

Farmington Icehouse *Renovated for Reuse*

Blake McDonald

Farmington Country Club outside of Charlottesville offers architecture enthusiasts a unique collection of buildings to study. A former plantation converted to a country club community in 1929, the property consists of a rolling golf course planned by renowned designer Fred Findlay dotted with homes built by prominent 20th-century architects including Stanhope Johnson and Marshall Swain Wells.

The clubhouse occupies a late 18th-century dwelling with additions designed by Thomas Jefferson, most notably an octagonal wing with a pedimented Tuscan portico and bullseye windows.¹ While numerous publications underscore the architectural significance of the clubhouse and surrounding residences, past efforts overlook many other important aspects of the property, one of which, the icehouse, is the subject of this essay.

Over the past two decades, the Farmington Country Club Historical Society undertook several studies to better understand the architectural evolution of the property and identify spaces and structures left out of earlier investigations. The icehouse is one of these, among the last

surviving service buildings dating to Farmington's antebellum period. A recent restoration funded by the historical society provides the perfect opportunity to share the history of this distinctive structure.



Jefferson's addition to original Farmington dwelling
Photo courtesy of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources

The Farmington icehouse stands approximately 150 feet north of the clubhouse. While the close proximity of the icehouse to the façade of the former dwelling may strike modern viewers as unusual, the location of the icehouse corresponds to period specifications on the siting of such structures. A widely circulated essay published by Maryland farmer Thomas Moore in 1803, for example, states that “the most favorable situation” for an icehouse is the top of a north facing hill.² The form of the Farmington icehouse also

conforms to early 19th-century guidance on the subject.

The circular icehouse measures approximately 17 feet in diameter, with two-foot thick rubble stone walls and a 15-foot deep pit. An opening on the north side of the icehouse, currently filled by a set of screened doors, provides access to the interior. In these

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The Barboursville Ruins and Winery

2021 Annual Meeting Meeting

JOHN J. ZEUGNER, ACIP, PRESIDENT



John J. Zeugner

CPSA members gathered in October for our annual meeting, held at Barboursville Vineyards in Orange County. The property is part of the original 5000-acre plantation of Governor James Barbour, 1775-1842, and preserves the ruins of Barbour's home, designed by Thomas Jefferson. The ruins will be the subject of a book by CPSA board member Bryan Clarke Green, focusing on the evolution of Barboursville's design.

Jefferson sent Barbour his drawings for an elevation and plans for the house in 1817. The house was completed in 1822, save for a planned dome. Barbour died in 1842, and his house was gutted by fire in 1884, leaving only its brick walls. Bryan gave an engaging on-site lecture to the members, explaining the architecture and history of the house. He and Calder Loth then led the members on a tour of the ruins and grounds.

In 1975, the University of Virginia School of Architecture hired a young Italian architect, Mario di Valmarana to teach design and historic preservation and to build a study-abroad program. Mario's influence within the University and the A-School was inestimable, and he also was a founder of the CPSA.

Not as well-known was Mario's belief that the rolling hills of Virginia's Piedmont closely resembled his native Veneto. He discussed



Barboursville Ruins

Photo by Bryan Clark Green

the opportunities for growing grapes in Virginia with several Italian vintners and convinced one family, the Zonins in Tuscany, to investigate the property with its Palladian-style ruin. Whether it was love at first sight for founder Gianni Zonin or Mario's ebullient enthusiasm for this agricultural opportunity, the enterprise started. Today, Barboursville Vineyards is well known for its Palladio Restaurant and its fine wines, which our group enjoyed along with a wide variety of hors d'oeuvres following the meeting.

Palladians, we appreciate your support, hope you will stay well, and that soon, we can meet again for education and fellowship. ■

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NEWSLETTER CREDITS

EDITOR

Calder Loth

COPY EDITOR

Kay Slaughter

DESIGN

Anne Chesnut

PRINTER

Mid Valley Press

CONTACT

MAILING ADDRESS

Center for Palladian Studies in America

PO Box 4754

Charlottesville VA 22905

VISIT

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palladiancenter.org

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Baltimore's *Architectural Treasures*

Calder Loth

Baltimore features a splendid assemblage of architectural landmarks, and CPSA members spent a November weekend viewing a number of these structures.

Visited first was Mount Clare, a 1760s Georgian plantation house, built for Charles Carroll, a relative of the signer of the Declaration of Independence and located in the heart of the city

The façade of the center section is dominated by a projecting pavilion of Doric columns supporting a porch chamber highlighted by a handsome Palladian window. Mount Clare's opposite side overlooks an impressive series of earth terraces that were part of the original garden. The building preserves and showcases a fine collection of Baltimore portraits and furniture.

