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**APOCRYPHAL GRANDEUR:
BELLE GROVE PLANTATION IN IBERVILLE PARISH, LOUISIANA**

by

Robert Mark Rudd

**A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Early American Culture**

Spring 2002

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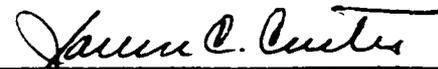
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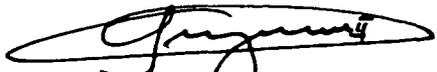
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ABSTRACT

In the fall of 1952, residents of Iberville Parish, Louisiana, gathered at the banks of the Mississippi to witness the burning of the mansion house at Belle Grove Plantation. It was what all agreed was an awe-inspiring spectacle. In less than one hour, Belle Grove House reached its final and bitter end, consumed by fire. Some 100 years earlier, another generation of Iberville Parish residents also gathered to witness an equally awe-inspiring spectacle: the construction of the largest house built in the American South prior to the Civil War.

Belle Grove House dwarfed both its neighbors and its immediate surroundings. With its irregular massing and Italianate design Belle Grove House brought to the Lower Mississippi a style of architecture popular in urban New Orleans.

To date, Belle Grove's massive size has overshadowed writing on the subject of the plantation and mansion house. At the same time, its tragic demise has been fodder for a romanticization on a scale unprecedented in American architecture. This study will treat Belle Grove House not as a romantic cultural icon, but as the product of the ambitions of an architect and owner. Belle Grove House will be considered within the greater context of the Lower Mississippi sugar country and within the plantation system that surrounded and supported it. At the same time, the use of space and the physical arrangement of both Belle Grove Plantation and Belle Grove House will be studied to gain a more objective understanding of life on the grandest of all Lower Mississippi sugar plantations.

Unfortunately, both Belle Grove Plantation and Belle Grove House no longer exist. As a result this effort will use as evidence photographs of Belle Grove, family records, remaining artifacts from the house, and U.S. census and Iberville Parish records. Records of neighboring plantations will help understand how Belle Grove functioned as a working and occasionally viable sugar plantation. Finally, Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) records will play a role in understanding the unusual and eccentric design and construction of the house, and how the house shaped life at Belle Grove.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1952, residents of Iberville Parish, Louisiana gathered at the banks of the Mississippi to witness the burning of the mansion house at Belle Grove Plantation. It was, in the words of witnesses, an awe-inspiring spectacle.¹ In less than one hour, Belle Grove reached its final and bitter end, consumed by fire.

Some 100 years earlier, another generation of Iberville Parish residents gathered by the Mississippi to witness an equally awe-inspiring spectacle: the construction of the largest house built in the American South prior to the Civil War. Dwarfing its surroundings, and with its Italianate design, Belle Grove House brought to the Lower Mississippi a form and style of architecture previously seen in more urban settings.

To date, Belle Grove House's massive size has overshadowed writing on the subject of the plantation and mansion house. At the same time, its tragic demise has been fodder for a romanticization on a scale unprecedented in American architecture. This study will by contrast treat Belle Grove House not as a romantic cultural icon, but as the product of the ambitions of an architect and owner. Belle Grove House will also be considered within the context of the Lower Mississippi sugar country and within the plantation system that surrounded it.



1. 1 Belle Grove House (Photo courtesy Library of Congress.)

At the same time, the use of space and the physical arrangement of Belle Grove Plantation will be studied to gain a more objective understanding of life on the grandest of all Lower Mississippi sugar plantations.

Sadly, Belle Grove Plantation and Belle Grove House no longer exist. As a result, this effort will use as evidence photographs of Belle Grove, family records, artifacts from the house, U.S. Census and Iberville Parish records, and previous writing about the house and plantation. Records of neighboring plantations will help understand how Belle Grove functioned as a working and occasionally viable sugar plantation. Finally, Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) records will play a vital role in understanding both the unusual and eccentric design and construction of the house, and how the house and plantation shaped life at Belle Grove.

Chapter 2

THE HOUSE THAT CANE BUILT

Like many of his generation, Louisiana sugar planter John Andrews began life in the East. Born in Norfolk, Virginia in 1804, Andrews moved west in search of better financial prospects. Arriving in Louisiana in the 1830s, Andrews formed a partnership with Dr. John Phillip Read Stone, an early Iberville Parish settler, to purchase a sugar plantation jointly. Upon arrival, Andrews purchased land between the Mississippi and Bayou Goula, and Stone provided 30 slaves to begin the work of developing sugar fields.² In 1844, the partnership ended, and John Andrews became sole owner of Belle Grove Plantation. In 1832, Andrews had married Penelope Lynch Adams, a descendent of Christopher Adams, one of Iberville Parish's early settlers. The couple had eight children before Mrs. Andrews' death in 1848. Five of these children lived to adulthood.³

John Andrews focused his interests and energies almost exclusively on raising and refining sugar. He did not enter politics, he played only a small role in local affairs, and for the most part he stayed out of the public eye. In 1842, Andrews did join in signing the "Memorial of a Number of Planters and Sugar Manufactures in the State of Louisiana," a petition for increased duties on imported sugar that was sent to the 27th Congress. This appears to have been his only role in the greater political economy of sugar on the Lower Mississippi. Andrews also avoided any entanglement with the law or

his neighbors. Records from the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s contain no indication of any charges or disagreements relating to his administration of the plantation and treatment of its slaves, or to any other business activities beyond raising and refining sugar. During the American Civil War, Andrews moved to Texas with his slaves, leaving his daughters in charge of Belle Grove. After the war, Andrews lost Belle Grove Plantation.⁴

John Andrews died at the age of 80 in New Orleans. By that time, his life had spanned booms and depressions, slavery and emancipation, war and peace, and prosperity and ruin. Ironically, the man who dedicated his life to sugar production and to the development of his plantation died on a quiet side street in New Orleans. By then, no member of the Andrews family was involved in large-scale sugar production.

In many ways, John Andrews' meteoric rise proved to be his undoing. Focusing almost exclusively on sugar production, Andrews created a highly specialized plantation and as a result narrowed his economic opportunities. This specialization created in turn rigidity in the plantation's organization and means of production. For a period, this rigidity strengthened the plantation and ensured its success. Unlike his neighbors, Andrews failed to adapt to the changing markets and the changes in systems of labor of the post-Civil War era.

Belle Grove was not solely the product of an owner and architect, but also of a larger agricultural and economic system that found its greatest expression during the second quarter of the nineteenth century.⁵ Consideration of the economic system in which Belle Grove Plantation was created is vital to understanding the organization of the plantation, and the design, construction, and furnishing of Belle Grove House.

Belle Grove Plantation was principally the product of its location and age, and a reflection of the financial vicissitudes of southern sole-crop agriculture during the first half of the nineteenth century. During this time, the Lower Mississippi was dominated by highly specialized agricultural patterns and residential architectural forms that were a reaction to the needs and goals of its primary product, sugar.⁶ Given the extensive upfront investment required to create a successful sugar plantation, and the finite amount of suitable land within a suitable climate, admission to the elite club of major sugar growers was intensely limited.

By the time John Andrews commissioned New Orleans architect Henry Howard to design and supervise construction of his house, an intricate and hierarchical social system had enveloped the Lower Mississippi. Andrews had arrived in Louisiana with impeccable timing. Cane sugar, long a product of the West Indies, was being raised commercially with success in the region. Thanks to the work of Etienne de Bore and Antoine Morin, widely regarded as pioneers in the cultivation of sugar in America, sugar was becoming one of America's staple crops.⁷ When Louisiana became part of the United States in 1803, what followed was one of the greatest population redistributions in American history.⁸ From Virginia and the Carolinas, a generation that had exhausted lands in the East arrived on the Lower Mississippi eager to convert their remaining capital (predominantly in the form of slaves) and their land into what was commonly called white gold. With an increasing American population and new protective tariffs on West Indian sugar, sugar planters like John Andrews came to the Lower Mississippi to enjoy growing demand and ample markets.

For many early planters, the production of sugar proved to be as problematic as it was profitable. Sugarcane is a grass and is planted using sections of mature cane that have developed joints or nodes. Mattressed under earth in the fall and planted the following spring, cane may thrive over the next seven months based on the health and vigor of the young plants and the cooperation of the weather. The following year, a stubble crop, the result of re-growth of the original planting, is harvested. These crops produce less usable cane, because they do not enjoy the vigor and strength of the original matted plantings. The third year crop is even weaker, and from this crop a planter needed to harvest and matted sufficient node stems to start the process over the following year. As a result, cane production runs on a three-year schedule, with each new year producing a smaller and less profitable crop than the year before it.

Period accounts indicate that most sugar planters learned to live with this three-year cycle of profit and decline. Some attempted to rotate fields so that each year saw cane harvested at all three stages in its life. At the same time, planters played a loose and fast game with the seasons. The longer cane was left in the fields, the higher the sugar level in the plant, and in turn the more profitable the crop. This required leaving crops standing through the often-cold days of October and November. One freeze spelled ruin, as freezing destroyed the integrity of the cane and drastically reduced the amount of sugar within it. Planters carefully weighed the added benefit of extending the cane's standing in the fields, often to disastrous effect. On one plantation, the entire crop of 1851 was lost after a major and unanticipated frost struck fields standing at the whim of wind and

temperature because the planter failed to harvest in time. Such an occasion spelled, at best, a year with little income; at worst, immediate bankruptcy.⁹

During the nineteenth century, cane was harvested and mechanically pressed and ground in a sugar mill to extract sugar juice. The remaining cane, called bagasse, was often burned as waste, necessitating investment in one of the many patented bagasse burners. The earliest planters on the Lower Mississippi made use of a series of large iron cauldrons to boil in succession the increasingly granular syrup. Molasses, the principal and natural byproduct of sugar production, was drawn off and cooled in barrels. In 1830, the vacuum pan system was invented which did away with the need for multiple open boiling kettles. This invention spread quickly up and down the Mississippi and greatly contributed to the creation of large-scale sugar plantations like Belle Grove.

Unlike today, sugar production in the nineteenth century was highly dependent on manual labor. Labor forces on Lower Mississippi sugar plantations consisted almost entirely of slaves, with the exception of day laborers employed to do work that planters thought was too risky to be performed by those in whom they had significant financial investments. As a result, planters operated with relatively fixed labor costs. This meant that a labor force sufficient for the harvest and grinding of cane could be larger than required during the rest of the year. Accounts show that during the grinding season, which usually began in the late summer or early fall, most slave forces worked round-the-clock.¹⁰ During the off-season, slaves were put to work at a variety of tasks, including chopping wood, planting cane, field maintenance, and other routine tasks.

