Palladio's Influence In America

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2008 marks the 500th anniversary of Palladio's birth. We might ask why Americans should consider this to be a cause for celebration. Why should we be concerned about an Italian architect who lived so long ago and far away? As we shall see, however, this architect, whom the average American has never heard of, has had a profound impact on the architectural image of our country, even the city of Baltimore. But before we investigate his influence we should briefly explain what Palladio's career involved.

Palladio, of course, designed many outstanding buildings, but until the twentieth century few Americans ever saw any of Palladio's works firsthand. From our standpoint, Palladio's most important achievement was writing about architecture. His seminal publication, *I Quattro Libri dell' Architettura* or *The Four Books on Architecture*, was perhaps the most influential treatise on architecture ever written. Much of the material in that work was the result of Palladio's extensive study of the ruins of ancient Roman buildings. This effort was part of the Italian Renaissance movement: the rediscovery of the civilization of ancient Rome—its arts, literature, science, and architecture. Palladio was by no means the only architect of his time to undertake such a study and produce a publication about it. Nevertheless, Palladio's drawings and text were far more engaging, comprehendible, informative, and useful than similar efforts by contemporaries.

As with most Renaissance-period architectural treatises, Palladio illustrated and described how to delineate and construct the five orders—the five principal types of ancient columns and their entablatures. The five orders are the foundation of the classical language of architecture. The clarity of Palladio's drawings and their accompanying explanations, as presented in *Book I* of *The Four Books*, enabled Palladio's presentation to be used as a textbook for architects well into the twentieth century. For colonial America, *Book I* was the fundamental source and authority on the orders. Admittedly, numerous other architectural treatises and pattern books available in America included instructions on the orders, but most of their authors, particularly the English ones, ultimately obtained their information from Palladio.

From America's standpoint, the most important of the English pattern book writers was James Gibbs (1682–1754). In his book, *Rules for Drawing the Several Parts of Architecture* (1732), Gibbs offered his own simplified system for drawing the orders. However, in his introduction to *Rules*, Gibbs conceded his debt to Palladio, stating: "Palladio, in dividing and adjusting his orders, had no doubt excelled the rest, whom I have therefore followed." Gibbs was a leading proponent of the eighteenth-century Anglo-Palladian movement, the fashion for adapting Palladian-style classicism for British country houses, institutional buildings, and churches. Through his publications (along with those by architects such as Batty Langley who shamelessly plagiarized Gibbs) Gibbs had a significant influence on American architecture. Using his designs as sources of inspiration, colonial builders and architects gave many of our buildings a Palladian cast, as we shall see.

Although our colonial builders derived many of their Palladian-style building schemes and details from Gibbs and other period pattern books, Palladio's *The Four Books* remained a primary source as well. The availability of various additions of Palladio in eighteenth-century America is a subject too complex to do justice to here. It is sufficient to note that editions of Palladio could be found in libraries in Boston, Salem, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, and Baltimore, as well as the libraries of Harvard and Yale universities. Thomas Jefferson, Palladio's greatest advocate in America called Palladio's *The Four Books* "the Bible." During his lifetime Jefferson owned seven editions of Palladio. For Jefferson, Palladio was always the primary authority on the five orders and classical design.

This now leads us to a consideration of *Book II* of *The Four Books*. In this section Palladio offered some fifty of his own designs for villas and town palaces. All these designs employed the classical vocabulary and proportional systems based on Palladio's study of ancient architecture. To our eyes today, his villa designs in particular have such a straightforward clarity that it is difficult to appreciate their revolutionary quality. Consider Palladio's design for the Villa Emo, for instance. At first glance, the Villa Emo appears as a normal, relatively modest, classical-style dwelling. Its distinguishing feature is a portico—a pediment supported on four columns. For most of us this is nothing startling. However, we have to remember that Palladio was the first to apply to domestic works in a full-blown way the signature motif of ancient temples. Moreover, Palladio was the first to promote its use on contemporary houses through the medium of publication.

