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In furtherance of its goals, the Center organizes symposia, lectures, and study tours on Palladian subjects, publishes books and periodicals, sponsors exhibitions, and makes grants to scholars and others.

## CENTER FOR PALLADIAN STUDIES IN AMERICA



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## CPSA Tours Petersburg, Brandon

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tour were the High Street historic district (early 1800s and thereafter), the Petersburg Courthouse complex (1840), Washington Street Church (1842), and the City Market (1879).

CPSA directors Warren J. Cox and John J. Zeugner, who organized the tour with assistance from director Helen Scott Reed, offered knowledgeable comments on the development of the Greek Revival

style in America and on the status of preservation efforts in the Petersburg area.

From Petersburg the tour moved on to Brandon (1765), the Daniel family estate on the banks of the James River in Prince George County, Virginia. Mrs. Robert Daniel conducted the group on a personal tour through her home. CPSA director Charles E. Brownell added comments on the relationship of Brandon to the Plate 3 design in Robert Morris, *Select Architecture* (London, 1755).

## 27 Years of Service

### CPSA's Record of Support for Study of American Palladianism

For more than 27 years CPSA has provided its members a vehicle for appreciating and learning more about how Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio changed the way the world looks today. CPSA has offered a diverse program for members at all levels of knowledge and interest.

Its activities have included focused group tours to the Veneto region of Italy to visit the villas, churches and palaces designed by Palladio himself, and to Germany and England for examples of European Palladianism. Tours in America have visited Palladian-inspired homes and other structures in Virginia, South Carolina and Louisiana.

Publications by CPSA include the *Building by the Book* series (three vols., 1984, 1986, 1990) edited by Mario di Valmarana; *Bremo: The Establishment of a Virginia Plantation* (1988), by C. Allan Brown; and *Palladio and America: Selected Papers Presented to the Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura* (1997), edited by Christopher Weeks. Grants have been made in support of Bryan Clark Green's *In Jefferson's Shadow: The Architecture of Thomas R. Blackburn* (2006) and Douglas Lewis' projected *Villa Cornaro at Piombino*. Other recent CPSA grants have supported the Virginia Historical Society's 2006 exhibition "In Jefferson's Shadow: The Architecture of Thomas Blackburn" and a study of Battersea, the important 1768 Palladian home in Petersburg, Virginia.

CPSA co-sponsors Virginia Commonwealth University's annual architectural history symposia and offers its own program of symposia, lectures and newsletters at regular intervals. In addition, this is the second issue of its new journal, *Palladiana*.

*CPSA is dependent upon its membership, and your participation is invited. Please encourage other interested individuals to become members as well.*

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# PALLADIANA

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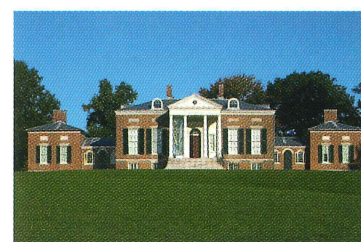
Spring 2007

## CENTER FOR PALLADIAN STUDIES IN AMERICA



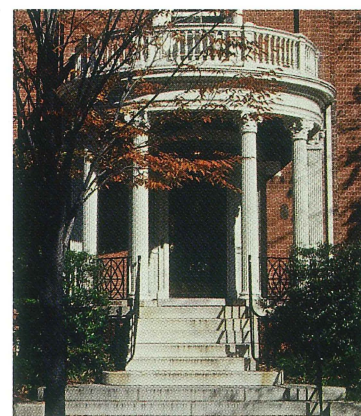
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Brandon, Prince George's County, Virginia (c. 1765)