It is within this agricultural and economic system that Belle Grove Plantation was born. Important to our understanding of the plantation and house are the few extant records relating to the production of sugar at Belle Grove and the income of the Andrews family, and those relating to the production, price, and profitability of sugar during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Thanks to the U.S. Bureau of the Census records of 1840, 1850, and 1860, city directories, and records kept by the Port of New Orleans and Iberville Parish, we can begin to understand the kind of resources available to John Andrews as he developed Belle Grove Plantation. This in turn will provide a basis for understanding the motivations and forces that shaped Belle Grove Plantation and House.

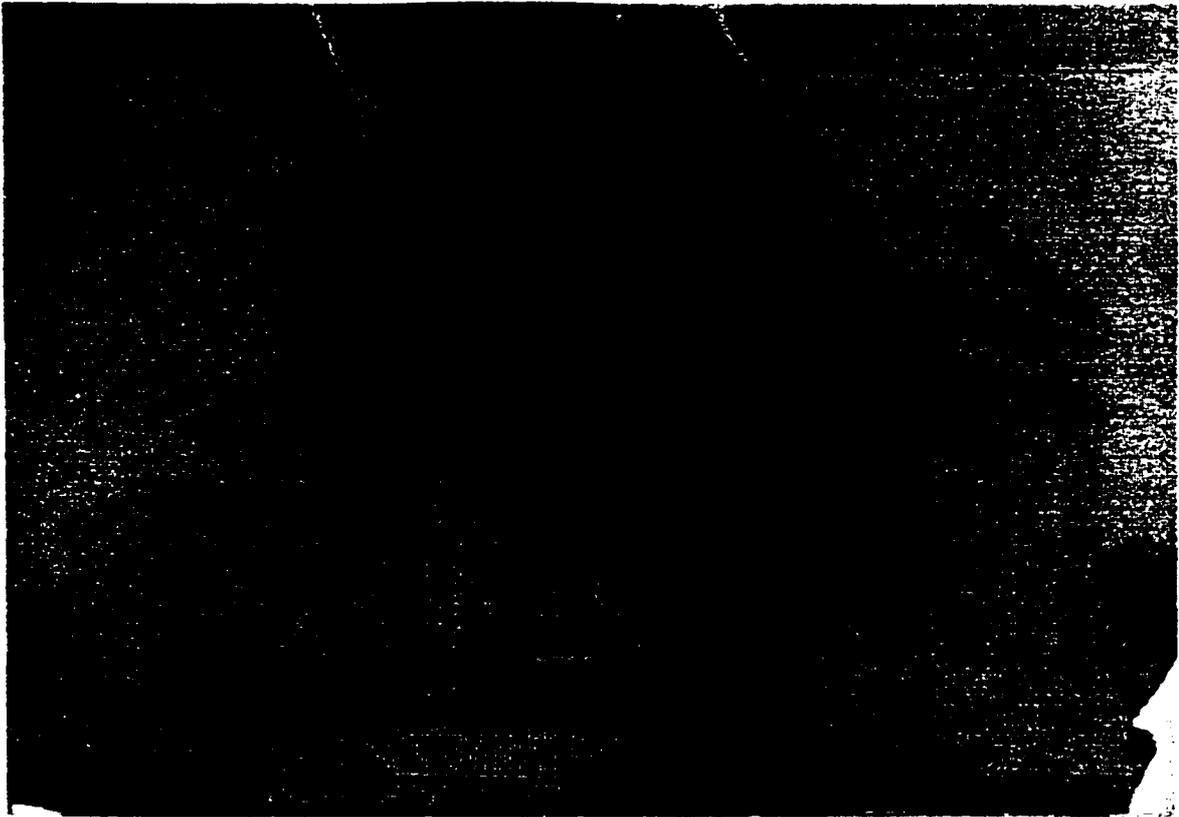
Before the American Civil War, John Andrews enjoyed a prominent position among Lower Mississippi sugar planters. Having purchased the land that became Belle Grove Plantation in two separate transactions, the first in 1835 and the second in 1837, Andrews gained a long stretch of land reaching from the Mississippi to Bayou Goula, a distance of three miles. By 1850, John Andrews owned 135 slaves, of whom 90 were active in cane cultivation and sugar processing. The census of 1850 lists the total value of Andrews' real estate as \$180,000. That year, some 327 residents of Iberville Parish owned slaves. Of this group, 14 owned over 100 slaves, placing Andrews within the top four percent of slave owners. The size of his plantation, however, did not elevate him above all of his neighbors. With 7,000 acres, Belle Grove was a mid-size sugar plantation, but Andrews found a way to overcome this problem: the percentage of land in cultivation at Belle Grove Plantation was higher than that of larger plantations.¹¹

By 1860, the value of Andrews' land and slaves had risen to \$250,000, placing him within the top one percent of Iberville Parish landholders. Of the now 408 slaveholders in Iberville Parish, only 26 owned more than 100 slaves. Andrews' 148 slaves, housed in 30 cabins on the plantation, earned him a position within the top six percent of slaveholders in the parish. Within that top six percent of slaveholders, only eight planters owned more slaves than Andrews. Perhaps most importantly, in terms of net worth Andrews was one of just 14 Ibervillians worth over \$250,000.¹²

Further data provide an even deeper understanding of the economic position of the Andrews family and the extent of their ability to construct and furnish a house on the scale of Belle Grove House. Most accounts argue that John Andrews paid all the expenses of the house's construction with one year's profits, with the cost of construction estimated anywhere from \$80,000 to \$97,000.¹³ These accounts may stem from an 1868 advertisement for the sale of the plantation prepared by Barstow & Pope in New York, which listed the plantation's 1856 income as totaling 582 hogsheads, which sold for \$97,000.¹⁴ This account is at odds with data collected by the Port of New Orleans for that year. P.L. Champomier, who during the mid-nineteenth century prepared detailed reports of each year's sugar production, reported that in 1856 John Andrews produced a total of 656 hogsheads of sugar, 74 more than claimed by Barstow & Pope. The price that year, however, averaged 70 dollars per hogshead, giving John Andrews a gross income of \$45,920, less than half of what Barstow & Pope reported. Even with the sale of molasses, Andrews' maximum possible income from sugar in 1856 was only \$58,869. Even in the best of years gross income from the plantation ranged from a high of \$67,591

to a low of \$19,443, from which the expenses of operating the plantation and feeding and sustaining 135 slaves would have been deducted.¹⁵

This reevaluation of John Andrews' income suggests that a much greater amount of time and energy was required to amass the wealth necessary to construct Belle Grove House than has been previously assumed. Exactly why Andrews decided to build Belle Grove House at the time he did is the subject of speculation, but it is apparent that several factors influenced the timing of the house's construction. One factor was the significant up-front investment required to make a sugar plantation profitable. Unlike cotton and other staples, effective sugar cultivation and production required a major investment in equipment. It is estimated that in the late 1840s and early 1850s, a large sugar processing plant with steam generation and a vacuum pan system like the one at Belle Grove Plantation would have required an initial investment of nearly \$100,000, more than the construction costs of Belle Grove House.¹⁶ The sugarhouse at Belle Grove Plantation also required ongoing investments in machinery. Twice, Andrews installed new equipment, including a steam battery system in 1856, and a Vespanidus battery system in 1861.¹⁷ Labor investments were also significant. Slaves in the prime of life in the 1850s sold on average for \$800 for a prime field hand, aged 20-30, and rising to nearly \$2,000 on the eve of the Civil War.¹⁸ At the same time, extensive development of cane fields, purchases of mules and wagons, soil amendment, and the construction of barns and slave quarters would have had priority over the construction of Belle Grove House. This may explain in part why 20 years elapsed between John Andrews's land purchases and the construction of Belle Grove House.



2.1 Belle Grove House at Completion (Photo courtesy Historic New Orleans Collection, acc. # 1983.47.4.2710.)

Belle Grove House was constructed between 1852 and 1855, a period of tremendous growth in both the volume of sugar production on the Lower Mississippi and the profits resulting from its refinement and sale. In 1851, the volume of sugar production on the Lower Mississippi began to increase dramatically. That year, growers produced and delivered to the Port of New Orleans, the primary destination for refined sugar and molasses, a total of 236,547 hogsheads of refined sugar. Each hogshead

weighed on average 1,150 pounds. In 1852, the year when construction of Belle Grove House began, sugar production rose 26 percent for a total crop of 321,931 hogsheads. 1853 saw another strong crop, totaling 449,324 hogsheads, an increase of 28 percent over the year prior. 1854 saw a downturn to 346,635 hogsheads, but still a rate of production that can be considered effective, and which ensured the survival of all but the most inept of sugar planters.¹⁹

During this time, prices remained strong and sugar planters did not see the decreases in price normally associated with increased agricultural production. In 1851, the total value of sugar produced was \$12,020,540, with planters receiving on average \$50 per hogshead. In 1852 the total value increased to \$15,452,683, based on a price of \$48 per hogshead. In 1853, the value rose to \$15,726,340, with prices running \$35 per hogshead. In 1854, the value increased again to \$18,025,020, with planters receiving \$52 per hogshead, a strong showing representing an increase in value over the previous year of over 33 percent. 1855 saw a decline in total value to \$16,199,890, the first decline in total production in five years. The price paid per hogshead rose that year to a record \$70, but this was not enough to offset the decline in production.²⁰

Production and pricing provide an economic framework within which it is also possible to understand how Belle Grove Plantation operated. In the mid-1840s, Belle Grove, and by association John Andrews, was the largest single producer of sugar in Iberville Parish. In 1844, some 64 plantations in Iberville Parish reported results to P.L. Champomier for his annual report. By 1845-46, 97 plantations had reported their results. In both years, only one operation produced more sugar than Belle Grove, but this was a

partnership of two planters, Hynes and Craighead, and their operation combined two large and separate plantations. As the decade turned, John Andrews again garnered the top spot among all plantations. In 1849-50, Belle Grove produced 580 hogsheads, the largest production in Iberville Parish.²¹

During the 1850s the picture began to change. From Champomier's reports it is clear that partnerships like that of Hynes and Craighead were becoming increasingly popular. Throughout Iberville Parish, families, and in some cases neighbors, formed partnerships to lower costs, expand production, and increase net income.²² John Andrews soldiered on alone. The 1850s ultimately saw a precipitous decline in Andrews' position among Iberville Parish sugar planters who also chose to go it alone. In 1850-51, Andrews slid to 3rd place. The next year, 1851-52, Andrews dropped to 12th place in overall sugar production. 1852-53, the year when construction began on Belle Grove House, Andrews rebounded to 3rd place.²³ Between 1853 and 1860, Andrews remained a major sugar producer, but he never recaptured the magic of 1849-50. In 1861, Andrews, with production of 855 hogsheads, ranked 5th in Iberville Parish sugar production, well behind Edward Gay of St. Louis Plantation with 1,385 hogsheads; Mrs. H.L. Vaughn of White Castle Plantation with 1,085 hogsheads; and John Andrews' key rival John Randolph at Nottoway, with 1,044 hogsheads.²⁴

Ironically, the construction of Belle Grove House came at a time when John Andrews' position in the local community was in decline. Andrews could not hold onto a top spot among Iberville sugar planters, nor did he ever own the most slaves or possess the largest landholding. He also failed to lay claim to having the most valuable plantation

in Iberville Parish. In the face of his declining reputation, Andrews turned his attention to an area where he could compete with fellow planters and win. In reaction to his diminished economic stature, Andrews commissioned the largest house built in the American South prior to the Civil War. In the process, Andrews created a very new kind of plantation, one that expressed his wealth and power, his taste and sophistication, and his family's socialibility and elitism on a scale that had never been attempted in the region. As we will see, this effort would be his undoing.