Except for its Tuscan portico, the Villa Emo is a quite plain house, more of a large farmhouse than a monumental country house. Its upper level doesn't contain bedrooms, but rather is

a grain storage area. The building's front ramp is for bringing farm wagons up the entrance to unload grain. The arcades flanking the main section are for sheltering farm equipment. But the portico signals that this is the home of an important family. The portico gives the composition an essential dignity of appearance.

Fig. 1, Frascati, Orange County, Virginia

The portico was developed by the ancients for buildings dedicated to the worship of gods. It was meant inspire awe. It inspired awe in ancient times and still does today. The 1820s Virginia plantation house, Frascati, has a tetrastyle portico nearly identical to the Villa Emo's. As with the Villa Emo, Frascati's portico sends the message to visitors and passersby that this house was built for an important person, in this case a justice if the U.S. Supreme Court. If we were to remove its portico, Frascati would lose most of its visual and psychological clout. The portico continued to be a particularly popular device throughout the twentieth century to signal an owner's wealth and status. America has hundreds of houses graced with stately porticoes, the products of architects well-versed in classicism. Many new houses continue to be embellished with porticos in an effort to add prestige. Unfortunately, modern-day porticoes often fail to follow the Palladian standards for proportion, column spacing, or detailing, and thus smack of illiteracy. Too many of today's architects and developers attempt to play the game without knowing the rules.

Probably America's earliest example of the application of full pedimented portico to a domestic work is Whitehall, near Annapolis. Built in the 1760s for Governor Horatio Sharp, the mansion's central section is fronted by a finely executed tetrastyle portico employing the Corinthian order. Whitehall was followed by James Madison's Montpelier, in Orange County, Virginia. Here, in the 1790s, Madison enlarged his father's colonial house and added a Tuscan portico to signal his growing importance as a statesman. Montpelier's was one of the first truly monumental pedimented porticos to embellish an American house. This expression of the Palladian ideal was suggested here by Madison's friend Thomas Jefferson.

In several of his villa designs Palladio showed the application of the two-tiered or two-level portico to the façade. This too was an influential innovation and found great popularity in America. Following ancient precedent, Palladio always gave his two-level porticoes superimposed orders, with either Ionic over Doric or Corinthian over Ionic. Typical is Palladio's design for the Villa Valmarana at Lisieria, shown on Plate XLII of *Book II* in *The Four Books*. This feature was translated for Drayton Hall, a country house near Charleston, South Carolina, built around 1740. With its two-tiered, recessed portico employing the Doric order on the lower level and the Ionic above, Drayton Hall is one of America's earliest expressions of Palladianism. Drayton's portico closely echoes the rear portico of Palladio's Villa Pisani at Montagnana, whose design also appears in *The Four Books*.

A later, more refined example of the two-tiered portico sets off the façade of the 1760s Miles Brewton House in Charleston. The Miles Brewton House is in a sense a compacted version

of the center section of Palladio's Villa Cornaro, the entrance front of which is dominated by a projecting two-tiered portico. The Villa Cornaro's façade design is also included in *The Four Books*. Another noteworthy colonial-era use of the two-tiered portico is found on Shirley, a famous Virginia plantation house. Shirley follows Palladian precedent by having similar porticoes on both of its principal fronts. An example of a two-tiered portico dating from the Federal period is the 1790s Annfield, in Virginia's lower Shenandoah Valley, in this case accented with Chinese lattice railings, an exotic but effective device. The use of the two-level portico continued well into the nineteenth century in scores of examples throughout the eastern United States. Typical is the 1820s Rosedale in Charlotte, North Carolina. With its two-tiered portico and one-story wings, the house typifies a provincial work that wouldn't look as it does had there been no Palladio.