Following Mount Clare, the group was given lunch and a tour of the Mount Vernon Club, housed in a Greek Revival town house on Mount Vernon Place, the City's cultural and historic center.

Local historian Charles Duff escorted the group on a tour of Baltimore's Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virginia Mary. Built between 1806 and 1821, the basilica is architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe's masterpiece. This voluminous domed edifice was the nation's first Roman Catholic Cathedral. The lean classicism of its interior exhibits the influence of British architect Sir John Soane.

Just a block away, the group viewed Baltimore's 1818 First Unitarian Church, designed by the French-trained architect



Mount Clare
Photo by Calder Loth



Baltimore Basilica
Photo by Calder Loth



Submissions

Have you got research or an article about Palladio and the influence of his work on American architecture? Have you read a book about the subject you'd like to review? Do you know about new exhibits or symposia on Palladian architecture? Please write to us about submitting articles to *Palladiana*.

Our deadline for the fall 2022 issue is August 1, and we appreciate early submittal of potential articles of no more than 1000 words. Please contact our administrator Kay Slaughter at palladianstudies@gmail.com if you have a piece you might submit.



Interior of the George Peabody Library

Photograph by Matthew Petroff

Wikipedia, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:George-peabody-library.jpg

Maximilien Godefroy. The church's dome, which dominates the exterior, was originally expressed on the interior. However, it was hidden from view in the late-19th century when a barrel vault was inserted beneath the dome to improve acoustics.

The George Peabody Library on Mount Vernon Place, with its amazing interior, ended the Saturday excursion. Completed in 1878, this staggering space as well as the building's exterior was designed by Baltimore architect Edmund G. Lind.

Evergreen, which had its origins as a mid-19th century suburban villa, welcomed the group on Sunday. Following its purchase in 1878 by John W. Garrett, President of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, it was expanded into a 48-room Gilded Age mansion. Now called the Evergreen Museum and Library, the interior preserves the Garrett family furnishings and numerous works of

art. The mansion's John Work Garrett Library of rare books, a branch of the Johns Hopkins University Department of Special Collections, contains early editions of Palladio's *The Four Books on Architecture*, which the group had the privilege of viewing.

Homewood, the 1808 Federal-period home of Charles Carroll, Jr. now part of the campus of Johns Hopkins University, was the final spot on the tour. The dwelling's five-part Palladian format is expressed in the delicate Neoclassicism style of Robert and James Adam.

The handsomely furnished interior of Homewood serves as a museum for which CPSA vice-president and guide, Judith Proffitt long served as program coordinator. The group ended the weekend with special thanks to Judith for arranging this tour of Baltimore's foremost architectural landmarks. ■



First Unitarian Church
Photo by Calder Loth



Evergreen Museum and Library
Photo by Calder Loth



Homewood
Photo by Calder Loth

Future Trips and Tours?

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Local

After the successful trip to Baltimore in November, CPSA is considering other journeys, both locally and abroad. We would love to get your input.

- Philadelphia is a possibility.
- We would also welcome recommended trips within Virginia.
- And we are considering holding our 2022 annual membership meeting this summer in Richmond or Petersburg.

Do you have suggestions for specific sites in these cities?

Email palladianstudies@gmail.com

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Abroad

The Northern England trip postponed from 2020 has been rescheduled to October 10-19, 2022. Based on 15 participants, the tour will cost £6,100 per person/double room, and £6,850/single, including daily breakfast, three lunches, and six dinners with wine, water, and coffee; services of lecturer Michael Douglas-Scott; and excluding airfare. Higher costs are due to availability of space and prevailing costs. For more details or to reserve, contact palladianstudies@gmail.com.

Trips

The Palladian Arch

Its Origins and Appearance in America

Calder Loth

The so-called Palladian Arch, the most ubiquitous of Palladian motifs, can be seen most anywhere in this country, even in the loft window of a stable converted to a beauty parlor. It consists of a round-top arch flanked by two narrower flat-topped openings. Palladio didn't invent the form; the Romans used it. A restored depiction of a section of the Aqueduct of Hadrian, a Roman work in Greece, dates from around 140 AD.

