicism were truly avatars of an eternal, binding truth that we moderns have foolishly jettisoned.

This bundle of metaphysical, epistemological, and historical problems is abetted by further difficulties: the book never fully accounts for the connection among the elements in its title (liberty, in its most abstract, arch-conservative guise, makes only a few fleeting appearances); it posits reductive and monolithic conceptions of nature, historicism, and modernism; and its unleavened hostility to everything the author

considers modernist quickly becomes tedious.

The central and longest part of the book presents four episodes of exemplary classical theory in the writings of Vitruvius, Leon Battista Alberti, Andrea Palladio, and Thomas Jefferson. Unfortunately, the anti-historicist polemic and natural law absolutism flattens the historical record into four equal moments of paradigmatic clarity: these theorists really articulated the enduring truth about architecture. For Westfall, Vitruvius was the founder of classicist theory, Alberti and Palladio were its modernizers, and Jefferson was its exponent in the New World. A formula quickly emerges for these chapters: exemplary theorist X shows how the "classical triplet of reason, judgment, and nature" (27) is the source of enduring beauty in architecture.

Thus, Vitruvius' theory of imitation "provides the method for producing a building with the symmetry and eurhythmy that makes visible the order, harmony, and proportionality of the cosmos" (19). Alberti reveals how "the reason that allows all people to perceive beauty is the very quality that they share as a part of their human nature ... and that gives each individual the unique status of being a microcosm of God's cosmic creation where beauty resides" (29). Palladio transmitted Alberti's ideas about "proportionality



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and the unity of diverse parts, beauty, and the roles of imitation, nature, reason, tradition, and lineaments to those in successive generations who were equipped to grasp its content” (69). And Jefferson was a citizen-architect who “kept architecture on its classical track running parallel with law within a tradition where law was guided by precedents, architecture by models, and innovations adapted both to serve new circumstances in constantly vitalizing traditions guided by the lodestars of the good and the beautiful” (125-26). Despite some keen observations, these chapters suffer from the dogged pursuit of one seamless foundation and continuous lineage for classicism.

Before reaching Jefferson, there are two irredeemably flawed chapters about classicism “on the continent” and “west of the Channel,” respectively. To Westfall, the classical tradition began to disintegrate in the late Renaissance. In continental Europe, architecture took an emulative path of merely copying precedents, based on a corrupted Vitruvianism, Sebastiano Serlio’s image-based treatise, and Giorgio Vasari’s academic model of artistic training. These developments precipitated the proliferation of design abuses “unanchored by governing that the imitation of nature imposes.” With Claude Perrault’s idea of customary beauty, classical theory’s “demolition was complete” (81-82). This pernicious relativism opened the way to Claude-Nicolas Ledoux’s and Étienne-Louis Boullée’s “bloviated buildings . . . sublimely unbound by reason” and the nineteenth century’s “ventriloquist dummies” (88-89). Also implicated, inexplicably, is the French Revolution, which sealed the fate of continental classicism. Here Westfall is a reactionary Burkean: “When people as a mass rejected that authority [of traditional law] they became atheistic regicidal mobs” (97)!

Meanwhile, Britain’s common law, “founded on necessary truths . . . congruent with our human nature and the nature of things that we extract by using moral reasoning,” served as “ballast” for that nation’s adherence to classicism (99). The British colonies of North America, and then the new American nation, followed Britain’s lead in confirming those truths. This Straussian School view of the American founding, wholly unsupported by the best scholarship on the topic, insists that the country “is some sort of propositional nation constituted . . . by a set of tenets needing constant promulgation,” in the justly skeptical words of one commentator.

Westfall’s historical fantasy reaches its apotheosis in his treatment of Jefferson. Here it becomes clear that, despite the book’s otherwise adamantly universal perspective, the aim is to articulate a specifically American architectural theory congruent with the Straussian view of the American founding: it is a project “to restore Jeffersonianism to American architecture” (147). The biggest of many problems here is that Jefferson was no architectural or urban theorist. His scattered

references to architecture do not amount to a theory, and his Academical Village is best seen in the context of his vision of education, not of his rudimentary ideas about cities.