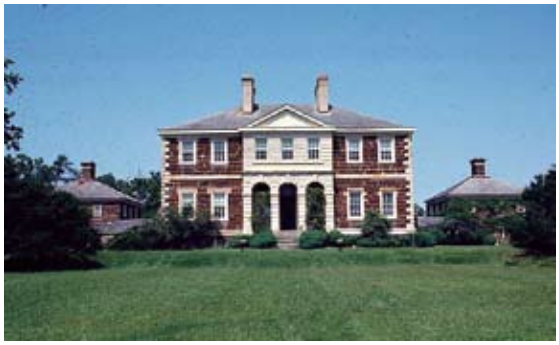

Fig. 2, Mount Airy, Richmond County, Virginia

A Palladian villa on a much less monumental scale is the Villa Saraceno, a simple but engaging design for a relatively small dwelling framed by barchese or colonnaded sheds for service areas and farm equipment. Palladio states of its design: "The kitchens are outside but still connected to it for convenience. At either side there are the rooms essential for a farm." The character-defining feature of Saraceno's façade is its three-bay, arcaded loggia set in a central pedimented pavilion. The idea of a central arcaded loggia was adapted by James Gibbs in a design for an English country house which he published in his other highly influential work, *A Book of Architecture* (1728). This richly illustrated volume became a standard reference for many of colonial America's more prominent master builders. This design, Plate 58, for a "Gentleman in Dorsetshire," served as the inspiration for Mount Airy, the Virginia plantation mansion of John Tayloe, begun in 1748. British-born architect/builder, William Buckland, who owned a copy of *A Book of Architecture*, most likely was responsible for Mount Airy's design. The use of the published design thusly fulfilled Gibbs's intention for his book. In the introduction to *A Book of Architecture*, he states: "They were of the opinion that such a work as this would be of use to such Gentlemen as might be concerned with Building, especially in the remote parts of the Country, where little or no assistance for Designs can be procured." America qualified as the most remote part of the country in the 1740s, and certainly possessed few architects to assist with design. Thanks to Gibbs, and ultimately to Palladio, Mount Airy remains one of our purest expressions of eighteenth-century Anglo-Palladianism.

Another significant characteristic of Palladio's villa designs it the breaking of the dwelling's mass into several sections, creating an extended symmetrical composition, as seen in both the Villa Emo and the Villa Saraceno. A more famous example is the Villa Barbaro with its distinctive five-part elevation consisting of a main center section housing the residence, then connecting hyphens for service and farm equipment, and finally terminal connected dependencies. This type of sectional composition provided an opportunity for more expressive design. It could transform even a modest villa into work of architecture with great presence, a vivid contrast to the inward-looking fortified family compounds more typical of

Italy in that period. The five-part scheme was interpreted for many eighteenth-century British houses. The form also struck a chord with a number of Americans. An early and visually pleasing American version of the five-part house is Battersea, near Petersburg, Virginia, built as a suburban villa for John Banister in the 1760s. It closely follows the Barbaro precedent of a two-story center section, low connecting hyphens, and higher terminal wings.

This five-part composition proved to be very popular in Maryland, especially in Annapolis, which boasts several prodigious five-part houses. These are not villas, but town mansions, including the famous Hammond-Harwood house in Annapolis, designed by William Buckland and begun in 1774. This is complemented by the neighboring James Brice house (completed 1773) and William Paca house (completed 1765). Both are huge five-part mansions in the Palladian spirit, though their lack of either a central pavilion or pediment gives them more of an English Georgian character than a Palladian one. The outstanding example of a Maryland country house beholden to the Palladian five-part composition is the 1790s Wye House, in Talbot County, a powerful composition with a temple-form center section and pedimented wings. Of wooden construction, Wye House is a uniquely American expression of Palladianism. Finally, a house that would have been one of Maryland's more stylish versions of the five-part villa was long ago lost to fire, but is known through a surviving elevation drawing by its architect, Joseph Clark. Preserved in the Maryland Historical Society, Clark's design displays the elegantly detailed Wye Hall, the 1790 home of William Paca in Queen Anne's County. The scheme's terminal wings feature large Palladian windows, a design element that was to see widespread use throughout the county, as we shall note later.

