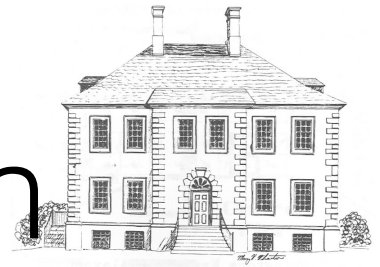


Carlyle Connection

“It’s a fine beginning.”



The Architectural Context of Carlyle House continued

By Susan Hellman

Theories abound as to where John Carlyle got design inspiration for his Alexandria mansion. Some claim a Palladian influence, but what does that mean?

Andrea Palladio (1508-1580), born in Padua and raised in the Italian Veneto, fueled the idea that there is a correct way to design a building, and that correct way is rooted in the architecture of ancient Rome. He is best known for his 1570 treatise, *The Four Books of Architecture*, one of the most influential architecture books of all time(1). Palladio extensively studied, measured, and drew the buildings of ancient Rome. His interpretation carried classicism through the nineteenth century, and his designs symbolize the Renaissance mission and its rediscovery of ancient Rome more than any other architect’s. Although other Renaissance architects also published treatises, Palladio’s was the most useful and informative. His written work was far more influential than his built works.

Palladio mostly designed small scale private dwellings and villas, along with some churches and civic structures. Hallmarks of Palladian design include bilateral symmetry, and a profusion of dentils (2) and acroteria (3). Building symmetry was the result of Palladio’s fixation with harmonic proportions and math. He carefully computed the proportions of length, width, and height of each room according to an exact formula of ratios. Every room related mathematically to every other room, as well as to the building as a whole, creating a wonderful sense of balance. In revolutionary fashion, Palladio adapted the classical temple form for his villas’ facades. Although this seems ordinary to us today, Palladio was the first to apply this prominent design element of classical temples to domestic buildings. He also publicized its domestic use through his writings. A portico makes an ordinary house look impressive, and marks the house as the residence of



Villa Rotonda, Vicenza, Italy, begun 1550.

someone important. Palladio’s best-known design motif is the Palladian window (4), a Roman design motif initially popularized by Venetian architect Sebastiano Serlio (1475-1554) and known as a “serliana” until Palladio came along. Palladio used the motif sparingly, and it is still called a serliana or a Venetian window in Italy today. He also excelled at engineering, constructing his villas with a series of complex hidden ducts that allowed the buildings to be cooled by breezes, a system that continues to function almost as well as air conditioning.

Palladio’s best-known and most-copied commission is the Villa Capra, or Villa Rotonda in Vicenza, Italy. Note the





Drayton Hall, begun 1738, Charleston, SC.

perfect symmetry, temple fronts on all four sides, acroteria, and dentails. Dozens of buildings worldwide pay homage to the Villa Rotonda, including Chiswick House in London and Mereworth Castle in Kent, both of which were completed in the 1720s.

Palladio was one of the great formative influences on English architecture. In the early eighteenth century, four major books with Palladian ideas became popular: Giacomo Leoni's Four Books of Architecture (1716), a reinterpretation and translation of Palladio's book; James Gibbs' A Book of Architecture (1728); William Salmon's Palladio Londinensis (1734); and Robert Morris' Select Architecture (1757), originally published in 1750 as Rural Architecture.

Beginning in the late seventeenth century, and continuing into the eighteenth century, Virginians assimilated classical design elements into their architecture. Many Virginia gentry used architectural pattern books, choosing plans and elements in the design of their own houses. John Drayton did so when he constructed Drayton Hall in South Carolina, built between 1738 and 1742 and considered the earliest and finest Georgian-Palladian dwelling in the Americas. Note the temple front, the dentils, and the bilateral symmetry. The house only lacks Palladio's acroteria.

George Washington used a variety of architectural pattern books when he enlarged Mount Vernon. John Tayloe II

relied heavily on Gibbs' book when building Mount Airy in Richmond County, Virginia, completed in 1764. In the late twentieth century, historians began to refer to any structure based on a pattern book as Palladian, no matter what books were used. This is probably when and why the term Georgian-Palladian in reference to Carlyle House originated. Even with no evidence of book-based design, buildings were labeled Palladian if they included elements vaguely resembling something out of an architectural treatise.