## CPSA Tours Brandon, Battersea, Petersburg Greek Revival Sites

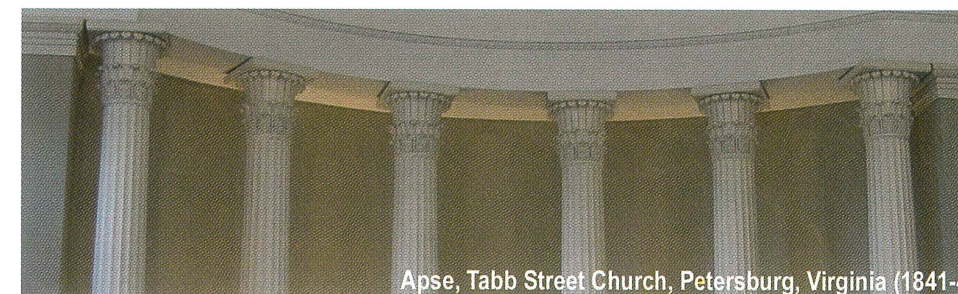
A blue-ribbon delegation of Petersburg, Virginia, political and cultural leaders headed by Mayor Annie M. Mickens greeted the CPSA fall tour in November 2006 when it arrived for a private visit to Battersea, one of the tour's headline stops.

The challenge of rescuing the endangered 1768 mansion was detailed in the last issue of *Palladiana*, and Mayor Mickens and her colleagues made clear Petersburg's appreciation of the assistance that CPSA has provided

to the rescue efforts. Historian Willie J. Graham led a careful tour through the influential structure on the bluffs above the Appomattox River.

The morning in Petersburg also included hosted tours of Tabb Street Presbyterian Church (1841-4) and the Exchange Building (c. 1839), now home to Petersburg's Siege Museum. Both buildings are exciting examples of Greek Revival architecture in America. Among other Petersburg sights on the

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Aps, Tabb Street Church, Petersburg, Virginia (1841-4)



# New Study Documents Blend of Palladian Ratios with Adam Neoclassicism

By Jeffrey E. Klee

Homewood was constructed in 1801 on a 130-acre tract outside Baltimore by Charles Carroll, Jr., to serve as a country retreat for himself and his new bride. His father, a Maryland signer of the Declaration of Independence and one of America's richest men, provided the funds for the ever-escalating cost of construction, though not always with a happy spirit. The structure is organized on a five-part plan, with symmetrical hyphens and wings flanking the central core.

Subsequent growth of Baltimore enveloped the property. In 1902 Homewood was acquired by Johns Hopkins University, which has opened it to the public as a museum since 1987.

This article is excerpted from "Palladian Proportions at Homewood," a study prepared for Homewood House Museum.

I have approached the problem of finding Palladio at Homewood with some skepticism. I have taken on the task because it offers a chance to revisit an old problem from a new perspective. Questions of proportion and system—of whatever origin—allow us to address the complexities of the architectural design process in early America. Furthermore, if Palladio turned up anywhere in North America in the early period, surely it

would be here, at one of the finest houses on the eastern seaboard.

Our first convincing evidence of Palladian principles is in that most abstract part of the house, its plan. The proportions of the main rooms confirm the sense that Palladio, or at least his notions of planning, do indeed haunt this house. Like his insistence on symmetry, Palladio's recommendations for room proportion were simple and tersely expressed. In a single sentence, he identified seven ideal relationships between the length and width of rooms: 1 to 1, or a square; a circle; 1 to 1½; 1 to the square root of two, or about 1.41; 1 to 1½; 1 to 1¾; and 1 to 2. He adds that, for rectangular rooms with flat ceilings, the height of the room should equal its breadth. [note 1] Unlike his extended discussion of the five orders, he does not elaborate on why those relationships are preferable, though Wittkower suggested that they derived from Renaissance notions of ideal harmonic and geometric relationships [note 2]. Whether Charles Carroll understood such theoretical arcana is unimportant. But it does indeed appear that he meant to follow Palladio's recommendations in planning his principal rooms. [See Fig. 2.]

The entry hall is 16 feet wide from plaster wall to plaster wall, by 22 feet, 8 inches deep. The ratio of length to width, therefore, is 1.412, within 2 thousandths of the square root of 2, one of Palladio's recommended ratios for room dimensions. In this, as in the other principal rooms, the ceiling is 13 feet above the floor, 3 feet shy of the much taller Palladian prescription for height, which was ignored throughout the house. The two rooms on either side of the entry are each approximately 16 feet, 10 inches wide by 22 feet, 9 inches deep, or about 1 to 1.35, less than 2 hundredths variance from the ideal relationship of 1 to 1-

Continued on page 3



Fig. 1. Homewood (1800), on the campus of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland.