Fig. 3, Homewood, Baltimore

Our foremost Federal-period expression of the five-part composition is Homewood in Baltimore, the suburban villa of Charles Carroll, Jr., completed in 1803. Its design is Palladian in outline but Adamesque in its detailing inside and out. Indeed, the house boasts some of America's most exquisite Adamesque detailing. Homewood thus is an instructive demonstration of how Palladianism could be interpreted with a different dialect; in this case the refined Neoclassicism adapted from ancient Roman domestic design by Robert and James Adam and promoted here through the pattern books of William Pain. Homewood's one-story format became the prototype for numerous five-part Federal period houses, interestingly for many in Kentucky, including the Duncan house (1810) in Lexington, displaying tall Palladian windows in its center section, and Ridgeway (1817) near Louisville, a carefully balanced, five-part composition. A relatively late and but dramatic five-part work is the 1850s Moss Neck Manor in Virginia which stretches 225 feet from end to end and is highlighted by a Palladian two-tiered portico in the center.

A variation on the five-part house is the seven-part house. In *Book II* of *The Four Books*, Palladio illustrated his concept of an ancient Roman villa based on his reading of Vitruvius's *The Ten Books on Architecture* as well as the writings of Pliny. Later research has shown that Roman villas probably didn't resemble Palladio's elevation, but his interpretation remained an important

Fig. 4, Brandon, Prince George County, Virginia

image nonetheless. A secondary but influential figure in the eighteenth-century Anglo-Palladian movement was Robert Morris, author of the pattern book, *Rural Architecture* (1750), a work popular in America for offering designs for informed, though relatively modest houses, contrasts to the palatial piles shown in works such as Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1715–1725). In *Rural Architecture*, Morris presented his own interpretation of Palladio's ancient villa elevation, a seven-part scheme for a farmhouse. His elevation was faithfully adapted in Virginia for Brandon, the 1760s plantation house the Harrison family on the James River. It also provided the basis for Tazewell Hall, the wooden mid-eighteenth-century residence of Sir John Randolph in Williamsburg. It should be noted that Whitehall in Maryland is also a seven-part scheme.

Focusing on the center section of Palladio's seven-part ancient villa, we see a two-story middle with one-story wings. Robert Morris worked up a version of this scheme in plate 37 of *Rural Architecture*, showing a pedimented two-story center section with lower wings. This design served as the inspiration for the ca. 1780 William Finnie House in Williamsburg, the prototype for a house-form that has come to be known as "Piedmont Palladian" because so many examples of this three-part type were erected through the Southern Piedmont in the first half of the nineteenth century, including Alabama and even Missouri. Virginia holds more than twenty surviving houses of this form, some quite countrified. A more refined example is Oak Lawn in Charlottesville, built in 1822 probably by James Dinsmore, a master builder and designer who was employed by Thomas Jefferson both at Monticello and the University of Virginia.

Jefferson introduced the tripartite scheme to central Virginia with his first version of Monticello, completed around 1772. With its two-tiered porticoes, superimposed orders, and hipped-roof wings, the scheme, as shown in Jefferson's own drawing, was a reduced version of Palladio's Villa Cornaro. Jefferson was very concerned about the state of Virginia's domestic architecture. Writing about the state's wooden vernacular dwellings he declared: "It is impossible to devise things more ugly, uncomfortable, and happily more perishable." With this first version of Monticello, Jefferson was determined to present a model for the literate use of the classical orders. To Jefferson's mind any respectable work of architecture had to make proper use of the classical architectural vocabulary.

Though it was a precedent-setting composition, Jefferson's first version of Monticello, of course, no longer exists. When Jefferson later lived in Paris as our ambassador, he became taken with French classicism and the pavilion-like quality of the newer houses there, particularly the Hotel de Salm on the banks of the Seine. Its design is characterized by its low one-story profile and central dome. When Jefferson returned home, he refashioned Monticello in the image of the Hotel de Salm, making a three-story house look like a one-story one. Despite its reference to the Hotel de Salm, Monticello is a mix of influences. It has many of the characteristics of domed pavilion design by James Gibbs, illustrated in Plate 67 of *A Book of Architecture*, a work that Jefferson owned. This Gibbs pavilion in turn was

influenced by Palladio's famous Villa Rotunda, which was greatly admired by Jefferson and which he knew through *The Four Books*. To say that Jefferson admired the Villa Rotunda is an understatement. Jefferson anonymously submitted his own version of a Rotunda house, one closely resembling the Villa Rotunda, in a design competition for the official residence of the United States President. The competition, however was won by James Hoban with the White House we know today. Never one to give up, Jefferson later had Robert Mills, who worked for a time as Jefferson's draftsman, prepare a set of drawings for an impressive Rotunda house, which unfortunately never found a client.