¹ Iberville Press, Oct. 21, 1952.

² Some accounts point to John Andrews having arrived from Virginia with just over 100 slaves, although this number cannot be confirmed. Census data indicate that by 1840, Andrews owned 90 slaves, a figure that seems more in line with the amount of land and scale of operations at Belle Grove Plantation. Andrews either arrived with a significant number of slaves, or purchased nearly 70 slaves over a 10-year period, a major investment that would have coincided with the construction of the sugarhouse and outbuildings, the development of fields, and the propagation of initial sugar crops. In all likelihood, few sugar planters could have made such extensive investments over such a short period. For further discussion of slave labor and sugar production, see Richard J. Follett's "The Sugar Masters: Slavery, Economic Development, and Modernization on Louisiana Sugar Plantations, 1820-1860" (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, 1997).

³ There has been no agreement on the date of Penelope Lynch Adams Andrews' death, with sources indicating her death as having occurred in 1847, 1848, and 1849. 1848 is the date given in most biographies. What is clear is that by the 1850 United States Census, John Andrews was a widower. This family history is drawn from Glenn R. Conrad's *A Dictionary of Louisiana Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Historical Association, 1988).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Three works provide a foundation for understanding antebellum Lower Mississippi agriculture: Glenn Conrad's *White Gold: A Brief History of the Louisiana Sugar Country, 1795 - 1995* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1995); Rene J. Le Guarder's *Green Fields: Two Hundred Years of Louisiana Sugar* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1980); and Carlyle J. Sitterson's *Sugar Country: The Cane Sugar Industry in the South, 1753-1950* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1953).

⁶ This observation is based on Barbara SoRelle Bacot's essay "The Plantation" in *Louisiana Buildings: 1720-1940, The Historic American Buildings Survey* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1997), pp. 87 - 173.

⁷ In 1796, de Bore and Morin succeeded in growing a crop of cane sufficient to return profits and justify cultivation on a large scale. The works of Glenn Conrad, Rene J. Le Guarder, and Carlyle J. Sitterson are again vital here in understanding the roots of Lower Mississippi sugar economics and culture.

⁸ In reality, John Andrews was no pioneer. His arrival in Louisiana came at the end of the period of major American settlement of the Lower Mississippi. For a more complete picture of population redistribution and the effects of America's Louisiana Purchase, see Dolores Egger Labbe's *The Louisiana Purchase and its Aftermath, 1800-1830* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies at University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1998).

⁹ The risks inherent in sugar cultivation are reflected in Pierre Antoine Champomier's invaluable *Statement of the Sugar Crop of Louisiana* (New Orleans: Cook Young and Company, 1845-1864), published annually in New Orleans. Champomier's records point to just how widely sugar plantation income could vary based on each individual planter's actions and timing, as well as on major catastrophic cane diseases as seen in the disastrous crop of 1855.

¹⁰ The best source for understanding the use of labor and the timing of seasons and cultivation is Carlyle J. Sitterson's *Sugar Country: The Cane Sugar Industry in the South, 1753-1950* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1953).

¹¹ Three sources provide a detailed picture of the financial status of Belle Grove Plantation: Pierre Antoine Champomier's annual *Statement of the Sugar Crop of Louisiana*, which provides production figures for both the region and for individual planters; the United States Censuses of 1840, 1850, and 1860, which provide information on property values, both in real estate and personal property; and city directories published by both Cohen and Gardner, which contain price and volume information for the Lower Mississippi sugar crops as landed at New Orleans.

¹² It is important to note that the census data reflects only holdings in the form of land, slaves, equipment, buildings, and personal possessions. As such, these figures do not include holdings such as bonds, companies and property located outside Iberville Parish, and other investments. Even with these restrictions, it is evident that the Andrews family was one of the wealthiest in Iberville Parish during the 1850s.

¹³ To date, three works have dominated discussion of Belle Grove Plantation and the Andrews family. They are: Harnett K. Kane's *Plantation Parade: The Grand Manner in Louisiana* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1945); Lyle Saxon's *Old Louisiana* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1929); and William Edward Clement's *Plantation Life on the Mississippi*. (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Company, 1962). While one can question the sources and stories used in these works, it is important to recognize that the three authors brought about a new appreciation for Louisiana architecture, resulting in the preservation of many of the large plantation houses on the Lower Mississippi.

¹⁴ Barstow & Pope, "Advertisement for the Sale of Belle Grove Plantation", New York, 1868, Manuscript Collection, Historic New Orleans Collection.

¹⁵ These figures are again drawn from Pierre Antoine Champomier's series *Statement of the Sugar Crop of Louisiana*, the Censuses of 1840, 1850, and 1860, and on data provided in *Cohen's New Orleans and Lafayette Directory*, and *Gardner's New Orleans Directory*, both published in New Orleans by a variety of publishers throughout the mid-nineteenth century.

¹⁶ The work of Glenn Conrad, Rene J. Le Guarder, and Carlyle J. Sitterson is vital here in understanding the kind of initial investment required to establish a major sugar plantation.

¹⁷ This figure is cited in Pierre Antoine Champomier's *Statement of the Sugar Crop of 1860-61* (New Orleans: Cook Young and Company, 1861) pp. 26.

¹⁸ Slave pricing data is provided in Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman's *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1974) pp. 67-106.

¹⁹ This data is drawn from *Cohen's New Orleans and Lafayette Directory including Carrollton, Algiers, Gretna and McDonough of 1854-55* (New Orleans: Daily Delta, 1855).

²⁰ This data is based on Pierre Antoine Champomier's *Statement of the Sugar Crop of Louisiana of 1854-55* (New Orleans: Cook Young & Company, 1855).

²¹ All data provided here is based on Champomier's annual publications.

²² Begnaud, Allen. "The Louisiana Sugar Cane Industry" in *Green Fields: Two Hundred Years of Louisiana Sugar* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1980) pp. 42-43.

²³ Andrews did have a year of production in excess of his neighbors. In 1856-67, he produced 582 hogsheads. The year earlier he was in 34th place with 178. In all likelihood the reporting reflects Andrew's attempt at market timing. In 1855-56 the price for sugar plummeted, and Andrews may have held back his sugar in anticipation of a better year. If so, this points to remarkable financial skills. The problem is that if one averages the two years, one good, one bad, the average still puts Andrews well back in the field.

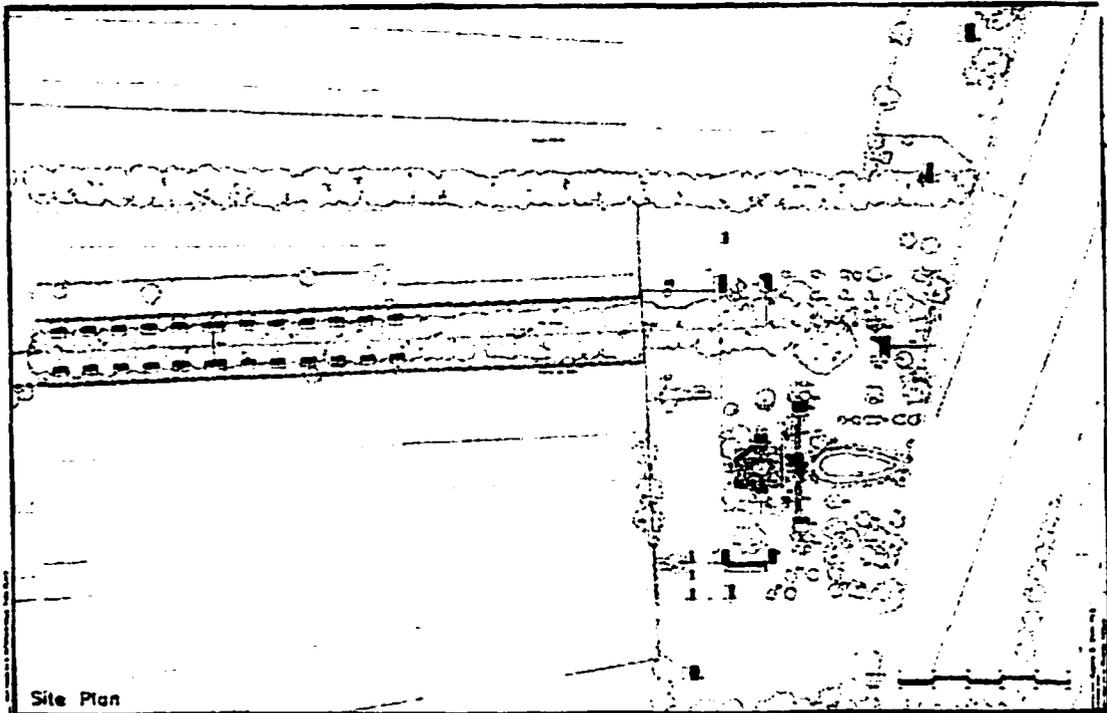
²⁴ The rivalry between John Andrews and John Randolph has become legendary and in some ways is quite believable. Each came to Louisiana from Virginia, each had large families and many daughters, each were major sugar planters, and most importantly, each hired the same architect and built massive plantation houses, located just several miles apart. Today, John Randolph's Nottoway is the largest surviving antebellum plantation mansion house in the American South.

