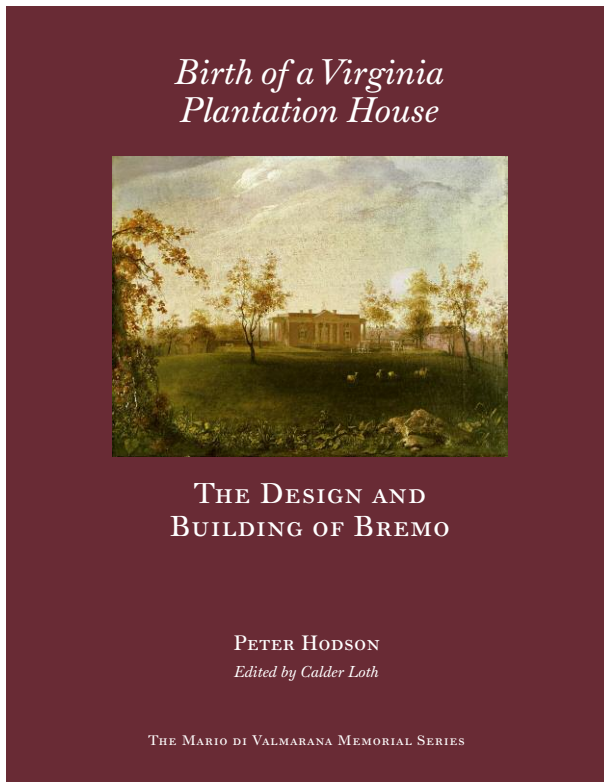


Announcing the first title in the CPSA's Mario di Valmarana Memorial Series



- “*The Design and Building of BreMO*,” principal text by Peter Hodson generously illustrated with original drawings and documents, plus exterior and interior photographs of BreMO plantation
- “*BreMO’s Patternbook Sources and the Architecture of a New Republic*,” an essay by Calder Loth illustrated with numerous examples from patternbooks and their corresponding as-built details at BreMO
- *Remembrance of Mario di Valmarana and introduction to the Mario di Valmarana Memorial Series*, by Carl I. Gable
- An appendix containing a fascinating collection of excerpts from correspondence, invoices and other documents relating to the BreMO building project
- Measured drawings of both floors of BreMO
- Limited edition of 500 copies, beautifully printed in full color, with text set in Monticello typeface
- Hardcover binding with durable Smythsewn construction, full-color endpapers and dustjacket, 104 pages, acid-free paper, 8.5 x 11 inches, designed by Bruce Kennett
- Price \$59.50 (\$47.50 until December 31, 2012)
(For CPSA members, price remains \$47.50)

Birth of a Virginia Plantation House: The Design and Building of BreMO examines the origins of one of America’s most beautiful and influential plantation houses, but it also captures a unique moment in the evolution of American culture when the new nation began to advance its own increasingly independent ideas about architecture and design.

Peter Hodson untangles and corrects the record as to those responsible for creating the 1815–1820 plantation house on the banks of the James River in Virginia. Then he constructs a poignant narrative, drawn from General Cocke’s diary, correspondence, invoices and other documents, to show the complexity of such a construction project and the real-life impact it had on the patron, his family and the craftsmen involved. Finally, Calder Loth, editor of the volume, adds his own essay unlocking the patternbook origins of many of BreMO’s interior motifs. In the process, he shows the central role played by one of America’s pioneering architectural patternbooks.

Birth of a Virginia Plantation House, printed in a limited edition of just 500 copies, is an essential reference for scholars and a fascinating addition to the library of any lover of American architecture, history or culture. (*More details overleaf*)



CENTER FOR PALLADIAN STUDIES IN AMERICA, INC.
Virginia Center for Architecture
2501 Monument Avenue, Richmond VA 23220



Figure 3. Front facade, with view after wing of the right. (Reverend)

main floor of the house substantially as built, but with walls of disproportionate thickness, and Kinchall stated that the drawing "might possibly have been the one which gave rise to the legend of an original drawing by Andrew Briscoe [and was] made directly in the possession of the University of Virginia."¹⁰ Since the publication of Peter Kinchall's article the position of architectural scholars has been that the Briscoe provenance is correct and the drawing is authentic, although the attribution of the house to the remains a strong popular tradition—binding national reputation for tourism to the State Highway Historical Marker near the entrance to the house. In the final pages of this work, made possible through the generosity of the Cooke descendants in allowing full access to the Cook Papers and the Briscoe Drawings, we clarify the question of Briscoe's authorship by providing a chronological account of the construction and make available for scholarly examination the original collection of original documents relating to the design and building of the distinguished manor of American architecture.

The present of this book was in 1997 University of Virginia master's thesis, *The Design and Building of Briscoe House, c. 1798*. Through the generosity of the Briscoe family at the time, Joseph F. Briscoe, Jr., the thesis was primarily printed in facsimile the following year for general scholarly use. Regrettably, all but one of the printed copies were made in a warehouse shortly after printing.