Jefferson, of course, was a great proponent of education. He spent most of his last years planning the University of Virginia and designing its buildings. A great believer in architectural literacy, he held that knowledge of architecture was essential to one's education. To Jefferson, that meant classical architecture, the foundation of the architecture of Western Civilization. Realizing that students couldn't achieve architectural literacy without good models to observe, Jefferson incorporated into his university design accurately rendered examples of the five orders of architecture, in some cases two or three versions of the same order. Jefferson's design for his "Academical Village" was, among other things, a great three-dimensional lecture on classical architecture. Each of the pavilions, or faculty residences facing the central lawn displayed a specific version of a classical order. Jefferson naturally turned to Palladio's *Book I* for models for several of the orders. Pavilion VII, for instance, features the Doric of Palladio; Pavilion V's columns and entablature use the Ionic of Palladio, and Pavilion III's portico employs the Corinthian of Palladio. The connecting colonnades sheltering the student rooms make use of a version of Palladio's Tuscan order. The dominate element of Jefferson's scheme was the Rotunda, a half-scale version of the Pantheon in Rome, a building Jefferson never saw but which he knew through Palladio's illustrations and description. While the Pantheon was a temple to all the gods, the Rotunda, which housed the library, was to Jefferson symbolically a temple of knowledge. Jefferson embellished the Rotunda's dome room with an encircling colonnade in the Composite order, thus ensuring that all five orders were represented in his university design.

Jefferson strongly advocated Palladian villas as models for the homes of Virginia's gentry. This predilection was exhibited not only in Monticello, but in his designs for houses for his friends, such as that for Barboursville, the home of his friend James Barbour. Its hipped roof and Tuscan portico flanked by single bays gave Barboursville a resemblance to the Villa Emo. Burned in 1884, Barboursville's walls and columns now stand as a romantic ruin.

Following their employment at both Monticello and the University of Virginia, many of Jefferson's workmen went on to design and build versions of Palladian-inspired houses using their knowledge of the idiom learned from Jefferson. Among these many attractively refined works is the tripartite Westend in Louisa County, Virginia, erected in 1849. Like Barboursville, its tetrastyle Tuscan portico also follows the Villa Emo precedent. In the village of Buckingham Court House, the Dr. Tucker house, a tripartite dwelling with a central pedimented pavilion, also displays a Palladian character via Jefferson. Probably the purest of all Jeffersonian Palladian houses is Bremo, home of Jefferson's close friend, Gen. John Hartwell Cocke. Cocke asked Jefferson for assistance with its design, but Jefferson declared he was too busy at the time and offered Cocke his most able builder, John Neilson,

an accomplished designer in his own right. Working closely with Cocke, Neilson produced a bold five-part scheme. The monumental main section with its central loggia and piano nobile has the strongest Italian quality of all the Jeffersonian/Palladian works. Though not designed by Jefferson, it is safe to say that Bremo would not look the way it does had Jefferson had no interest in architecture. Gen. Cocke became so intrigued by the Palladian image that he even built a Palladian-style barn, a rustic stone structure fronted by a Tuscan portico with columns of rubble stone.