## Palladio and the Convex Porch

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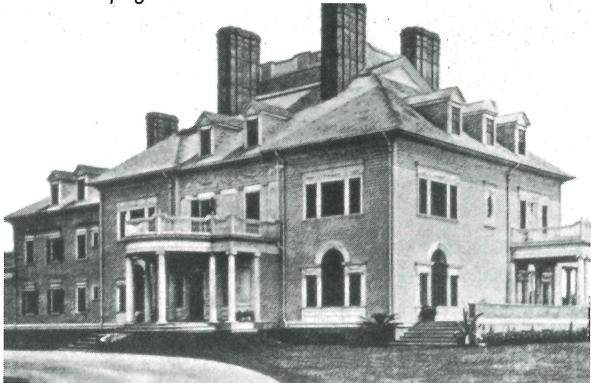


Fig. 7. H. A. C. Taylor House, Newport, R. I., finished 1886. McKim, Mead, and White, architects.

firms at the turn of the century. The Taylor House was one of the defining buildings on the Colonial Revival side of the American Renaissance. Notions of what was Colonial were (and remain) cheerfully vague. In fact, McKim, Mead, & White's rounded portico was not a revival of anything Colonial; the firm revived the kind of Neoclassical porch that Bulfinch had popularized.

The influence of the Taylor house and of American Neoclassicism soon made itself felt. Thus, the major American architectural journal *American Architect and Building News* began publishing illustrations of late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century American houses with convex porticoes in the 1880s — indeed, this journal is one major source of information about Bulfinch's Perez Morton House (Fig. 4), which the *American Architect* published in 1886. The journal's editor, William Rotch Ware, later republished the illustrations in a popular book, *The Georgian Period* (1899-1902; rev. ed. 1923). It is no surprise to see American architects using the porch in question on Colonial Revival facades as of the 1890s (Fig. 1). In the early twentieth century the convex portico would become a familiar sight in the United States, in countless variations. The renewal of Classicism in the later twentieth century has brought us a fresh crop.

Such portals make a point. The sources of American architecture run deeper than most people suppose, and the influence of Palladio is stronger than most people suppose. We see convex porches around us ultimately because the Romans developed the form, Palladio reconstructed the Roman baths, and the details of his reconstructions finally began to reach a wide public in the late eighteenth century, quite outside of what we

normally think of as Palladianism. So it is that the pedigree of many an American porch stretches through more than two millennia. How often do you pass a reminder of this distinguished history in your own community?

## SELECT SOURCES

Boucher, Bruce. *Andrea Palladio: The Architect in His Time*. With principal photography by Paolo Marton. Rev. and updated ed. New York: Abbeville Press, 1998.

Cohen, Jeffrey A., and Charles E. Brownell. *The Architectural Drawings of Benjamin Henry Latrobe*. 2 vols. *The Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Series 2, Architectural and Engineering Drawings*. New Haven: Yale University Press, for the Maryland Historical Society and the American Philosophical Society, 1994.

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Lounsbury, Carl R. "Beaux-Arts Ideals and Colonial Reality: The Reconstruction of Williamsburg's Capitol, 1928-34." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 49 (December 1990): 373-89.

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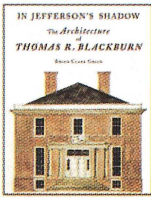
Charles Brownell, Ph.D., Professor of Art History, Virginia Commonwealth University, is author of *The Making of Virginia Architecture*, co-author of *The Architectural Drawings of Benjamin Henry Latrobe*, and a member of the board of directors of the Center for Palladian Studies in America, Inc. Dr. Brownell is director of the annual symposium on architectural history presented by VCU's School of Arts and co-sponsored by CPSA.

Kimberly Sacra is beginning her graduate studies in art history at Virginia Commonwealth University after completing her undergraduate education there.

## Some events of interest

- James "Athenian" Stuart, 1713-1788: The Rediscovery of Antiquity. Exhibition, Bard Graduate Center, 18 W. 86 St., New York City, Nov. 16, 2006 - Feb. 13, 2007.
- Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797. Exhibition, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, Mar. 27-Jul. 8, 2007, with symposium Apr. 22, 2007.
- Annual Architectural History Symposium, presented by Virginia Commonwealth University School of Art, co-sponsored by CPSA. Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia, Nov. 16, 2007.