Chapter 3

PLANTATION DESIGN AND LAYOUT

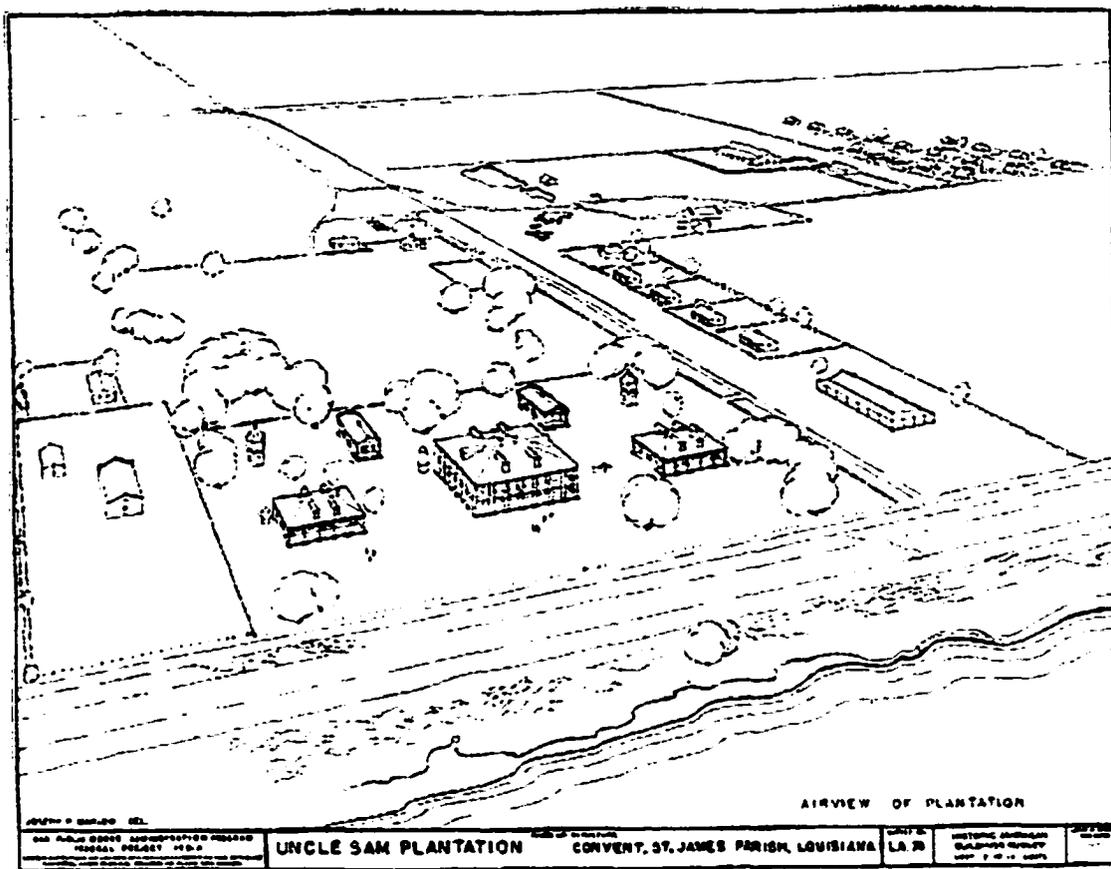
In the late 1850s and early 1860s, artist Marie Adrian Persac traveled the Lower Mississippi and the surrounding bayous, painting sugar plantations.¹ Thanks to his work, a record of antebellum sugar plantation architecture exists, including paintings of many plantations since altered or destroyed. Most striking in Persac's work is the consistency of his images. From his work, it is clear that the typical large Louisiana sugar plantation included a white, one or two-story plantation house, a row of slave cabins, and a sugarhouse. As Barbara Sorelle Bacot has shown, three plantation forms dominated the Lower Mississippi. She identifies these forms as the linear plan, the lateral plan, and the block plan. The linear plan arranged structures in a line from the Mississippi River back toward the inland end of the plantation. The lateral plan arranged structures parallel to the Mississippi. The block plan followed the design of small towns; structures were arranged in a grid pattern, with paths and lanes running both parallel and perpendicular to the Mississippi. These three forms dominated the organization of plantations and remained in strong favor until the American Civil War.²

The three plans were as much the result of geography as social custom. The Mississippi River, the economic lifeline of region, was the force in the division of land. In a region with few roads and far-ranging bayous, the Mississippi was the primary vehicle for the movement of cotton, sugar, and finished goods.



3.1 Evergreen Plantation Layout

With its slave quarters stretching back from the Mississippi River, this plantation follows the classic linear plan. (Illustration courtesy Library of Congress.)



3.2 Uncle Sam Plantation Layout

Perhaps the most complete plantation to survive the nineteenth century, Uncle Sam began life following the linear plan. As the main house and supporting offices and other structures were added, the plantation took on a more lateral form. (Illustration courtesy Library of Congress.)

Given the importance of river access, Lower Mississippi sugar plantations were mostly formed in long strips of land, with each plantation having some access to the Mississippi. In Iberville and other parishes, plantations were usually two to three miles deep, and generally extended from the Mississippi to the inland forests or bayous. This arrangement ensured river access and gave each plantation a source of wood for heating and cooking fires, for construction, and for the refinement of sugar. Not all plantations were created equal, and in Iberville Parish some sugar plantations enjoyed 10 times more river frontage than others, while some had no access to forests or bayous.³

Length of river frontage did not correlate directly to wealth, nor did it ensure the long-term survival of a plantation. Given the twisting nature of the Mississippi, plantations tended to be wedge shaped; the length of river frontage being determined by their relationship to bends in the Mississippi. Plantations like that of Dr. H.G. Doyle (Eureka, ca. 1840), whose river frontage was minimal, and that of A. Sigur, whose river frontage extended over one-half mile, were of roughly the same acreage and considered equally valuable.⁴ Nor was the length of river frontage a given. Despite levees, the shifting nature of the Mississippi regularly redistributed land. Plantations such as Houmas (early nineteenth century, reworked 1840) on the east bank of the Mississippi lost land consistently throughout the nineteenth century, while those planters across the Mississippi enjoyed the regular deposit of land in front of their plantations. What is unusual is that so few planters took the shifting river into consideration in designing their plantations. Today, the main houses at Bocage (early 19th century, reworked 1840), San Francisco (1852-56), and Nottoway (1857-59) are all within feet of the levees. By the

time San Francisco and Nottoway were built, the shifting nature of the Mississippi had to have been painfully evident.

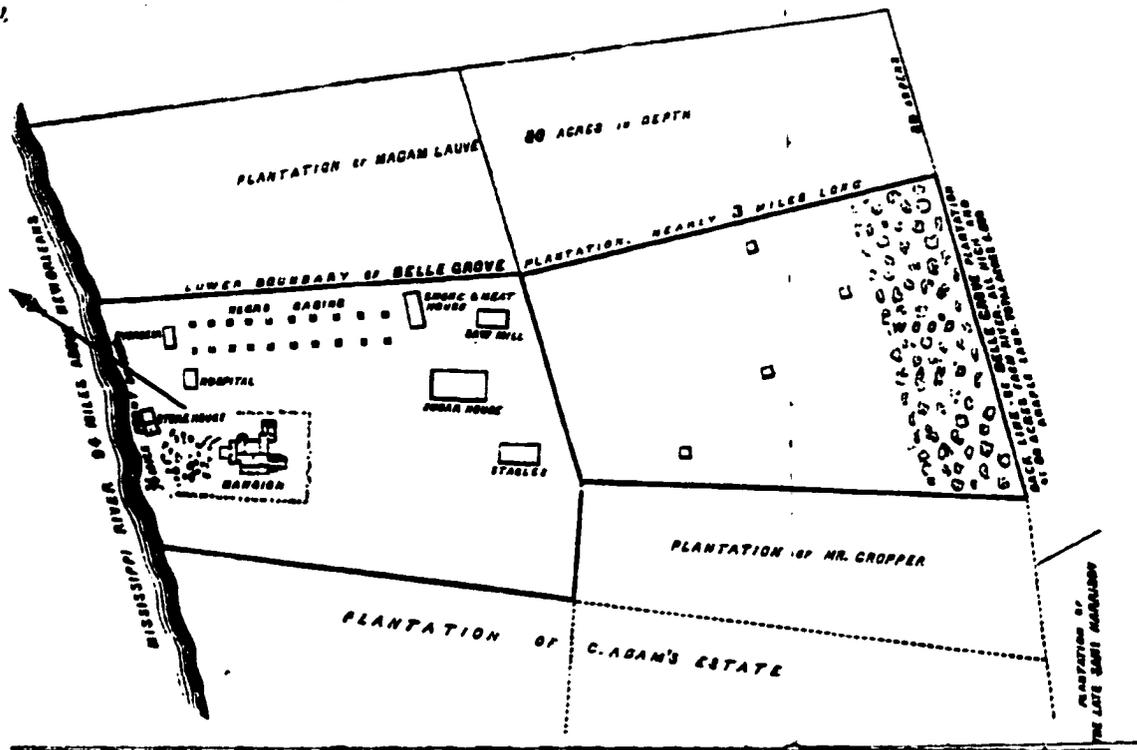
Whatever plan they followed, plantations grew over time, and the layout of structures was not always carefully planned. Most plantations stuck to their original design models with remarkable tenacity.⁵ At plantations such as Evergreen (ca. 1795, reworked 1832) and Houmas, both constructed on the linear plan, new structures were added in careful line with previously existing structures. At the same time, plantations such as Palo Alto (ca. 1850) grew in stages and yet remained true to their lateral plan, adding structures along an axis parallel to the Mississippi. Palo Alto, structures were added over a 40-year period, with each new structure placed in relation to those dating from nearly half a century earlier. In some cases, as at Uncle Sam Plantation (1837, rebuilt 1849), an earlier linear plan was modified to become more lateral as later structures were added.

Unlike most Lower Mississippi plantations, Belle Grove defies such easy categorization. The plantation did not conform to the linear, lateral, or block plans. Given that the plantation stretched roughly three-quarters of a mile along the Mississippi and was nearly three miles deep, any of Bacot's plantation forms would have worked well, and would have permitted the addition of structures as Belle Grove Plantation grew. In addition, surrounding plantations, including Palo Alto, Evergreen, Houmas, Oak Alley (1837-39) and others could have served as models for John Andrews to follow in laying out Belle Grove. Despite their close proximity, none of these plantations served as a role model for Belle Grove.



3.3 Houmas Plantation House (Photo Courtesy Library of Congress.)

Belle Grove was a very different plantation from the ones Marie Adrian Persac painted during his time on the Lower Mississippi. Unlike his neighbors, John Andrews organized the plantation convey to every person living on, visiting, or passing by Belle Grove that he was the most important producer of sugar in Iberville Parish. In the process, he created a new plantation archetype. As we will see, it was one that Persac could not ignore.