Jefferson's most influential architectural work is the Virginia State Capitol, begun in 1785. The capitol's design marked the first conscious effort of modern times to give architectural expression to the republican form of government. Jefferson's use of the ancient temple form for a modern public edifice was a ground-breaking concept. As such, Jefferson was creating a temple of democracy. We might ask what this has to do with Palladio. In his study of *The Four Books*, Jefferson was introduced not only to the illustrations of Palladio's orders and villa designs, but to the designs of ancient Roman temples. Palladio's reconstruction and measured drawings of the temples are the subject of *Book IV* of *The Four Books*. The design of the capitol was directly inspired by the Maison Carree, a nearly perfectly preserved Roman temple in Southern France. Jefferson first became familiar with the temple through Palladio's drawings in *The Four Books*. Also, the Maison Carree was the one ancient temple that Jefferson actually saw.

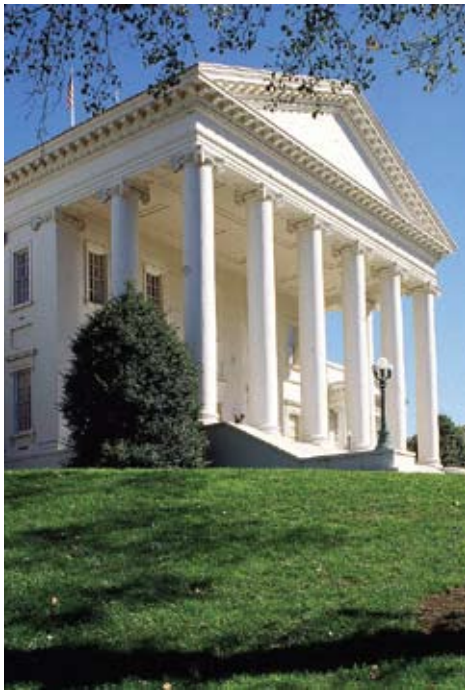

Fig. 5, Virginia State Capitol, Richmond

With the assistance of the French architect Charles-Louis Clerisseau, Jefferson worked up designs for the capitol and sent them to Virginia along with a plaster model to guide the builders there. In locating the capitol on a high hill, above the simple structures of what was then the small town of Richmond, Jefferson must have had Palladio in mind. In Chapter I of *Book IV*, Palladio wrote: "But we, who by God's special grace, are free of that darkness and have deserted their foolish and false superstitions, should choose sites for temples in the most dignified and prestigious part of the city, far away from unsavory areas and on beautiful and ornate squares where many streets end, so that every part of the temple can be seen in all its majesty and arouse devotion and awe in whoever sees and admires it. And if there are hills in the city, one should choose the highest part." The proudly sited Virginia State Capitol marked the birth of the American Classical Revival movement and established the precedent for using monumental classicism, learned by Jefferson from Palladio, for our public buildings.

A discussion of Jefferson's capitol design prompts a closer look at Palladio's *Book IV* and its impact on American architecture. This is the section of *The Four Books* in which Palladio presented his restoration and reconstruction drawings of ancient temples and other public buildings, based on his study and measurements of the ruins. In his foreword to *Book IV* Palladio wrote: "I intend therefore to illustrate in this book the form and ornaments of many

ancient temples of which one can still see the ruins and which I have recorded in drawings, so that anyone can understand the form and ornaments... and although one can see only portions of some of them standing above ground, I have nonetheless proceeded to deduce from them what they must have been like when they were complete..."

It is difficult to over-stress the importance of this effort. It marked one of the first concentrated study and recording projects involving above-ground archaeological remains. The results were amazing from the standpoint of their quality and understanding. Moreover, it was an invaluable accomplishment because it is mainly through these drawings that we have any idea of the probable appearance of much of ancient Roman architecture. Palladio's drawings also are a priceless documentation since several ruins he recorded were subsequently destroyed. For instance, the likely appearance of the Temple of Nerva Trajan, with its Corinthian portico and arched side wings topped by a bold attic, is known only through Palladio's drawings. The ruins were pulled down in 1606.

Fig.6, Mellon Auditorium, Federal Triangle, Washington, D.C.