The book’s ruthlessly severe natural law approach obscures its important insight: “architecture serves the ends of politics by building cities” (19). This is crucial, even if one cannot follow Westfall in making it architecture’s all-encompassing purpose. Supporting his principle is an appeal to the language of civic priority as well as an understanding of building type and decorum to regulate classicism’s formal legibility, principles especially apparent in Palladio. This stands in stark contrast to the hubris and vacuous theatrics coursing through contemporary architecture. But instead of showing how “the duty of a building is the same as that of a citizen” (21), or what the “good city” might be like, Westfall proffers unsupported assertions and contentious metaphysical theory. The attempt to naturalize classicism ironically makes it more vulnerable: the skeptical critic can reject the appeal to reason based in immutable nature, dismissing classicism as the antiquated obsession of dogmatists.

Architecture attests to the contestation involved in building human societies. None of that struggle is apparent in the book’s tidy moralistic polemic. It is true that some architectural solutions are better than others; some do stand the test of time. Unquestionably, classicism has played a large part in those solutions. Specious natural law arguments, however, cannot make sense of architecture’s significance in the past and do not bolster the case for classicism today. Westfall wants to restore the order and beauty he imagines the world to have possessed before its modern corruption, but classicism cannot stand on reductive claims to a single “solution of the cosmic jigsaw puzzle,” as Isaiah Berlin put it. To be vital today, classicism must help engender that common horizon of citizenship which is our own only firewall against the pervasive neoliberal rationality eroding every part of the democratic ethos. Unfortunately, Westfall’s reactionary understanding of civic order, complete with reference to the Great Chain of Being, that traditional formula of social and political hierarchy, leaves classicism with nothing to offer the pursuit of justice. Aldo Rossi once wrote that “Platonic speculation” had led architecture to an abstract “theology of the beautiful,” whereas “in true classicism . . . the normative rules themselves will have life as a model and not as an a priori position.” *Architecture, Liberty and Civic Order* proposes a Platonic theology of classicism. Straussians and natural law jurists can luxuriate in the timeless truths they perceive in this text, but few others will be persuaded.

***Mr. Ranogajec is an independent art and architectural historian with a Ph.D. from the City University of New York. He learned classical architectural design at the University of Notre Dame.***

## CPSA To Publish A Book On Barboursville



Barboursville Vineyards, Inc. and an anonymous donor are sponsoring a publication on Barboursville, the ruinous Orange County mansion designed by Thomas Jefferson. New evidence on the development of the design has recently come to light and will enrich of story of this intriguing site. Dr. Craig Reynolds, Museum Director at the Branch Museum of Architecture and Design is the author. CPSA board member Calder Loth is serving as editor and special contributor. The book will be the second work in the CPSA Mario di Valmarana Memorial Series. Publication is expected in 2017.

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## Saturday and Sunday, 16-17 April 2016

The Center for Palladian Studies in America is offering a Field Trip by bus of significant buildings in the Winchester area, conducted by MARAL S. KALBIAN, architectural historian, with K. EDWARD LAY, Professor Emeritus of Architecture at UVA, and CALDER LOTH, retired Senior Historian of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. The two-day itinerary includes 18th- and 19th-century Neoclassical houses that demonstrate a variety of architectural styles, such as:

**Glen Burnie (c. 1790), Winchester.**  
**Carter Hall (c. 1790), Millwood.**  
**Clermont (1756), Berryville.**  
**Annfield (c. 1790), Berryville.**

**The Tuleyries (c. 1833), Millwood.**  
**Long Branch (c. 1811), Millwood.**  
**Burwell Mill (c. 1785), Millwood.**  
**Clifton (1833), Berryville.**

The price of the tour includes admission to Glen Burnie well as a box lunch on Sunday. Hotel accommodations, all other meals, and transportation to and from Winchester must be arranged by the participants. Participation is open to 40 persons; registration is due by April 1, 2016. The fee for CPSA members is \$150 per person; the fee for non-members is \$195, which includes automatic membership enrollment. To register, please email: [contact@palladiancenter.org](mailto:contact@palladiancenter.org)



Carter Hall (c. 1790), Millwood



Tuleyries (c. 1833), Millwood

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