The form has been called other names: a *serliana* and a Venetian arch, but in this country it is generally referred to as a Palladian arch or Palladian window. The term, *serliana*, derives from Sebastiano Serlio, a predecessor of Palladio who published several designs for Venetian palazzos featuring the motif. However, it is uncertain whether any of these were built.

Palladio is rightly credited for popularizing the motif, mainly through an illustration in Book 3 of his treatise, *The Four Books on Architecture*. The illustration shows the two levels of arcades he designed to screen the medieval basilica in Vicenza.

So how did the so-called Palladian arch get to be known in this country? Certainly, during our colonial period, few people owned Palladio's treatise. Yet the motif graces prominent colonial buildings such as Mount Pleasant in Philadelphia.

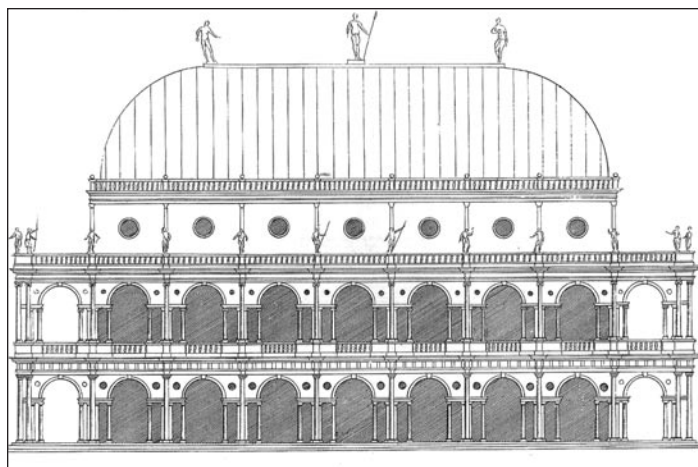
The likely sources for the details on such works were the numerous pattern books and builders' manuals produced in quantity in the 18th century by English architects. For example, an English pattern book widely used in the American colonies was William Halfpenny's *Practical Architecture*, which offers specific instructions for designing what the British called a Venetian arch. This and many similar publications facilitated the application of the motif on numerous colonial buildings, including even our most famous colonial edifice: Independence Hall.

During the Federal period, the popularity of the Palladian window probably received a nudge from an illustration in Owen Biddle's *Young Carpenter's Assistant* published in 1805, in Philadelphia. Biddle's was the second architectural pattern book written and published in the United States.¹ It was inexpensive and widely distributed in at least three editions.



Stable Window, Fan District, Richmond VA

Photo by Calder Loth



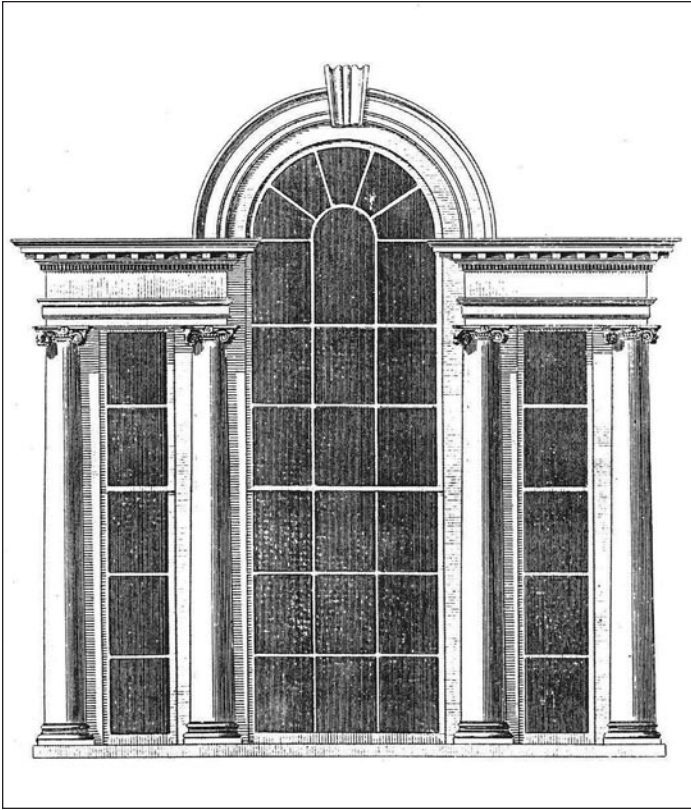
Vicenza Basilica

Andrea Palladio, Book 3, *The Four Books on Architecture*, 1570



Aqueduct of Hadrian

Stuart & Revett, Book III, *The Antiquities of Athens*, 1794



Palladian Window

Owen Biddle, *Young Carpenter's Assistant*



Mount Pleasant, East Fairmount Park, Philadelphia

Photo by Calder Loth

The Palladian motif was used infrequently during mid-19th century but regained popularity during the American Renaissance movement of the late-19th century. This motif highlights the luscious façade of the Century Association built 1888–91 in New York City and designed by Stanford White. Forty-four years later, the Palladian arch created a handsome portico for the University of Virginia's Fine Arts Museum, now The Fralin Museum of Art at UVA, designed by Edmund Campbell in 1935.