The impact of the *Book IV* drawings has been profound. The drawings presented for the first time a credible image of the grandeur and beauty of classical architecture. In writing about the temples Palladio stated: "The ancient Greeks and Romans expended the greatest care on them and composed them with the most magnificent ornaments and finest proportions... " While many studies of the ruins have been undertaken since Palladio, his drawings and commentary were a primary motivation for the continuation of the classical tradition in architecture. They provided the ultimate source if not inspiration for many of the great classical works in America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in what we call the American Renaissance. The most conspicuous display of this architectural movement is found in the remarkable assemblage of classical works in our nation's capital. Outstanding among them is Arthur Brown, Jr.'s Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium (completed in 1934), the central element of Washington's Federal Triangle. This huge-scale heroic composition gives us a vision of Palladio's ideal of ancient Roman grandeur. In a sense, America in that period regarded itself as a new Rome, an empire for liberty, and took the Roman image for its own.

In practically any American city, however, we will find monumental classical works that probably would not have existed or, would have been very different in the absence of Palladio's efforts. Space here allows opportunity to offer only a few examples just to give a taste of this proud and priceless part of our architectural heritage. In Charlotte North Carolina, for instance, the long Corinthian colonnade of the 1928 former Mecklenburg County Courthouse by Louis Asbury evokes Rome's Temple of the Divine Hadrian, a ruin drawn and published by Palladio. Baltimore's Pennsylvania Station, designed by Kenneth Mackenzie and built in 1928, is a temple of transport reflecting the Roman basilicas drawn by Palladio. The great vaulted hall of Mckim, Mead & White's Metropolitan Museum of Art suggests Palladio's section of the Basilica of Maxentius. The Philadelphia Museum is an awesome temple of art. Its

conspicuous position adheres to Palladio's principles for locating a temple in a city: on a high hill, at the end of a great street.

Fig. 7, Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore

Famed architect John Russell Pope provided Baltimore with a temple of art in the Baltimore Museum of Art. Like the Philadelphia Museum, it uses a Greek order rather than a Roman one, versions of the orders that were unknown to Palladio. Nevertheless, the Baltimore Museum's interior atrium, with its peristyle and clerestory, recalls Palladio's designs for what he called an "Egyptian Hall," which he illustrated in *Book II* of *The Four Books*. Pope graced Baltimore with other monumental classical works. On the northern stretch of Charles Street is Pope's Scottish Rite Masonic Center, an imperious structure in the Corinthian order begun in 1930. Across Charles Street from Homewood stands Pope's University Baptist Church, a very learned essay in classicism. Its façade is dominated by a perfectly articulated Roman Ionic portico. The main body is topped by low polygonal dome recalling the Baptistery of Constantine, a work also drawn by Palladio and illustrated in *Book IV*.

Carrere & Hastings' 1902 Memorial Rotunda at Yale University echoes Bramante's Tempietto, the one Renaissance building so admired by Palladio that he included a drawing of it in *Book IV*. In writing about the Tempietto, Palladio stated: "... Bramante was the first to make known that good and beautiful architecture which has been hidden from the time of the ancients till now, I thought it reasonable that his work should be placed amongst those of the ancients..." With its colonnaded drum topped by a dome, the Tempietto provided a model for countless monumental domes, including that on our National Capitol as well as the domes of many state capitols. A reflection of the Tempietto is clearly evident in the dome of Baltimore's 1875 City Hall, designed by George A. Frederick.

Fig. 8, University Baptist Church, Baltimore

We cannot discuss Palladio's influence in America without mentioning his most pervasive stamp on our built environment: the so-called Palladian window or Palladian arch. This familiar form consists of a round-arched opening flanked by lower flat-topped openings. Palladio did not invent this form but it is forever associated with him as we shall see. The motif, in fact, existed in Roman times, most often found in works for which the Emperor Hadrian was the patron. Stuart and Revett illustrated in *The Antiquities of Athens* a restoration drawing of this arch form found in remains of Hadrian's aqueduct in Greece. The motif was resurrected in the Renaissance and was popularized by the Venetian architect Sebastian Serlio, who included it in a number of his designs for Venetian palaces, which he published in his treatise *L'Architettura* (1537–47). In fact, the motif became so associated with Serlio and his Venetian designs that more often than not it is referred to in Italy as a serliana or Venetian window.