The 1970s Carlyle House restoration architects appear to have believed that John Carlyle used a pattern book when building Carlyle House (5). But we have no firm evidence to that effect. His estate inventory lists several books, including a five-volume history of England, a heraldry book, a naval history, and a dictionary. If Carlyle did own an architectural treatise, it was not explicitly listed. The 1980 restoration report identifies similarities between Carlyle House and Craigiehall, a mansion located on the outskirts of Edinburgh. The report credits a drawing of Craigiehall that appears in William Adam's Vitruvius Scoticus. However, the book was not published until 1812 and the changes to Craigiehall that make it similar to Carlyle House were made after 1755, far too late to have been a design inspiration for Carlyle.



Craigiehall, begun 1695, renovated 1755, Edinburgh.

A lesser-known, but just as common, method of incorporating classical details into building design involved direct observation. Many colonial elite, including John Carlyle, traveled to England for business or personal reasons. While there, they absorbed what they saw.

“Although most never set out to deliberately study aristocratic houses, castle, gardens, and churches for design details, their travels shaped or reinforced more general ideas about architectural aesthetics.” (6) In addition to seeing the great English country houses in person, classical design was also disseminated to the colonies through prints and other graphic sources. John Carlyle’s numerous prints of his native land, along with his 1750 return to England and Scotland, are far more likely sources for design inspiration than a pattern book.

John Carlyle returned to England in 1750 with William Fairfax. We know that they visited Carlisle, Papcastle, Kendal, York, London, Hull, and Whitehaven. Several mansions in northern England and Scotland bear a striking resemblance to Carlyle House. Glendoick, for example, was built around 1747 in the Perth area, approximately 140 miles from Carlisle. Like Carlyle House, Glendoick is two stories tall above a raised cellar, with a five-bay primary elevation, two interior chimneys, corner quoins, and a projecting central pavilion. Many of these design elements became ubiquitous in mid-eighteenth century Anglo-American architectural design. Although these elements are based in classicism, they are not considered strictly Palladian. Note the pediment topping Glendoick’s pavilion. This is the most common treatment of a pavilion, and a nod to Palladio’s use of the temple front in domestic design. For whatever reason, John Carlyle chose not to include a pediment, moving his design that much further away from the Palladian ideal.



Glendoick, circa 1747, Perth.

Of course, Carlyle House does exhibit other classical details typical of the Georgian period. The dining room retains its original embellishment, which indicates that it was the most important room in the house. The pineapple motifs, the pilasters and overmantel above the fireplace, and the modillioned cornice are some of the most obvious classical

motifs, all of which were common in Georgian dwellings, not only Palladio-inspired dwellings. The broken pediments above the doors share some similarities to a plate in William Salmon’s *Palladio Londinensis*, but this too was a very common element in eighteenth century genteel dwellings. The one element of the house that would label it Palladian is the Palladian window on the rear elevation. However, that window is not original to the house and there is no architectural evidence of what type of opening, if any, may have originally been in that location. This was a “conjectural architectural treatment” applied by the restoration architects after they removed the nineteenth-century gallery at the rear of the house.

Carlyle House fits solidly into the pantheon of genteel eighteenth century Anglo-American design. Although it lacks signature Palladian design features, it includes a wealth of typical classical detailing. John Carlyle built to impress, using the most modern and fashionable architectural elements he knew. Wherever Carlyle found inspiration, his was one of the most fashionable dwellings in Virginia.

Endnotes:

1. For an English copy, see Andrea Palladio, *The Four Books of Architecture*, with an introduction by Adolf K. Placzek, (New York: Dover Publications, 1965).
2. Denti: one of a band of small, square, tooth-like blocks forming part of the characteristic ornamentation of the Ionic, Corinthian, and Composite orders, and sometimes the Doric. See Cyril M. Harris, editor, *Illustrated Dictionary of Historic Architecture* (New York: Dover Publications, 1977).
3. Acroteria: the ornament at the corners or peak of a roof. See Harris, op. cit.
4. Palladian window: a window of large size, characteristic of neoclassic styles, divided by columns or piers resembling pilasters, into three lights (i.e. windows), the middle one of which is usually wider than the others and is sometimes arched. The lintel is flat over each side light. See Harris, op. cit. In plain English, a central round-arched window flanked by lower flat-topped windows.

5. Fauber Garbee, Inc., Architects, "The John Carlyle House, Alexandria, Virginia: Restoration Report for the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority" (unpublished manuscript, July 1980). This is now available online on the City of Alexandria website.