3.4 Sale Document for Belle Grove

Belle Grove Plantation's slave quarters followed the traditional linear plan. The main house sat lateral to the Mississippi. To the back, a series of structures, including the sawmill, sugarcane house, and barns, were located in a line behind the house and quarters. (Illustration courtesy Historic New Orleans Collection.)

¹ An excellent description of Persac's career is to be found in H. Perrot Bacot, Barbara SoRelle Bacot, Sally Kittredge Reeves, John Magill, and John H. Lawrence's work, *Marie Adrien Persac: Louisiana Artist* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000). In addition, the Historic New Orleans Collection and the Louisiana State Museum both possess examples of Persac's work.

² Poesch, Jessie and Barbara Sorelle Bacot. *Louisiana Buildings 1720-1940: the Historic American Building Survey* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997) pp. 89-94.

³ Probably the best source for understanding the arrangement, distribution, and land patterns of Lower Mississippi plantations is "Norman's Chart of the Lower Mississippi" by Marie Adrien Persac, which provides a detailed map of each plantation between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. This map was published in 1858.

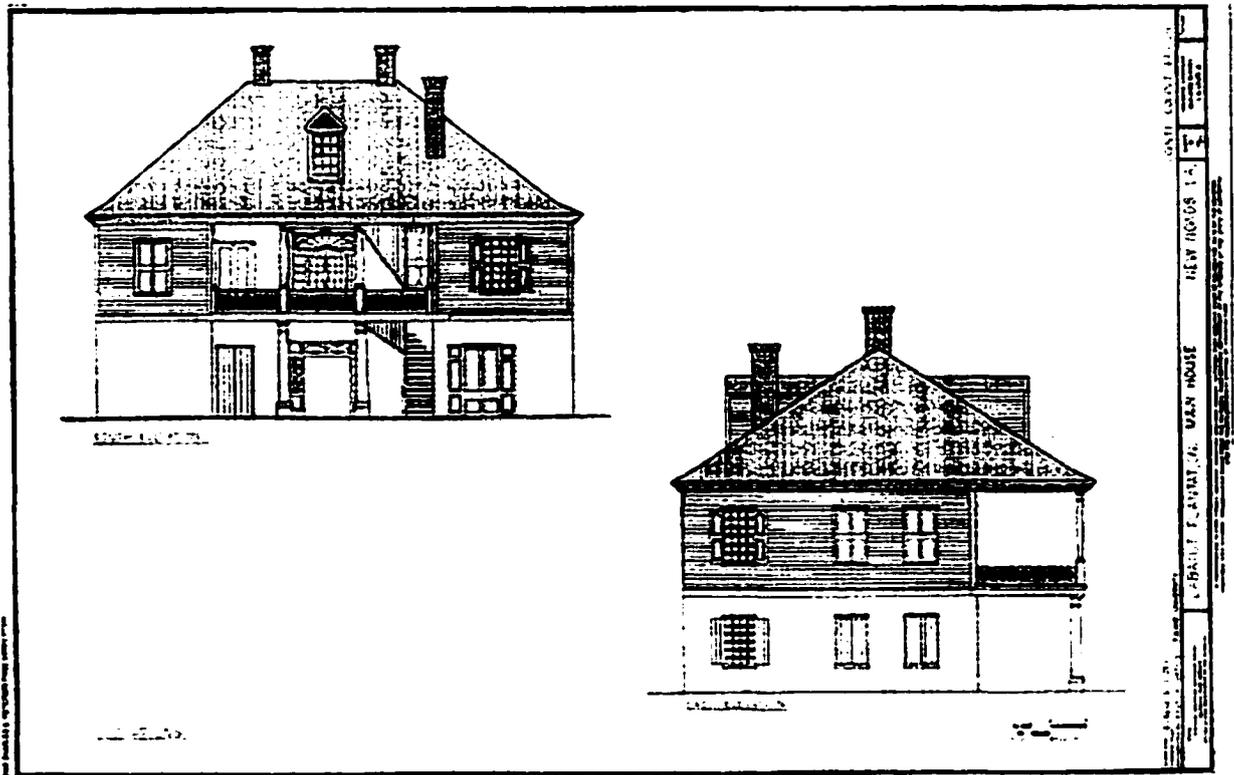
⁴ Values cited in this discussion are drawn from the United States Censuses of 1840, 1850, and 1860.

⁵ This observation is based on the work of Barbara Sorelle Bacot in *Louisiana Buildings 1720: The Historic American Buildings Survey* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997) pp. 87-95, and on the evidence provided in the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) reports on major Lower Mississippi sugar plantations.

Chapter 4

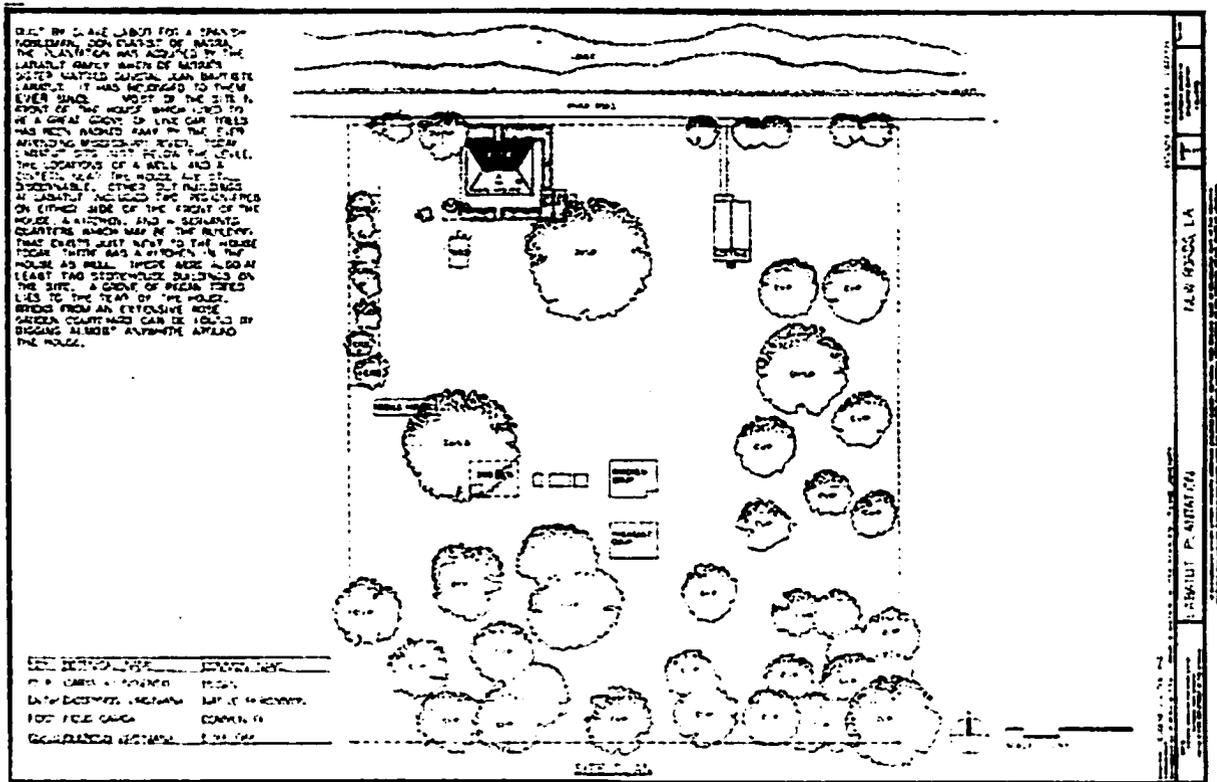
BELLE GROVE PLANTATION DESIGN

The most visible structure at Belle Grove Plantation was the main house. It played the defining role in communicating the wealth and power of the Andrews family and their position in the region. Given that the fastest form of transportation in the early nineteenth century was by water,¹ the main goal of Belle Grove House was to impress those traveling by steamboat. To do this, Belle Grove House had to be built facing southeast, presenting to the Mississippi River its three strongest sides. At some plantations, comfort was sacrificed to ensure that those passing and arriving by steamboat would have a clear view of the plantation's main house, and that the planter in turn could observe movement on the Mississippi River. Taking climate into consideration, orienting a house so that its primary parlors and bedrooms faced east would have provided afternoon shade and as a result would have mitigated the high summer temperatures common to the region. But along the Lower Mississippi, planters stubbornly built their houses facing the Mississippi no matter how uncomfortable their houses became in warm weather. This is no clearer than at Labatut House, built between 1790 and 1810 by the de Barra family. Labatut House's colonnade, covering only one side of the house, extends along the northern front facing the Mississippi River. As a result, the eastern, southern, and western sides of the house are exposed to direct sunlight. Given this arrangement, a summer day in Labatut house is insufferably hot.



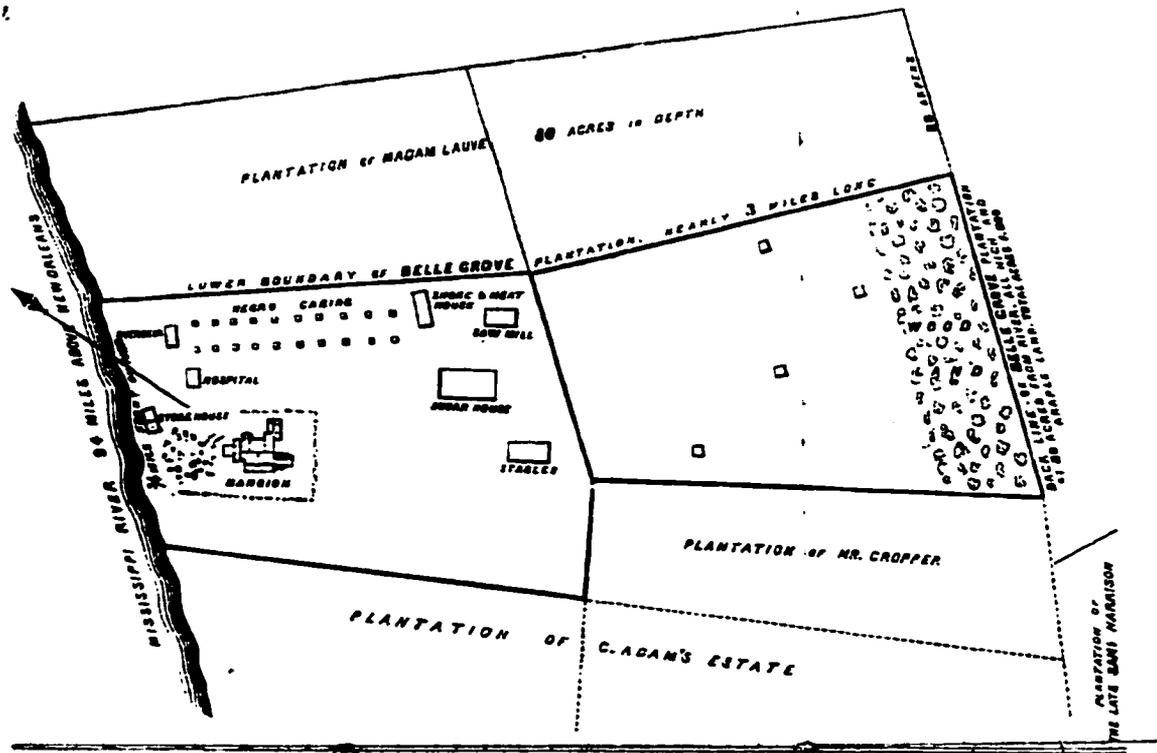
4.1 Labatut House

In these, the south and east elevations, the house at Labatut was largely exposed to direct sunlight. Ironically, the north side of the house, facing the Mississippi, was the side protected by a colonnade. (Illustration courtesy Library of Congress.)