A recognition of the value of understanding and recognizing one of the nation's premier Palladian-style houses, the Center for Palladian Studies in America has sponsored this republication of the thesis, as it is revised and updated form, and with new, high-quality photographs. In addition, there is the inclusion of a new essay by Colin Lavin, examining and identifying the published sources for many of Briscoe's architectural details. The text, original documents and drawings, coupled with Lavin's new scholarship, provides a unique insight into the emergence, in the early years of the new republic, of a distinctly American domestic architecture.

¹⁰ Kinchall, op. cit., "The Building of Briscoe," p. 3.

The Design of Briscoe

When in 1793 Gen. John Hathcock Cooke decided definitively to build a new manor at his first plantation, Upper Briscoe, he was aware that his talents as an amateur architect would be required to take of designing the large and important structure which he contemplated without assistance. He then began seeking advice from Briscoe who were also amateur architects, writing for suggested designs to his neighbors, John Patterson of Warren, and his old schoolmate, St. George Tucker of Williamsburg. Patterson responded first in July 1793 with a design for a large, two-story building with basement (Fig. 1) which clearly reflects Andrew's influence on Palladian house-building. The formal correspondence and the printing, when Patterson drew three alternatives for the shaped end of this room, has stated in accompanying letter [a-1] that he "should prefer the original" are typical of Andrew's influence, and the design has a greater similarity to the early houses including Briscoe in both—commented under Andrew's name or influence in the region during this period.

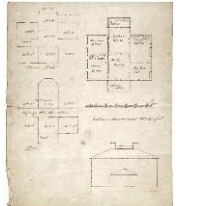


Figure 4. John Patterson, proposed design, July 1793.



Figure 6. Briscoe west gable. The west gable wing, based upon the Briscoe plan, and the west gable wing, based upon the Briscoe plan, and the west gable wing, based upon the Briscoe plan.

On June 3 [a-15] Gen. Cooke had received 1793 through Ellis and Allen to Lagrange for the month, which they reported paid June 28 [a-15]. The respective, measurements and basis were at work during the remainder of the month building the base—showing the roof, finishing the cutting of the capitals for the portico columns and designing the roof. June 28 Gen. Cooke sent "Memorandum regarding the foundation of the New Building at U. B. . . ." [a-17] and on July 1 [a-18] that Messrs and the carpenters were awaiting the state of ground to build the cell and the porch when Briscoe's estimate had required. Work began in earnest on August 18 when Gen. Cooke sent " . . . and the hands opening the foundation for the Western Office of the new building, which Mr. Whitson is to commence the block work of the first week of September. . . ." [a-18] The month also saw him treating with Ellis and Allen to hire an experienced mason from Cary to Richmond, and on September 10 Whitson reported the commencement of the work on the new manor on the review of a note from Whitson of September 2, 1793. [a-18] Relating the laying of the first of the foundation, and on September 10 Whitson began laying both. [a-18] On the same day, Allen, the black stone-carver hired from Cary, began preparing door and window sills for the other wings. Ellis was also responsible for the base to the Thomas column for the west office, but Cate undertook setting the capitals under Whitson's direction. [a-18]

"Which was in Charlottesville for the laying of the cornerstone of the new Great College. . . ." [a-18] It was on November 1, however, that Gen. Cooke (in Charlottesville) again for the meeting of the Agricultural Society "sent Mr. Nelson [a-18] to his way to give direction for the corner of the block which makes a plan 80 feet for my principal building. . . ." [a-18] Nelson made only a brief visit "giving directions for" [a-18] in the early part of November, and was on the night December 10, when Whitson had finished the round columns of the west wing and commenced the arches of the east wing, that "Mr.



Figure 7. The Briscoe hall. The room has recently undergone renovation. (Reverend)

Nelson arrived and gave me a detailed plan of my buildings" [a-18] The next day Gen. Cooke "agreed with Mr. Nelson finally upon the plan of my proposed building, it is concerned the [Dish & Dishes—? a-18] On the 12th that he is with him building the digging out of the foundation of the main block, and on the 15th Nelson "finished the ground plan of my buildings." [a-18]

Measured a great deal of preparatory activity and correspondence had been engaged. On November 6 [a-18] Ellis and Allen reported that the order for the marble and the standing bill had been received by C. L. Nelson, the representative to Lagrange. The order had been handed over "to a workman for the new stone," and the marble could be expected to reach Richmond early in the spring. The prospect for expedite and date the later obtained ultimately from the Buckingham quarry were investigated, and an estimate of column, doors, pane, capitals, ornaments and plaster—obtained the previous winter from Price of Richmond—was placed on the east aspect of the bill at Upper Briscoe. On November 10 and as Gen. Cooke planned two doors "Highgate Oak trees" from his brother-in-law, James Patrick, in "Virginia, W. Compensation of my new household at Upper Briscoe" giving the trees as bearing the best apple for sale.