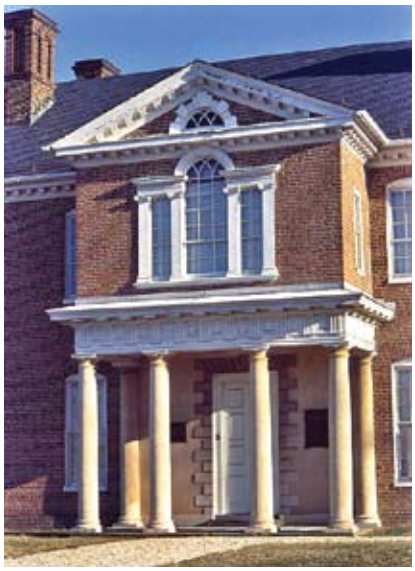

Fig.9, Mount Clare, Baltimore

It was Palladio, however, who gave fame to the motif when he incorporated it as a repetitive device in his famous two-level screen around the medieval basilica of his native Vicenza. He subsequently published the design in *The Four Books*. Interestingly, Palladio used the motif very rarely in his own works, but his publication of the basilica screen ensured the lasting popularity of the motif. Indeed, we must acknowledge that there is something quite visually satisfying about it: at once combining strength and grace, firmness and movement. Its popularity was spread by architects of the Anglo-Palladian movement including James Gibbs, who incorporated it into a number of his designs published in *A Book of Architecture*. His use of a large Palladian window in the east end of St. Martin in the Fields prompted its incorporation into the fabric of the many American churches based on illustrations of this famous Gibbs design. Of course, many of our more sophisticated colonial houses were given visual importance through the application of a Palladian window. Two noteworthy examples are Mount Pleasant, in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park and Mount Clare in Baltimore. Mont Clare's Palladian window elegantly accents the house's distinctive porch chamber. Finally, in his first commission in this country, William Buckland demonstrated creativity by having the motif define the form of the entrance porch that he added to George Mason's Gunston Hall, in Fairfax County, Virginia.

When properly proportioned and detailed the Palladian window can be a feature of great beauty, one adding character to a façade even when fairly plain, as demonstrated on St. Paul's Rectory in the heart of downtown Baltimore. Regrettably, however, in recent time the motif has been reduced to a cliché, a requisite hallmark for many of the so-called McMansions spreading across the country. Oftentimes it's just a simplistic version, ordered from a catalogue and applied with little thought. It was grossly trivialized when it was employed in a stripped-down version for scores of windows in a Boston high-rise. Despite this lugubrious architectural joke, we must recognize that numerous contemporary architects, particularly those affiliated with the Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical America and its various chapters, are producing literate and informed new works in the Palladian spirit.

In closing, we can safely acknowledge that after half a millennium Palladio remains among the most influential architects who ever lived, one whose genius is reflected in many American buildings. We have no reason to think that Palladio will cease to be a source of inspiration well into the future. Although we recognize his genius in his buildings and drawings, we should also think of him as a person, indeed a very personable individual. We have a keen insight into Palladio's personality through a description written in 1616 by Paolo Gualdo. Like Jefferson, Palladio was someone you would enjoy knowing. The following is extracted from Gualdo's description:

"Palladio was a most extraordinarily able and attractive conversationalist, so he gave the most intense pleasure to the Gentlemen and Lords with whom he dealt. The same is true of the workmen he used, whom he kept constantly cheerful, treating them with so many

pleasant attentions that they all worked with the most exceptional good cheer. He eagerly and lovingly taught them the best principles of the art in such a way that there was not a mason, stonecutter, or carpenter who did not understand measurements, elements, and rules of true architecture.

He left many disciples, especially in his home town of Vicenza; they subsequently, with recollections of Palladio's style, have built both public and private buildings that are very beautiful in that city and abroad."

As for abroad, it is hoped that we can now recognize that his American disciples built beautiful public and private buildings in Palladio's style in this country.

Endnotes

James Gibbs, *Rules for Drawing the Several Parts of Architecture*, second edition, 1738: Introduction, 3.

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