4.2 Labatut Plantation Layout

In this illustration, the main house faces due north. (Illustration courtesy Library of Congress.)



4.3 Belle Grove Plantation Layout

In this map created for the 1868 sale of Belle Grove Plantation, the main house is shown facing the Mississippi. Note the dispersed support structures. (Illustration Courtesy Historic New Orleans Collection.)

In addition to Belle Grove House, other structures were designed and arranged to be seen to their fullest advantage from the Mississippi, and like the main house they played a role in communicating the wealth and power of the Andrews family. Almost directly in front of Belle Grove House was a large double warehouse, capable of storing 120 hogsheads of sugar. In a society that placed great importance on economic success and the development of a comprehensive and modern plantations,² the warehouse was a vital structure, and its prominent placement reflected a conscious effort to present to the world proof of the owner's economic might. The sugar warehouse also communicated ownership and control over the fruits of the plantation's labors. Once in its finished and marketable state, sugar was moved out of the sugarhouse, the realm of slaves, to the front of Belle Grove House, the realm of John Andrews. This arrangement would have reminded slaves that the products of their toils were not their own.

The placement and organization of the slave quarters was as important to the impression of wealth and power as the display of the main house. Much like the sugar warehouse, the location of the quarters was intended to drive home the impression of wealth and success. Located downriver from the main house, the quarters consisted of 20 double cabins stretched in two rows leading away from the Mississippi. These cabins were frame constructed and each had a gallery facing the quarters' yard. Each cabin was divided into two rooms measuring 10 by 16 feet, and each room housed either one family or a group of unattached slaves divided by gender.³ An additional slave cabin constructed of brick and standing two stories tall, provided six more quarters. In all, some 46 spaces were available for slaves. Given the number of slaves at Belle Grove,

and taking into consideration that slaves lived in the main house, each available space housed on average three slaves. It would appear from the record that these quarters were better on average than those at other plantations in the region: in the 1868 sale documents, the quarters are termed superior.⁴ At the same time, it is important to note that each slave had approximately only 25 square feet of living space. This may point to the slave quarters as having been considered superior because of their construction and not their accommodations.

The overseer's house also played a role in affirming the wealth and power of the Andrews family. By locating it at the end of the quarters closest to the Mississippi, the overseer's house was prominently visible and made clear that John Andrews had achieved a level of success where he could hire others to manage his slaves. At the same time, the scale of the overseer's house and its brick construction would have signaled the ability to attract a competent overseer and pay him well.

Impressing those arriving by river was not the only goal of the arrangement of the overseer's house and slave quarters. By its location, the overseer's house was a physical and psychological barrier, cutting the slave quarters off from the Mississippi. Given the importance of the Mississippi as an avenue of transportation and escape, the placement of the overseer's house would have reminded slaves of the futility of attempting flight from the plantation.⁵

Rewards also played a role in confirming the dominance of overseer and owner. At the other end of the row of cabins, and standing directly between the quarters and the sugar fields, stood the smoke and meat house. This building appears to have been

roughly four times the size of a double slave cabin and was large enough to store 100 barrels of pork, besides the plantation's supply of bacon.⁶ By its placement, a very different message than that of the overseer's house was communicated. The placement of this smokehouse made clear the rewards of plantation work, and served to remind slaves that the route to nourishment was best followed not by looking toward the freedom of the Mississippi, but to the cane fields and sugarhouse that were the site of their labors.

Further back from the Mississippi, a large four-room slave hospital also served to communicate the wealth and superiority of the Andrews family and their power over the lives of the rest of the plantation's residents. The slave hospital was the closest structure to the main house. To those traveling on the Mississippi, the prominent placement of the slave hospital showed the world that the Andrews family could afford the luxury of medical treatment and rest for their slaves. The placement of the slave hospital also pointed to the paternalistic power John Andrews had over his slaves. While Andrews would care for a sick field slave, the only field slaves he trusted near his family were those incapacitated by disease or accident. The hospital was the closest slave structure to the storehouses, and a similar message was provided by this proximity. The hospital was also quickly accessible by the overseer, and just as with the slave jail located under the dining room, this reminded slaves that while they were allowed proximity to the main house and family, they were still very much under the eye of their immediate supervisor. Given the persistent and universal complaints planters made about their slaves' tendency to claim illness as a means of avoiding work,⁷ the ability of the overseer to control and monitor those taken ill would have had an economic benefit.

The view from the Mississippi was not the only factor in how the main house, slave quarters, overseer's house, and hospital were arranged. As much as Belle Grove Plantation was planned to communicate the might and importance of its owner to those arriving by river, the plantation was also designed to communicate to its residents their places within the social and economic hierarchy of the plantation.

Given its massing and size, the house at Belle Grove dominated the plantation from all directions. And while a line of trees was planted along the front of the house leading to the Mississippi, the lack of landscaping at the back of the house ensured that the house could be seen from anywhere on the plantation. This arrangement served to remind slaves, overseers, and other workers of the dominant role the Andrews family played in the life and fabric of the plantation. To the northeast, the row of slave quarters would have been under the watch of John Andrews, whose library and bedroom were placed to provide a view of nearly all the support structures on the plantation. Two important structures were not visible from Andrew's library and bedroom: the overseer's house and the hospital. This arrangement gave to and acknowledged a level of autonomy to the overseer, and provided slaves with a reminder of the powers vested in their primary supervisor. This also would have reminded slaves of just how many layers of authority lay between them and the Andrews family.



4.4 Belle Grove House Library Wing

This wing provided owner John Andrews ample view of the slave quarters, sugarhouse, sawmill, and barns. (Photo courtesy Louisiana State Museum.)

Other structures were organized and placed to affirm the power of the Andrews family and to define the plantation hierarchy. Farther back from the main house, slave hospital, and living quarters, and roughly halfway to the far end of the plantation, was a steam-powered sawmill capable of sawing 6,000 board feet of lumber a day. This sawmill could be converted into a gristmill as needed. A cooperage and a fully equipped blacksmith shop rounded out the trade structures at Belle Grove. To the far right stood a massive barn with stables for 40 mules, and a series of corncribs. These structures demonstrated an investment of large amounts of capital, and would have been a source of income during the off-season. More importantly, they served to advertise to passersby the efficiency and independence of the plantation and the ownership of skilled, and thus more valuable, slaves.

The importance of these support structures to the position of the Andrews family pales in comparison to the role of the plantation's sugarhouse. If the main house pointed to the high social status of John Andrews, the sugarhouse was the primary structure by which onlookers could measure the production of a plantation and its economic status. Located at the very center of the plantation, it served as well to remind slaves of the primacy of its activities in their lives. The sugarhouse was constructed of brick and equipped with a 40-horsepower steam engine, three 40-foot boilers, a large sugar mill with two sets of six-part sugar kettles, a steam granulating system, and a bagasse burner. Ironically and importantly, capacity for the sugarhouse was 1,000 hogsheads per year, more than the plantation would ever produce.⁸ .

Marie Adrian Persac's paintings make clear the importance of the sugarhouse to the status of plantations and their owners. In deference to his planter clients, and regardless of season, Persac's paintings always portray sugarhouses with full steam up. As in Persac's paintings, the most striking aspect of Belle Grove's sugarhouse was not its inner workings but the immense smokestacks that rose from the structure. Visible for miles up and down the Mississippi, the smokestack would have been the first thing visitors noticed of the plantation.



4.4 Belle Grove House

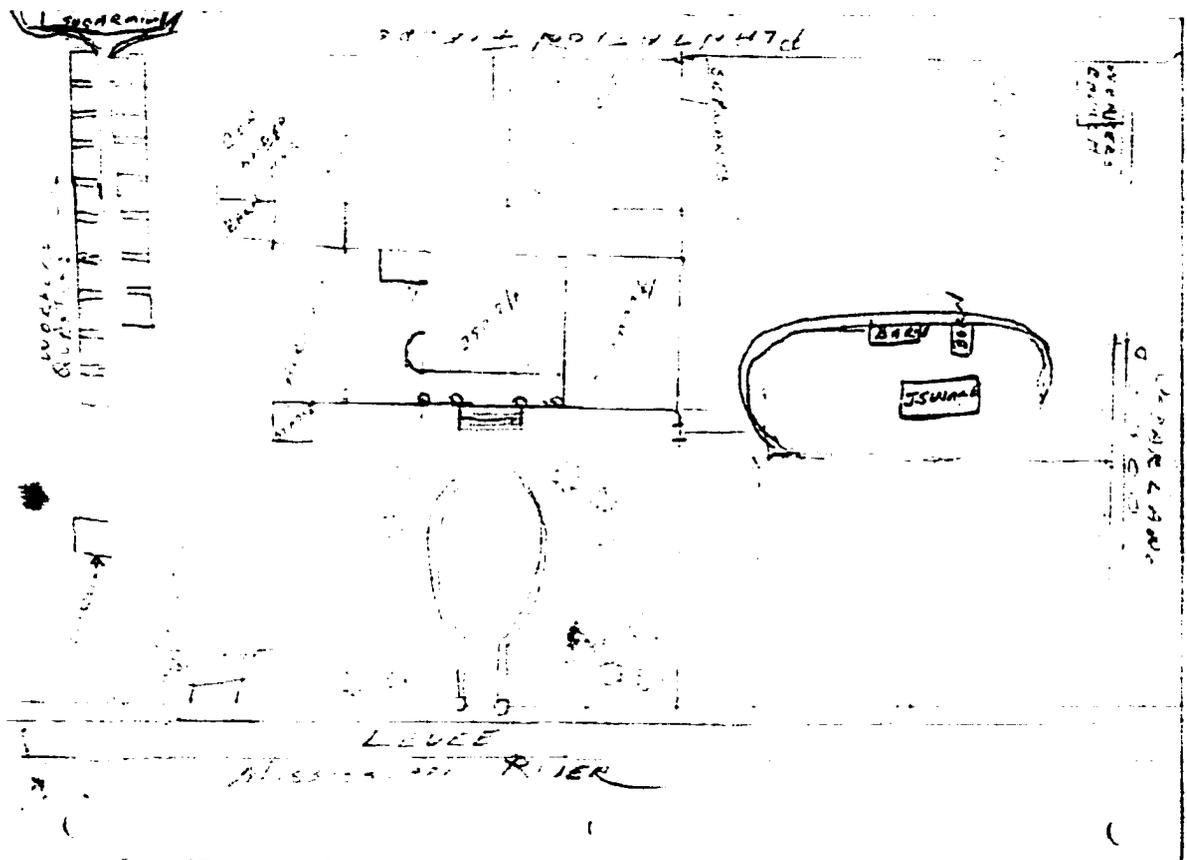
Note the two sugarhouse chimneystacks in the lower left corner. Visible from any point on the plantation, the sugarhouse most marked Belle Grove as a sugar plantation. (Photo courtesy American Architect and Building News.)