## The Palladian Bookshelf: Some Recent Books of Palladian Interest



Bryan C. Green

*IN JEFFERSON'S SHADOW*

Princeton Architectural



Douglas Lewis

*THE DRAWINGS OF ANDREA PALLADIO*

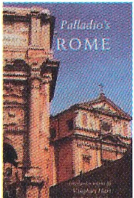
Martin & St. Martin



Giovanni Giacon and Kim Williams

*THE VILLAS OF PALLADIO*

Princeton Architectural



Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks

*PALLADIO'S ROME*

Yale University Press



## Palladio and the Convex Porch

Continued from page 5

one of the great interpreters of Palladio, Ottavio Bertotti Scamozzi, published his sequel to the *Fabbriche* in 1785, with a smaller-format edition in 1797. From the late eighteenth century, we no longer have to follow the story of the books, because men who had studied Palladio's reconstructions had made the convex portico of the baths available internationally.

Rather than look at the British and European use of our theme, we can turn to North America, where the rounded portico appeared again and again, not in buildings that we can call Colonial in any sense, but in structures that are very much Post-Revolutionary. If we look north, we find that Charles Bulfinch, the eminent Boston Neoclassicist, erected a series of variations on the convex theme from the 1790s on. At a lost mansion for Perez Morton in Roxbury, Massachusetts (1796), Bulfinch used a particularly interesting version of the portico where the roof is cantilevered, probably on the lines of older hoods over doors (Fig. 4). Convex porticoes like this and other Bulfinch treatments enjoyed a vogue in New England, at the hands of such designers as Bulfinch's disciple Samuel McIntire.

But we can see still more important versions of our theme in Washington from the hands of Bulfinch's exact contemporaries, Dr. William Thornton and B. Henry Latrobe. In the 1790s, Dr. Thornton, one of the designers of the U.S. Capitol, came up with a strange and wonderful proposal for the west side of the building, with a mighty convex portico on an assembly hall under a pantheon of American heroes (Fig. 5). Thornton's conception was unbuildable, but a string of state capitols received convex porticoes later on. So did the White House, where a semicircular portico was added in front of the south bow window as an afterthought. The suggestion for this porch almost certainly came from Jefferson shortly after 1800, Latrobe then developed the design (Fig. 6), and James Hoban rethought the scheme when he built the portico in the 1820s.

In fact, we could track our portico in the United States — the very post-Colonial United States — from the 1790s at least to the 1860s. We would find it in Classical based styles from Late



Fig. 6. Proposed south façade of the White House, Washington, DC, drawn 1817. B. Henry Latrobe, architect.

American Palladianism and the Adamesque all the way into the Italianate Villa Manner. We would discover it in Maine and Maryland, Mississippi and Missouri. And we would find it in buildings by architects as diverse as Caleb Ormsbee, William Jay, and Alexander J. Davis. We would not, however, encounter the porch as a dominant feature of architecture in these decades or later. Because of the extra expense of the curved construction and perhaps because of the questionable utility of the portico (an oblong porch provides usable room more amply), the motif was reserved for select buildings.

The convex porch may never have faded out altogether during the Victorian decades, but it underwent a renewal from the 1880s during the American Renaissance. That is, it took a fresh lease on life in a period when Americans understood that many of our eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings belong to the tradition of Classicism that the Italians of the Renaissance renewed.

The curved portico made a decisive reappearance with the lost H. A. C. Taylor House in Newport (finished 1886; Fig. 7), designed by McKim, Mead, and White, one of the preeminent  
Continued on page 7

## Palladian Ratios at Homewood

Continued from page 2

1/3. The two rooms on either side of the rear passage are each about 17' by 17'-7 1/2": within 4% of a perfect square but off by enough to make us wonder why they are not exactly square. They are close enough, of course, to tempt us to imagine that Carroll intended these rooms to be equal in length and depth but that he was stymied by the imprecision inherent in the building process.

As we move away from the center mass and the most public rooms of the house, we stray from such perfect, or nearly perfect, geometries. Closets and vestibules intrude and alter room shapes so that, depending upon where dimensions are taken, the ratio of length to width can vary widely and rarely approaches Palladian ideals. Only the kitchen, if measurements are taken from the front of the fireplace jamb, comes close, as it is nearly a square.