On December 10 Ellis wrote to recommend James Curtis, a masoning, to replace Allen, who had to return to Cary. He also recommended a planter, M. Bladen. The contract for the completion



Figure 8. Window and column details and window detail.

Following the tradition of classical design for houses, Nelson applied a hierarchy of the orders to the room facades. There is for the bedrooms, dining, the hall, and for the west parlor, the room with the highest status. The west parlor hall has the most elaborate capital and column. Briscoe preferred the Palladian (Fig. 12) Palladian's Ionic, as shown in Book 3 of the Four Books, has rarely decorated moldings, including egg-and-dart, watered, and leaf-and-rod. The Ionic pattern, however, are essentially the same as the west parlor capitals. A similar version of the capitals, but without the decorated moldings, is illustrated in the Langley's *The Builder's Journal*, when it is labeled "The Ionic Capital, Palladian's." As with the detail capitals, the Langley's show the moldings scalloped with a pedimented Ionic. Not to be left out, Briscoe illustrates the same capitals with a Doric Ionic (Fig. 13) to be used, which were used in Nelson's drawing "What is the House, Briscoe's Ionic capitals, is identical to the west parlor capitals, or capital, or are essentially the same as the primary capitals here. The connection to Owen Briscoe's book the more apparent is illustrated in the treatment of the arched window leading to the light. The architrave Briscoe of such windows, the



Figure 9. Section of the house, showing the window and column details.

architrave, as well as the way in which the arch is set on the cornice closely follow Briscoe's illustration of what he termed "a variation in the Ionic Capital," illustrated in *Plan and the Four Corners of a Building*. (Fig. 12) The window tracery in the arch is similar but not identical to Briscoe's plan.

We see a departure from reliance on Briscoe's plan in the doorcases in the main-floor parlor wings. The doorcases are not treated with standard architectural details but instead use the ornate, asymmetrical architrave with corner blocks, although here the corner blocks appear the straight architrave with the panels from the central into the arch. (Fig. 10) Each of the corner blocks is decorated with a panel consisting of concentric molded circles. The panels in a decorative detail around the panels from the central into the arch. (Fig. 10) Each of the corner blocks is decorated the shallow pane for holding several light used in connection of scrolls. Palladio and other Baroque architects treated them as an decorative detail of Doric capitals, the Pattern Capital, as illustrated in the Lower edition of *Four Books*, a noteworthy example. (Fig. 10)

The Ionic form is termed "symmetrical architrave" here because instead of having an egg-and-dart, as in a standard architrave, the frames here are treated with ornamental moldings. The fashion for using ornamental architraves with square corner blocks originated in the late eighteenth-century England with the Regency style and the Greek influence. Some of the earliest architraves was treated with the ornamental facing in column heads, but the treatment came in many variations. Such was become popular with hill-builders because it was much easier to frame an opening than that with ornate scrolls, which are difficult to make. While it cannot be documented, it is likely that this new style of Briscoe was introduced into the country by the noted British architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe, who emigrated to America in 1794 and is credited with introducing the Greek style or Greek Revival to the United States. He is, 1798-99 presentation showing in the state hall of the French House in Norfolk, likely having ornamental moldings and corner blocks decorated with panels, and may be the earliest proposal of this detail in these shores.

The question then arises as to whether the Nelson got the idea of using this type of opening from Briscoe. It is illustrated in some of the parternocks cited here and in some that we are aware of that would have been available to him at the time. However, since Nelson was then young and trained in Belfast,

BIRTH OF A VIRGINIA PLANTATION HOUSE
contains a wealth of illustrations: over a dozen reproductions of the original sketches and correspondences produced during the early stages of the design, plus numerous photographs showing both exterior and interior aspects of the house. Construction details have been meticulously researched and are shown in both source drawings and as-built photographs. The book contains 70 illustrations in all, plus transcriptions from original documents.

ORDER FORM

I wish to purchase *Birth of a Virginia Plantation House: The Design and Building of Briscoe* as follows:

_____ copies @ \$47.50* per copy \$ _____
 (*\$59.50 for non-members after 12/31/2012)

ADD U.S. shipping & handling*
 (\$5.00 for 1 copy; \$4.00 for each additional copy sent to the same address)
 (*For shipment to addresses outside the U.S., please email scalvin@aiava.org for pricing)

ADD (for shipments to VA residents only) Virginia sales tax @ \$2.38* each
 (*\$2.98 each for sales at \$59.50 price)

ORDER TOTAL \$ _____

Mail completed form to:
 Center for Palladian Studies in America, Inc.
 Virginia Center for Architecture
 2501 Monument Avenue
 Richmond VA 23220

ADDRESS _____
 Name _____
 Address _____
 Email _____
 Telephone _____
 Enclose instructions if shipping addresses differ.

PAYMENT (Please check one)
 Check enclosed.
 Pay by credit card.
 (circle) Visa MasterCard AmEx
 Card number _____
 Card expires _____ Security Code _____
 Signature _____