From the sugarhouse, cane fields spread in all directions, reaching at their end Bayou Goula, a lush and near-impenetrable forested swamp. The importance of this land to the image of Belle Grove Plantation should not be discounted. The additional acres served a functional role in that they allowed for some crop rotation and the resting of land. But given that cane, once planted, produces for three seasons, and given that planters on the Lower Mississippi were not as pressed to develop new fields as their cotton-growing brethren to the north, the amplitude of Belle Grove Plantation's acres for the most part served to add to the stature of the plantation and its owner.

Just how important it was to John Andrews to create the ultimate sugar plantation and affirm to the world his wealth and power can be seen in his conscientious effort to align all structures to the Mississippi River, even those, as in the case of the sugarhouse, constructed at a considerable distance from the Mississippi, and those, in the case of the main house, constructed much later in the development of the plantation. All structures at Belle Grove Plantation were constructed in consideration and anticipation of one another, with each new addition carefully placed in relation to those previously constructed. The importance of this effort should not be discounted; in the case of the sawmill, sugarhouse, and stables, these structures stood in a line with roughly one-quarter of a mile between each, and the effort to align these structures would have taken considerable care and attention.

The kind of close attention paid to the physical orientation of structures was also paid to the sequential way in which the plantation unfolded to its visitors. The slave cabins, sugarhouse, and mansion house were positioned to dominate the scene. But more

subtly, structures were carefully arranged according to height, with the shorter slave cabins and hospital at front, the smokehouse and sawmill behind, and the sugarhouse and stables to the rear. Thanks to this arrangement and ordering, all structures would have been visible from the Mississippi River.



4.5 Belle Grove Plantation Plan

A member of the Ware family did this sketch sometime during the 1930s. Seventy-five years after its creation, the plantation retained much of its original layout. Added is the racetrack and second house indicated on the right as "JS Ware." The slave quarters remain and appear to provide housing for workers on the still-functioning plantation. (Illustration courtesy Mrs. Patricia Ware.)

One further aspect of Belle Grove Plantation's layout deserves consideration for its role in defining the social hierarchy of the plantation, and for the message it sent about the wealth and power of the Andrews family. As Dell Upton has argued in his study of Virginia plantations, most were organized around an "articulated processional landscape"⁹ that created a series of physical buffers between visitor and planter. But at Belle Grove Plantation, no such barriers or buffers existed between the main house and the Mississippi. At the same time, the row of trees between the house and river focused the eye on the house, and created a strong visual connection between house and river. While it could be argued that this was in part the result of a desire to see the Mississippi River from the house, a subtler message may have been intended. With no barriers between river and house, it would have been apparent to anyone arriving by river that the Andrews family could well afford to welcome them as guests.

In creating Belle Grove Plantation, John Andrews created the impression that he was the wealthiest and most powerful sugar planter in the country. Although census data proves he was not,¹⁰ his plantation had to have made a strong impression on those traveling through the region. For evidence of this, one must look not at photographs and documents relating to the plantation and its organization, but at the contemporary objects that depicted Belle Grove Plantation at the height of its power. That Belle Grove Plantation came to represent an ideal is evidenced by the way in which the house and plantation consistently show up as icons of the Lower Mississippi sugar country. Artist Marie Adrien Persac was commissioned in 1858 to design and illustrate *Norman's Chart of the Lower Mississippi River from Natchez to New Orleans*, a map showing the

Mississippi River with each plantation identified by size and owner. At top and bottom center, scenes of Natchez and New Orleans serve to orient the map. At lower left, a steamboat coming downriver passes a sugarhouse in full production, with smoke rising from its two immense stacks. At lower right, Persac, the man who knew intimately the major plantations of the region, chose to depict a scene of Belle Grove, with the main house looming over the countryside, its neat row of slave quarters to the left, and with two huge sugarhouse stacks pouring forth smoke.

Three years later, a silver coffee and tea service recognizing his service to the region was presented to F. H. Hatch, then Collector of the Port of New Orleans.¹¹ On the side of the set's sugar bowl, Belle Grove Plantation appears in bold repoussé. This time, Belle Grove is depicted with the massive main house to the right of the sugarhouse, but with the addition of a train pulling up to the house. While some poetic license has been taken with the plantation's layout, silversmiths Terfloth and Kuchler clearly considered Belle Grove to be the strongest representation of a prosperous Lower Mississippi sugar plantation. The Hatch sugar bowl and Persac's map make clear just how successful John Andrews was in maneuvering his plantation into the public spotlight.

As we have seen, the plantation as a whole was designed to impress on visitors the wealth and power of the Andrews family. Once at the plantation, the main house became the focal point and destination for any visitor. As we will see in the next sections, the same level of care and strategy applied to the design and organization of the greater plantation was applied to Belle Grove House, but for very different reasons.



4.6 Terfloth and Kuchler Sugar Set (photo courtesy Neal Auction Company.)



4.7 Sugar Set: Belle Grove Plantation. (Photo courtesy Neal Auction Company.)

¹ A more complete discussion of the economics of water transportation in nineteenth-century America is found in Benjamin W. Larabee, William M. Fowler, Jr., Edward W. Sloan, John B. Hattendorf, Jeffrey J. Safford, and Andrew W. German's *America and the Sea* (Mystic: Mystic Seaport, 1998) pp. 237-284.

² The works of Glenn Conrad, Rene J. Le Guarder, and Carlyle J. Sitterson are again helpful in understanding the motivations and goals of the Lower Mississippi sugar planters.

³ A complete discussion of the organization of slaves within quarters is provided by John Michael Vlach in *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993) pp. 153-182.

⁴ This description of the plantation and those that follow are based on the 1868 advertisement prepared by Barstow and Pope, New York, for the sale of Belle Grove Plantation which includes a description of the structures at Belle Grove Plantation and their use, a map showing their location in relation to the Mississippi, and floor plans of the main house.

⁵ The use of the Mississippi as an avenue of escape and concealment is discussed in Roderick A. McDonald's *The Economy and Material Culture of Slaves: Goods and Chattels on the Sugar Plantations of Jamaica and Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993) pp. 66-72.

⁶ This description and all other descriptions of the plantation and its structures are again based on Barstow and Pope's advertisement.

⁷ This phenomenon is endemic in writing on slavery in America, dating to the seminal work of Kenneth Stampp in *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-bellum South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956).

⁸ It is clear from available records that Belle Grove Plantation did not have the capacity to produce this amount of sugar in one year. This figure may have been part of the effort to aggrandize Belle Grove Plantation and by association Belle Grove House.

⁹ Upton, Dell. "White and Black Landscapes" in *Material Life in America 1600-1860*, Robert Blair St. George, Ed. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988) pp. 363-369.

¹⁰ The United States Censuses of 1840, 1850, and 1860 show that Andrews was unable to unseat his rivals, who thanks to their partnerships exceeded his production of sugar.

¹¹ This description based on illustrations and written descriptions provided in the Saturday, November 5, 1988 auction catalog of the Neal Auction Company in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Chapter 5

BELLE GROVE HOUSE

As we have seen, Belle Grove House was the largest house built in the American South before the Civil War. Just as the house dominated its environment, its massiveness has dominated discussion of the house and its exterior design. Beginning in the 1930s and 1940s, writers including William Edwards Clement, Lyle Saxon, and Harnett Kane were the first to point out that John Andrews intended for his house to solidify his stature and standing in the region. Since that time, writers including architect Richard Koch, W. Darrell Overdyke, and Mills Lane have also focused on the unusually large scale of the house. Most recently, Barbara Sorelle Bacot, Vincent Scully, and others have noted how the exterior of Belle Grove House blended Greek revival and Italianate decoration. Following Richard Koch's earlier line of argument, Bacot and Scully point to Belle Grove House as having successfully bridged these two tastes.

That Belle Grove House was built to celebrate wealth and that its exterior design bridged disparate styles is correct, but a more close reading of the house as a structure shows that in both its design and massing it made a much more complicated statement not about wealth and power, but about taste and sophistication. As such, Belle Grove House must be considered as more than a bold and overpowering architectural statement.