So where are we? We have a house that sometimes, but not always, obeys Palladian principles of planning; that is decorated with the fashionably attenuated proportions of the classical

orders favored by Robert Adam; and that borrows select details from English pattern books. But if this seems a haphazard, smorgasbord approach to designing a great house, its disparate elements have been carefully integrated. Despite the seeming contradictions inherent in Adamesque ornament to a Palladian planning scheme, a rigorous logic governs the form of the house. In the center, the most public rooms are the most lavishly decorated, with the superior classical orders treated in the most elegant, attenuated manner. These same spaces, too, are the ones that adhere most closely to ideal Palladian proportions in plan. A third semi-public room, the little family parlor, is less ornamented, and employs the lesser Doric order in its mantel, but remains close to a preferred relationship of length to width. The two principal bedchambers use inventive decorations derived from pattern books for their mantels—classical in inspiration but not one of the canonical orders. They both approach Palladian ideal ratios, though the secondary chamber, which is in the main block, comes much closer. In addition, they are symmetrical with the room on the opposite side of the center axis.



Fig.3. Column, capital and entablature of the portico at Homewood, from dining room.

In short, Homewood is a tightly controlled architectural composition, in plan and in finish treatment. It suggests a designer who was literate in both books and buildings, and who could submit both the mundane requirements of domestic life and the florid, attenuated forms of Adamesque neoclassicism to the rigorous formal discipline of a symmetrical, Palladian planning scheme. It is an inventive adaptation of European architectural principles for an American suburban house.

### NOTES:

[1] Andrea Palladio, *The Four Books on Architecture*, trans. by Robert Tavernor and Richard Schofield (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 57-58.

[2] Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (London: Alec Tiranti, rev. ed., 1967), 107-142.

Jeffrey E. Klee, B.A. Yale University, M.A. University of Delaware, is Architectural Historian of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Photos: J. Van Rensselaer, p. 2; Jeffrey E. Klee, p. 3.

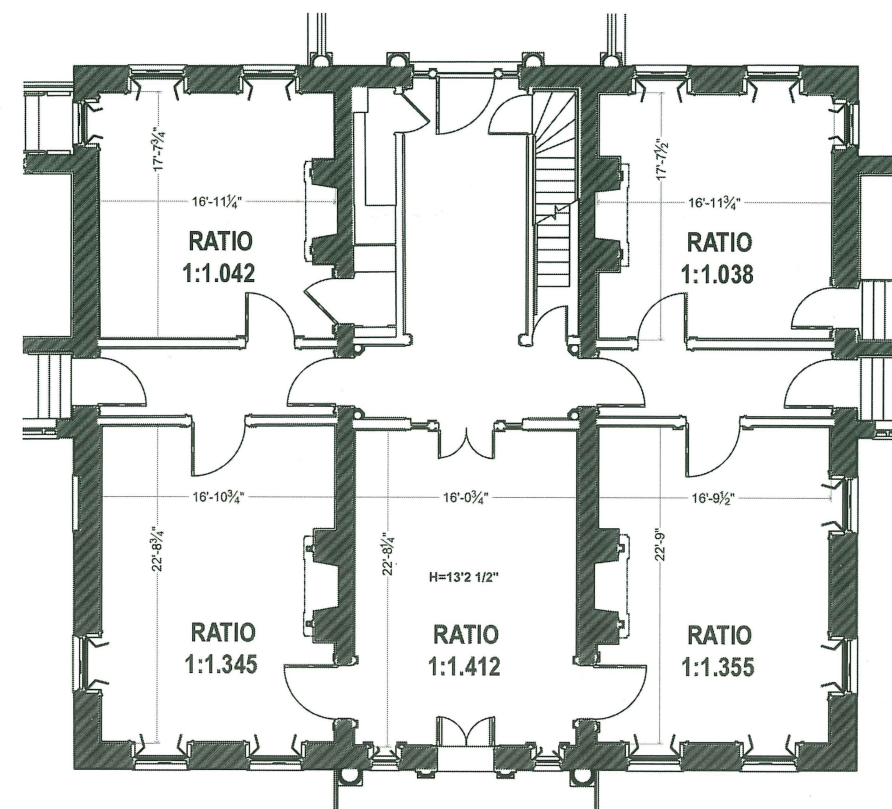


Fig. 2. Central core of the main level of Homewood, after Historic American Buildings Survey drawing by Mark Schara, with room ratios added.