6. Cary Carson & Carl L. Lounsbury, eds., The Chesapeake House: Architectural Investigation by Colonial Williamsburg (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), pg 80.

7. A quoin is the external angle of a wall, especially the stones or bricks that form the corner of the wall. Decorative quoining sometimes employed raised or rusticated quoins, whereby bricks or stones projected beyond the surface of a wall and generally had beveled edges. See Carl R. Lounsbury, editor, An Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture and Landscape (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 81.

8. Pavilion: a projecting subdivision of a larger building, often forming a terminating wing and distinguished by variations in height and roof form. Lounsbury, op. cit., 264.



Fun at the Hands on History Tent 2014

News from the Educator

This year we had a very successful Hands on History Tent, which had a theme to coincide with the War of 1812 commemoration in Alexandria called A Privateer's Life for Me! 122 little privateers and pirates came with their families to the annual event and made flags for their ships, discovered buried treasure, and met a pirate turtle visiting us from Potomac Overlook. I would like to thank all of the volunteers who came and helped to make my first Hands on History Tent a success. I know next year's will be just as great!

We are getting closer to our first session of Camp Carlyle. I aimed to have at least 8 campers per session and have successfully reached that goal. Our July 7-11 session has 9, July 21-25 has 11, and August 4-8 has 8 as well. I expect this year's session to be exciting as we visit our friends at Gadsby's Tavern Museum, the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum, the Alexandria Archaeology Museum, and George Washington's Mount Vernon.

The school year is coming to an end and we had 904 children participate in our education programs, including one group that utilized our bus stipend for Title 1 schools. I am working on an application system where a certain number of schools will receive a scholarship for a free school program as well as bus funding. This would be a great way to diversify the schools that visit Carlyle House giving it new exposure. I am also working with a Fairfax County Public Schools Education Specialist to provide input on the new curriculum they are developing on teaching about enslaved African Americans in the 18th to mid-19th century.



News from the Curator

If you were unable to attend the Friends annual meeting in June, here is the Spring and Summer news from the Curatorial Department.

The mission of this year's annual appeal was to raise money which would be used to conserve several of the wooden furniture objects in our collection. The process began with Susan and myself reviewing what pieces were showing their age and then we gathered proposals from two firms and presented them to the Friends Collections Committee. The committee approved conservation work on the objects that were most in need of attention and work began in June. The tall case clock in the Parlor was temporarily out for repair while the clockworks remained on a stand to be displayed. This was an excellent opportunity for visitors to Carlyle House to see the inner workings of such a valuable 18th century piece like the one that we have. We are so grateful for all of your support for this project.



In other collections news, a new hygrothermograph system will be installed later this summer with the coming of the new fiscal year. Hygrothermographs monitor relative humidity which is very important in this Virginia climate and will help us continue to safeguard the collection for many years to come, especially those objects on which the recent conservation work has been performed.

Another area of "conservation" which the Friends supported this year was paying for much needed pruning to be done in the garden. This was a major operation and included pruning: 2 lindens, 5 maples, 6 dogwoods, all the crepe myrtles, the holly trees, and the magnolias. Our garden volunteers were especially appreciative of this donation as they work tirelessly in all seasons to keep the garden looking lush and well maintained for our visitors and neighbors to enjoy.

Our Spring programs did very well this year. April opened with very high numbers for the Braddock Day event, where we welcomed over 500 visitors to see how we interpret life in the 18th century. Two weeks later was our Garden Day fundraiser with over 1500 people entering our gates. 263 of those visitors came through the museum that day with the vast majority having learned about us through the Historic Virginia Garden Week book and the annual day-long Alexandria Garden tour.