So be on the lookout for it, and feel free to send *Palladiana* photos of interesting and widespread examples. ■

Calder Loth, architectural historian, excerpted this short essay from his presentation on "Palladio in America," one of a series of lectures broadcast recently by the British Architectural Library Trust. The lectures focus on works held by the Royal Institute of British Architects and commemorate the completion of a reassessment of all Palladio drawings in the RIBA collection. Recordings may be accessed at thebaltrust.org/events/



The Fralin Museum of Art at UVA

Photo by Calder Loth

¹ The first pattern book published in the United States was Asher Benjamin's *Country Builder's Assistant*, Greenfield, Mass., 1797.



Icehouse modified as a pavilion, 1952
Photo courtesy of Farmington Country Club Historical Society Archives

Continued from page 1.

basic dimensions, the icehouse pit mirrors many contemporary facilities, including nearby icehouses at Birdwood, Monticello, and Edgemont.³

While the exact date of the icehouse's construction remains unclear, former owners George and Martha Divers most likely added the structure around the turn of the 19th-century. The Divers purchased Farmington in 1785 and transformed the property from an agricultural outpost to a highly productive plantation with an elaborate home from which they frequently entertained guests.⁴ An inventory prepared upon the death of George Divers in 1830 includes several ice cream molds and presses.⁵ The presence of these tools indicates the availability of ice during warm weather months and therefore suggest the existence of an icehouse on the property by at least 1830.



Icehouse prior to restoration, 2018
Photo by author



Restored icehouse, September 2021

Photo courtesy of Farmington Country Club

Given Thomas Jefferson's enthusiasm for his own icehouse at Monticello, it is plausible that Jefferson either encouraged Divers, with whom he corresponded frequently, to build an icehouse or perhaps oversaw its construction while the main house was being renovated and expanded.

The recent restoration of the icehouse provides a final clue in dating the structure. After touring the property, stone mason Shelton Sprouse positively identified the stone in the low walls of the icehouse as a match to the stone found in the cellar walls of the original, ca. 1785 portion of Farmington's former dwelling. This match implies the icehouse may have been built soon after the original dwelling, perhaps before Jefferson's additions, using excess stone from the house or a nearby quarry.⁶

The Divers would have used their icehouse to elevate the quality and increase the variety of the meals served at Farmington. The icehouse permitted the preservation of foods like butter, milk, cheese, and fish, which were generally stored in troughs dug into the top of the ice. In the summer, salads, meat dishes, and wine could be chilled in the icehouse prior to being served at the dining table.⁷ The production of ice cream and sorbet, highly fashionable in early 19th-century America, required ice from the icehouse in order to set in the molds listed in George Divers 1830 inventory. The icehouse enabled the Divers to exhibit their wealth by serving

fresh, fashionable, and often elaborate meals inspired by continental culinary trends.

The process of filling the icehouse with enough ice and snow to last through a Virginia summer required a significant output of labor. Jefferson provided an account of this task in a 1806 letter to overseer Edmund Bacon where he described the need for two wagons and several men to collect ice for four days in order to fill the Monticello icehouse.⁸ The effort necessary to maintain an icehouse furnishes a reminder of the large enslaved community that once toiled at Farmington. Records indicate that Divers owned well over 100 enslaved individuals in the early 1800s, and their forced labor made possible both the operation of the icehouse as well as the fine cuisine that relied on its presence.⁹

The Farmington icehouse, as it stands today, presents as a 20th-century renovation dating to its conversion to a country club community. Above the original pit and low stone walls, heavy timber framing and conical roof date to ca. 1930.¹⁰ These alterations, in addition to a wood slat floor over the original pit, modified the service building to function as a pavilion overlooking the newly graded golf course.