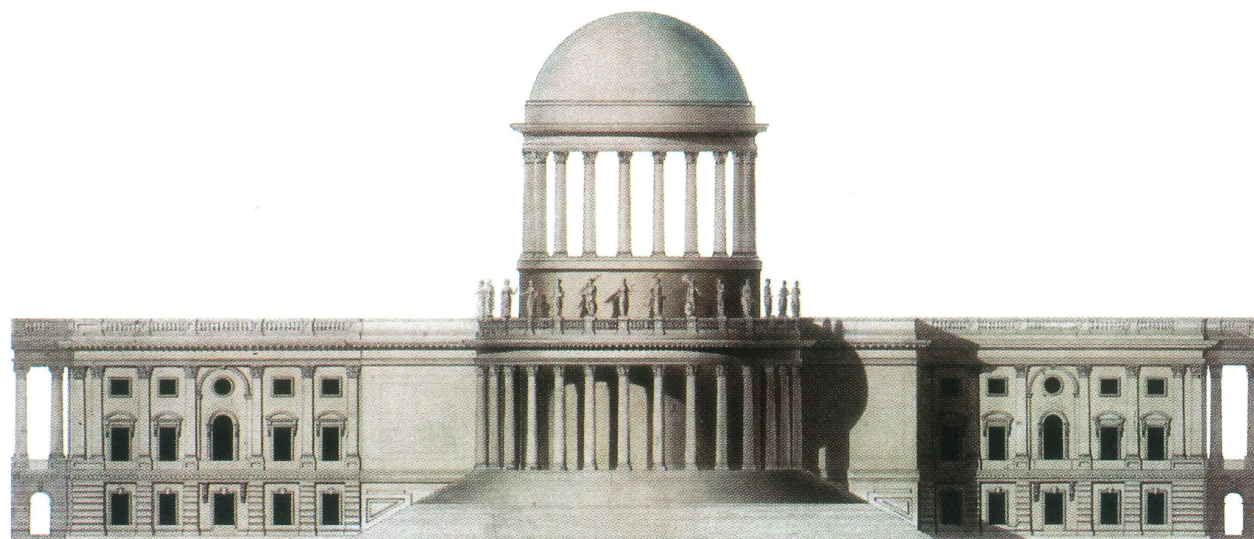


Fig. 5. Proposed west façade of the U. S. Capitol, Washington, DC, drawn c. 1797-1803. William Thornton, architect.



# Palladio, the Convex Portico and the Colonial Revival

by Charles Brownell  
and Kimberly Sacra

This article is adapted from a paper presented at the 14th Annual Symposium on Architectural History, sponsored by the Department of Art History, School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, November 2006.

If you take a look at Fig. 1 of this essay, you find a familiar enough sight, a rounded porch on an American Colonial Revival house. It happens that the building in question is the first Colonial Revival dwelling in Richmond, the former James and Minnie Allison House, built by the New York firm of Griffin and Randall in 1894-96, and today the President's office at Virginia Commonwealth University. This pleasant building has only modest significance, but its portico has an important past. This porch is not part of Palladianism as we normally define that phenomenon. Nonetheless, the Allisons would not have had this portal without Palladio, who correctly reconstructed convex porticoes as a feature of ancient Roman architecture (Fig. 2). How did such porches find their way to the United States and the Colonial Revival?

These convex porticoes were a feature of various kinds of Roman building but above all of some of the most splendid public baths. A major authority on the baths, Fikret Yegül, tells us that modern America has nothing comparable to the baths as places of regeneration for the body and the mind. The baths, moreover, were a place of the most vigorous experimentation with construction and the imaginative layout of spaces – layouts such as the rounded portico, which no doubt echoed a perfectly circular kind of Greek building called a *tholos*.