Our programming will continue this summer with the Bicentennial Commemoration of the War of 1812. Carlyle House is playing a large role in commemorating this part of Alexandria's history and we have partnered once again with the Office of Historic Alexandria to share the history of the British Invasion in the Chesapeake and National Capital Region in the summer of 1814. (We aren't really two years late, I promise!) Additionally, with over a dozen local partners, we have worked to create a Star-Spangled Summer Signature event which will take place here in Alexandria at Waterfront Park on Sunday, August 31st. However, the highlight of Carlyle House's summer



Scales and Crosstones

programming was every Thursday night in June when the Magnolia Terrace was invaded by British pop culture from the '60s, sailor songs and pirates! Carlyle House hosted its first War of 1812 Summer concert with a British Invasion on June 6th and over 160 people came to our terrace and gardens to enjoy the evening of music from the Rolling Stones, Beatles, the Kinks, Chuck Barry, and more for two

hours. The second week, Carlyle House hosted the Ship's Company Chanteymen, a local War of 1812 singing group who have performed here previously and will wrap up our concerts at the end of the month. The third week we welcomed Scales and Crosstones who sang pirate songs and traditional Irish music. In total, 300 visitors have come to our concerts which is a record for this type of programming at Carlyle House. Many thanks to our Friends who have come out to support our events!

~Helen Wirka

Did you know?

Carlyle House is the only historic museum featured in the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association marketing video. Obviously, it's because Carlyle House is the top historic attraction in Alexandria!



Screen shot from ACVA video



Carlyle House Upcoming Events

Camp Carlyle

July 7-11, July 21-25, August 4-8; 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

This program is a week long summer camp, intended for boys and girls entering grades 2 through 7 in the fall of 2014. Participants will have the opportunity to learn about 18th century games, clothing, schooling, culinary techniques, trade and money, and city life. Camp Carlyle is not sports, day care, or play camp. Activities are designed to be engaging, challenging and educational. We highly value and encourage inclusion of all campers in all activities. Some of the activities campers will participate in include candle making, colonial cooking, scavenger hunts, and the first annual Colonial Games Olympics. Participants will also have opportunities to take field trips to other historic sites in Old Town Alexandria that will include Alexandria Archaeology Museum, Gadsby's Tavern Museum and the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum and a special day trip to George Washington's Mount Vernon.

Ghosts & Goblins Crafty Tea/Cauldron Tea

Sunday, October 19; 11:00 a.m. And 2:00 p.m.

Come to the Carlyle House terrace for a spooky afternoon tea that will be sure to cast a spell on your Halloween celebrations. Bring your little ghosts and goblins to our 11:00 a.m. crafty tea, where they will enjoy child-friendly foods, crafts, and a goody bag. Ages 5+. Our 2:00 pm is for adults, who are invited to tour the museum after the tea and learn about 18th century funeral and mourning practices in Virginia. Costumes are encouraged at both seatings.

John Carlyle Funeral and Ghost Tour

Saturday, October 25; 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Visitors will experience firsthand this important but somber day in Carlyle House history. Meet Colonel John Carlyle's family and view his coffin from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Carlyle House. After paying respects to the family, visit our dark, dank tunnels for a spooky experience. A ghost tour of Alexandria is also included in the price of admission.

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Carlyle House Historic Park is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums

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News from the Site Director

We are very proud to announce that the Alexandria Historical Society presented our own Mary Ruth Coleman with the AHS Special History Award at their April 23rd meeting. The AHS presents awards to individuals who have made significant contributions to preserving local history. Mary Ruth received the award for her extraordinary work as Director of Carlyle House Historic Park. Mary Ruth was nominated by past award recipient Robert L. Madison, who stated in his nomination letter that because of her “vision, determination, and commitment to excellence, Carlyle House became one of the leading house museums in the region, making it a model for other museums to follow.” During her time as Director, Mary Ruth successfully helped lead the Friends of Carlyle House, was the executive producer of the documentary film, Paper and Stone, and is a past President of the Alexandria Historical Society. Congratulations Mary Ruth!



Our beautiful dogwood allee on Garden Day.

More good news: NVRPA has approved and financed the installation of both a new sprinkler system and a new lighting system in our beautiful garden. Both were very outdated and cranky. Installation began the week of June 16, and we expect its completion any day now. On top of that, we also have brand new benches! Come by and enjoy our garden improvements.

You’ll be relieved to know that the rehousing of our archaeological collection has been completed. We now have the entire collection housed according to National Park Service and Secretary of the Interior standards. We are working with Alexandria Archaeology to brainstorm some storage issues, as well as to make the collection available to scholars for research purposes. More artifacts date to the Carlyle period than was originally thought, and the collection can therefore tell us a much richer story about John Carlyle and his family. We are hoping to find an archaeologist to tease out that story for us. The rehousing was completed by Kayla Marciniszyn, who has agreed to stay on board as our new Collections Assistant. Welcome back, Kayla!

~Susan Hellman

Carlyle House Historic Park

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