These changes align to a detailed plan for the Farmington club grounds drawn up by landscape architect Earle Sumner Draper in 1927 and executed by architect Edmund Campbell over the



View within restored icehouse,
original stone walls and trapdoor to ice pit
Photo courtesy of Farmington Country Club

following several years.¹¹ While substantially changing the appearance of the icehouse, the nearly century-old alterations to the structure illustrate the transition from a working plantation to a country club and set the structure apart as an unusual early example of adaptive reuse.

The recent restoration of the Farmington icehouse included rebuilding the decayed 1930s framing, recladding the roof in wood shingles, and outfitting the space with electricity to serve

as an outdoor event venue.¹² These improvements make the icehouse functional for a new generation of club members and visitors. In its restored form, the icehouse is the perfect place to reflect upon a history of Farmington that extends beyond the established narrative to encompass ongoing discoveries at this fascinating property. ■

Blake McDonald studied architectural history at Connecticut College and the University of Virginia and works at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources as architectural survey and cost share program manager. He travels throughout the Commonwealth supporting the stewardship of Virginia's diverse past.

- 1 Madison Reid Spencer, Jr., *Farmington Historic District Preliminary Information Form* (Richmond: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2009) Accessed January 10, 2022, <https://vcris.dhr.virginia.gov/>.
- 2 Thomas Moore, *An Essay on the Most Eligible Construction of Ice-Houses* (Baltimore: Bonsal and Niles, 1803), 11.
- 3 Mesick, Cohen, Wilson, Baker Architects, *Farmington Country Club, Original Structures, Historic Structures Report* (Albany, NY: Mesick, Cohen, Wilson, Baker Architects, 2016), 54. William Garth, *Birdwood Ice House, U.S. Route 250 West, Charlottesville*. Historic American Buildings Survey Measured Drawings (Washington: Library of Congress) Accessed January 10, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/item/va1077/>.
- 4 Michael J. Broome, *Farmington Country Club: Extraordinary People in a Remarkable Place* (Charlottesville: Farmington Country Club, 2003), 12, 17.
- 5 Inventoried Will of George Divers, June 18, 1830, Albemarle County, VA, Book 10, page 83, Albemarle County Register of Deeds, Charlottesville, VA.
- 6 Sheldon Sprouse, conversation with the author, September 2021.
- 7 Lucia C. Stanton, *"Those Who Labor for My Happiness": Slavery at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 1.
- 8 "Thomas Jefferson Explorer: Ice House." Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. January 10, 2022, <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/ice-house>.
- 9 Inventoried Will of George Divers.
- 10 Mesick, Cohen, Wilson, Baker Architects, 54. City Mortgage and Insurance Company, Inc., *A Proposal of Insurance for Farmington, Inc. and Farmington Country Club* (Charlottesville, VA: City Mortgage and Insurance Company, Inc., 1952), n.p.
- 11 Earl Sumner Draper. "General Plan for Farmington." Map, ca. 1927. Edmund S. Campbell, *Farmington Country Club Inc. 1929, floor plan*, Folder: University of Virginia Architectural drawings, 1911-1948, Accession #6846-cf, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, VA.
- 12 Chris Combs, "Telling a New Story: Bringing the Farmington Ice House Back to Life," *Farmington Country Club Focus Magazine*, Fall 2021, 11.



Membership Dollars at Work

In another matter, your CPSA dues and contributions have helped to continue support for a UVA architecture student's study. Because students could not travel abroad this past fall due to Covid, CPSA selected a student researching in the US. Robert Edwards, a recent graduate with a Master of Arts in Architectural History, requested support to continue research on the preservation of the Palladio's work. Robert, who had served on the City of Charlottesville's Board of Architectural Review while he was pursuing his studies, now has a fellowship with The Decorative Arts Trust.

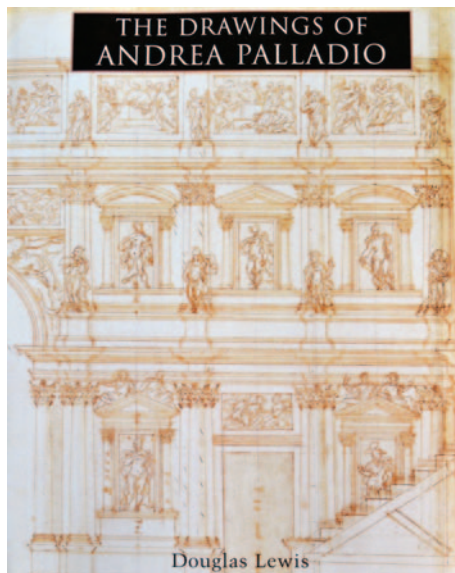
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