Fig. 1. James and Minnie Allison House, Richmond, 1894-96.  
Griffin & Randall, architects

The ruins of the baths were one of the most fruitful sources for architects when the Italians of the Renaissance set out to achieve a rebirth of the arts of Antiquity. Sebastiano Serlio, the father of the architectural patternbook, published a selection of Roman bath plans in his third volume (1540). Serlio's treatise wielded a vast influence, but his illustrations failed to popularize the convex portico, and his successor, Palladio, utterly superseded Serlio's limited study of the baths.

Bruce Boucher, one of the most insightful authors to write about Palladio, has declared that, of all ancient buildings, "it was the Roman baths that made the greatest impression upon Palladio." Palladio's reconstructions of the baths have remained an indispensable source to researchers ever since, and, of course, these

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## Palladio and the Convex Portico

Continued from page 4

reconstructions include convex porticoes (Fig. 2). Palladio never built a convex exterior porch, but what he published had vastly more influence than what he constructed. In 1570 he brought out the first four installments of his treatise, *The Four Books of Architecture* [I quattro libri dell'architettura]. In this work, Palladio repeatedly promised to devote subsequent volumes to baths and various other ancient public buildings. Had he finished publishing what he wanted to, his *Four Books* would probably have become *Ten Books of Architecture*, like the treatise of his ancient Roman model, Vitruvius, but he never got further than his first four volumes. He never published his bath drawings.

In the following century, quite independently of Palladio, the convex porch put in a series of major appearances, stretching from the Rome of the Baroque via London to North America. The chain starts with the portico that Pietro da Cortona devised – of course, on the precedent of the baths -- for the ingenious façade that he added to the church of Santa Maria della Pace (1656-59). An engraving of Cortona's porch gave Sir Christopher Wren the brilliant idea of giving a pair of convex porticoes to the transept of St. Paul's Cathedral in London (1675-1710). Wren's example in turn stimulated English-speaking architects to create a series of such porches. There were not many of these porticoes, but they appeared on important buildings.

The chief and almost only examples in North America were the pair that adorned the first Williamsburg Capitol (1701-05; Fig. 3), a building recently reconstructed on paper by the distinguished Colonial Williamsburg architectural historian Carl Lounsbury in an award-winning article. These portals burned with the Capitol in 1747. In a tidy illustration of how the English Baroque gave way to Anglo-Palladianism, they were replaced in the rebuilt Capitol (1751-53) by a Palladian portico descended from the one on the entry facade at Palladio's Villa Cornaro. As Lounsbury has shown, the architects who tried to recreate the 1701-05 Capitol in the twentieth century dismissed the evidence of the round porticoes because it was not what they wanted to see.

Not long after the construction of the Williamsburg porticoes, Palladio re-entered the stage, thanks to Richard Boyle, the third Earl of Burlington. From the 1710s, Burlington sponsored a reform of British architecture on the model of Antiquity and its revivers Palladio and Inigo Jones, Palladio's first British disciple. Burlington strove to publish all the materials necessary for this reform. The famous book is the translation of Palladio's treatise by Isaac Ware and Burlington that remained the standard English version for over 250 years. No longer well remembered is the *Fabbriche Antiche*, one of the most lavishly produced books of its century, and a volume with a complex history that two English scholars named Eileen Harris and Nicholas Savage have disentangled. In this book Burlington, with Isaac Ware's assistance, meant to publish all of his large collection of Palladio's drawings of ancient buildings. For this project, the poet Alexander Pope wrote one of the most celebrated poems in the English language, "An Epistle to the Right Honourable Richard, Earl of Burlington, Occasion'd by his Publishing Palladio's Designs of the Baths, Arches, Theatres, &c. of Ancient Rome," which rapidly took on a life of its own, completely divorced from Burlington's

ill-starred project. In the end, perhaps in 1740, Burlington succeeded only in publishing most of the bath drawings. His book is rare. Burlington issued the costly undertaking as a limited edition to give to the chosen few, and its convex porticoes had only a restricted influence within British Palladianism.

The situation changed from the 1750s with the rise of Neoclassicism, an international renewal of the Classical tradition in which Palladio's influence was only a lesser current among many. Internationally the Roman baths were a preoccupation, as was the goal of producing a more available version of the *Fabbriche*. Robert Adam meant to replace Burlington's book with the help of the brilliant draftsman Charles-Louis Clérissieu (who later helped Jefferson with the Virginia Capitol), but Adam dropped the undertaking.

It fell to another Neoclassical architect, Isaac Ware's pupil Charles Cameron, to redo the *Fabbriche*. Cameron succeeded in publishing his expanded and modified version of the *Fabbriche* under the title of *Baths of the Romans* in 1772. Not long thereafter

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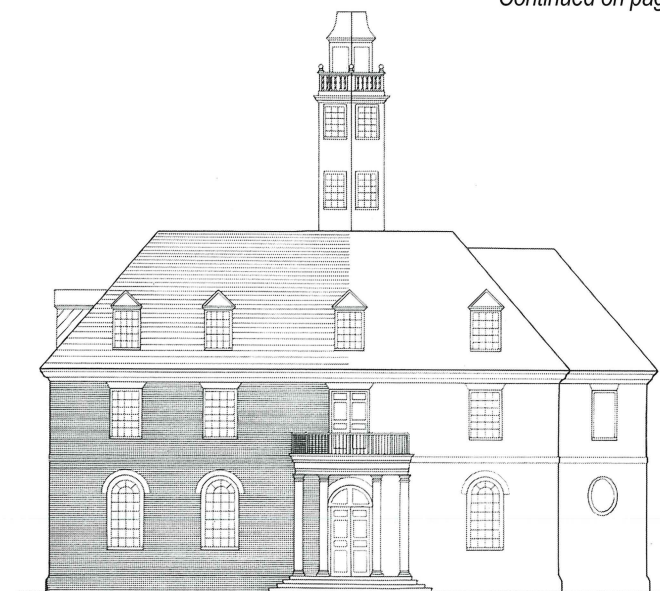


Fig. 3. Reconstruction of Williamsburg's first Capitol, 1701-5,  
with convex porch.



Fig. 4. Perez Morton House, Roxbury, Massachusetts, 1796.  
Charles Bulfinch, architect

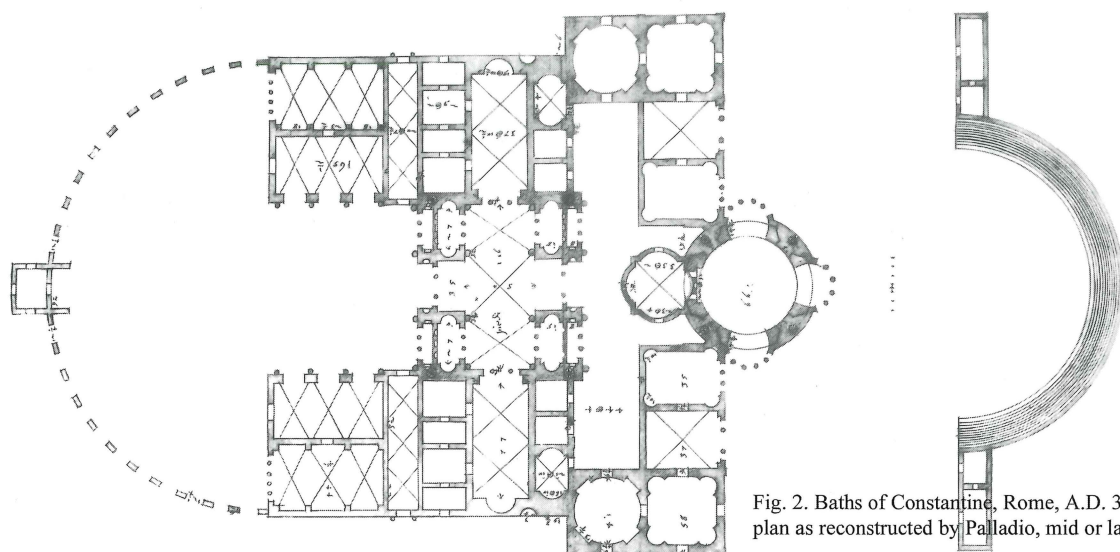


Fig. 2. Baths of Constantine, Rome, A.D. 320,  
plan as reconstructed by Palladio, mid or late 1540s.