By the time construction began on Belle Grove House, its designer Henry Howard had established a reputation both in New Orleans and along the Lower Mississippi for work that blended refinement, elegance, and excess. Born in Cork, Ireland, in 1818, Howard immigrated to the United States in 1836. Howard's timing was impeccable; like John Andrews, Howard arrived in America on the eve of a financial boom, one that would see demand for new construction skyrocket. Howard spent his first 18 months in America in New York working in a looking glass and picture frame factory. He then left for New Orleans, arriving September 20, 1837.¹

Howard's arrival in New Orleans coincided with a period of great prosperity, with the city then under a building boom. Of great importance to the future of Belle Grove, however, was the fact that Howard arrived with no real training in architecture. In his brief autobiography, Howard describes his arrival in New Orleans: "After my arrival in New Orleans, I commenced to work at all kinds of carpenter and joiner's work – including the most difficult branch of it, stair building. Although young and inexperienced, I received from my first start in the trade, journeyman's wages."²

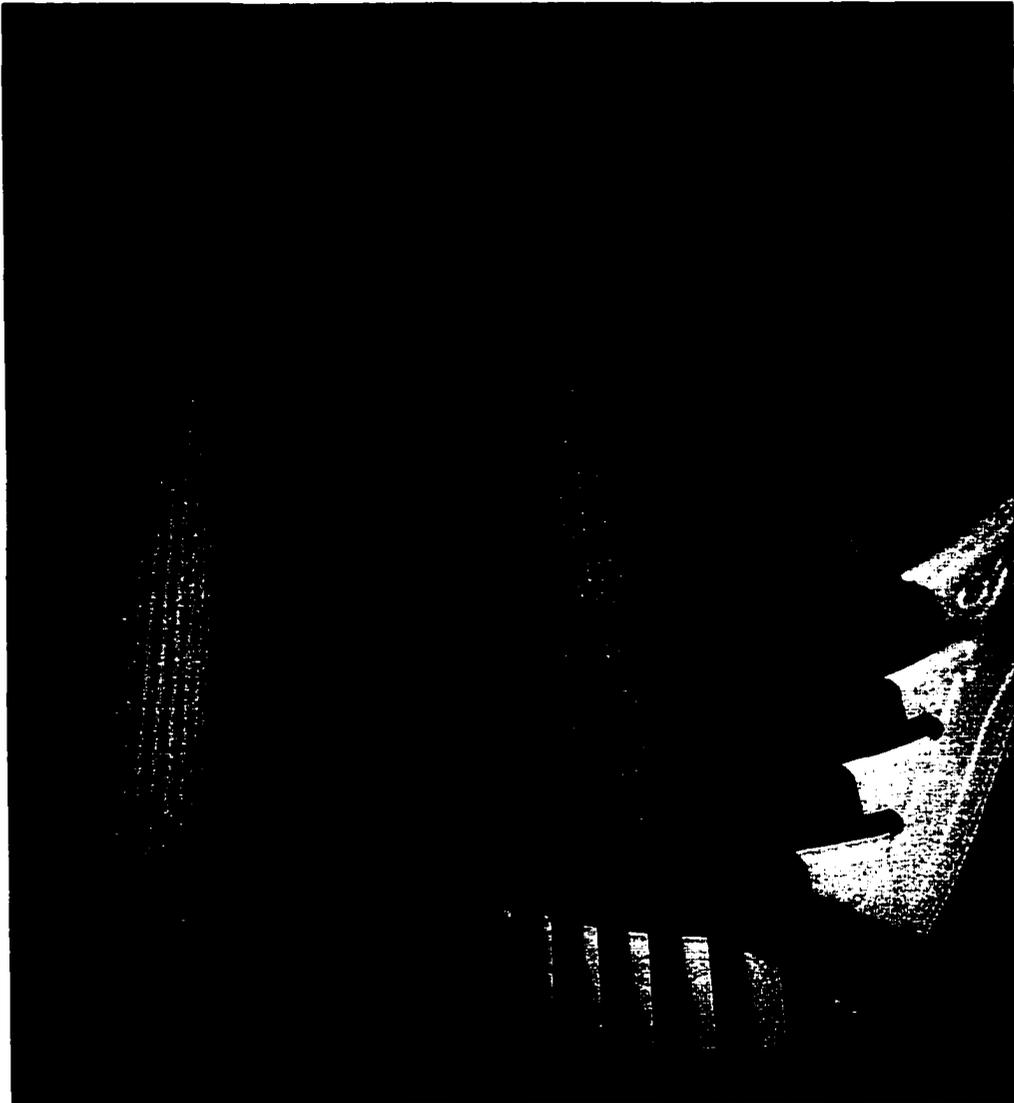
In 1845, Howard spent a watershed year in his career training under James Dakin, one of the region's most celebrated architects. During this time Howard also studied with the surveyor and civil engineer Henry Molhausen. Remarkably, following his brief tenure with Dakin and Molhausen, Howard quickly secured the kinds of commissions that built a high reputation. In 1846, Howard designed the Ascensionville Parish Courthouse in Donaldsonville; Madewood Plantation House (1846-1848) at Bayou Lafourche, a massive Greek revival temple-form house for the Pugh family; and

Woodlawn Plantation House (1849) in Assumption Parish. In 1850, Howard designed the Robert Grinnan House and the W.P. Converse Residence, both in New Orleans. By 1852, the year construction began on Belle Grove House, Howard had already worked on major public and commercial projects in New Orleans, including alterations to the Pontalba Buildings, the Crescent Mutual Insurance Building, and the Thomas Hale Row, Warehouse, and Stores.



5.1 Madewood House

An early commission from the Pugh Family, Henry Howard's Madewood House was based on more traditional New England Greek revival mansion houses. While symmetrical in its exterior design, the house exhibits a high degree of creativity in its internal layout. (Photo by the author.)



5.2 Madewood House Staircase

This staircase is located in the central bay of Madewood House, and joined by a cross hall at left. This arrangement breaks with traditional room arrangement on the Lower Mississippi, and points to Henry Howard's early experimentation with interior spaces. (Photo by the author.)

At Belle Grove, Henry Howard drew on his experiences with structures both civic and private, and urban and rural. At completion, Belle Grove House was a very different house in its scale, massing, decoration, and organization than the more traditional plantation houses that surrounded it. But Belle Grove House's design can hardly be considered original. In his design for the house Henry Howard not only copied elements of other houses and structures in New Orleans; he also used commonly available print sources for inspiration.

The strongest influence on the design of Belle Grove House was Howard's work as a student of New Orleans architect James Dakin. Just how Howard came to be hired by Dakin is unclear, but by the time he did, Dakin's work, both in New England and in the South, was widely regarded as superior.³ Howard's tutelage under Dakin was the only formal training he ever received in architecture. The extent to which the experience colored Howard's work is evident in the strong relationship between his early designs and those done by Dakin both before and during the year Howard was in his office. As Arthur Scully has pointed out, Howard's first major commission, Madewood House, copies closely the Bowers House in Massachusetts, a house attributed to Dakin and dating to his time in the firm of Town and Dakin. Scully also points to Dakin's influence over Howard's second major commission, Woodlawn, a house that copied Dakin's design for the Abigail Loyal Armitage Slark House (1844) in New Orleans. Both the Slark House and Woodlawn House were fronted by four massive ionic columns framed by paneled square columns. The houses are identical in proportion and show the extent to which Howard borrowed directly from Dakin's successful designs.



5.3 Woodlawn Plantation House

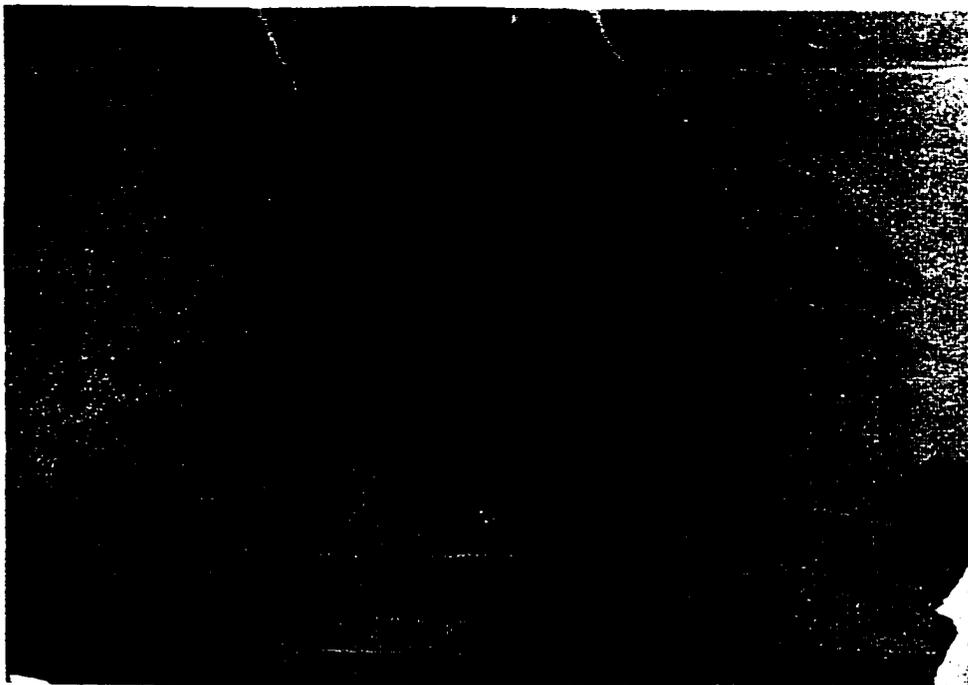
Woodlawn's house dates to 1840, with wings added in 1849-50. With his work at Woodlawn, Henry Howard continued to rely on the work of others, in this case, the work of James Dakin at the Abigail Loyal Armitage Slark House (1844) in New Orleans. (Photo courtesy Library of Congress.)

In its massing and decoration Belle Grove House was very different from the houses Dakin designed both in New England and in Louisiana, and it would appear that print sources played the major role in its design. One of the most influential sources for Howard's work was the work of John Nash at Regent's Park in London. James Elmes first published the design of Regent's Park in an 1827 work entitled *Metropolitan Improvements; or London in the Nineteenth Century*. Elmes's book included detailed illustrations of Regent's Park's overall design and a series of views of the residential structures built within and around the park, many designed by John Nash and Decimus Burton. Elmes's work was widely distributed in America, and in New Orleans, James Dakin, Lewis Reynolds, and Charles Bryant were all inspired and influenced by Regent's Park.⁴ New Orleans architect James Gallier also drew on Elmes's work, using a drawing of Regent's Park's Greenough Residence (Grove House), as inspiration for several of his New Orleans commissions.

Howard most likely became familiar with Regent's Park during his time with James Dakin, whose architectural library was considered one of the best in New Orleans.⁵ As Roger Kennedy has pointed out, Howard adapted the design of the Greenough Residence for his design for the Robert Grinnan House in New Orleans. In turn, at Belle Grove Howard drew on Decimus Burton's South Villa at Regent's Park. Belle Grove House's unusual half-turret, ringed with iron railings, topped with a large dentil molding, and joined to the house by a short hyphen, is a direct copy of the design of the South Villa. Belle Grove's façade and main portico, rusticated arched foundation, and four towering columns and pediment relate directly to the South Villa as well.



5.4 South Villa at Regent's Park (Reproduced plate courtesy Winterthur Museum.)

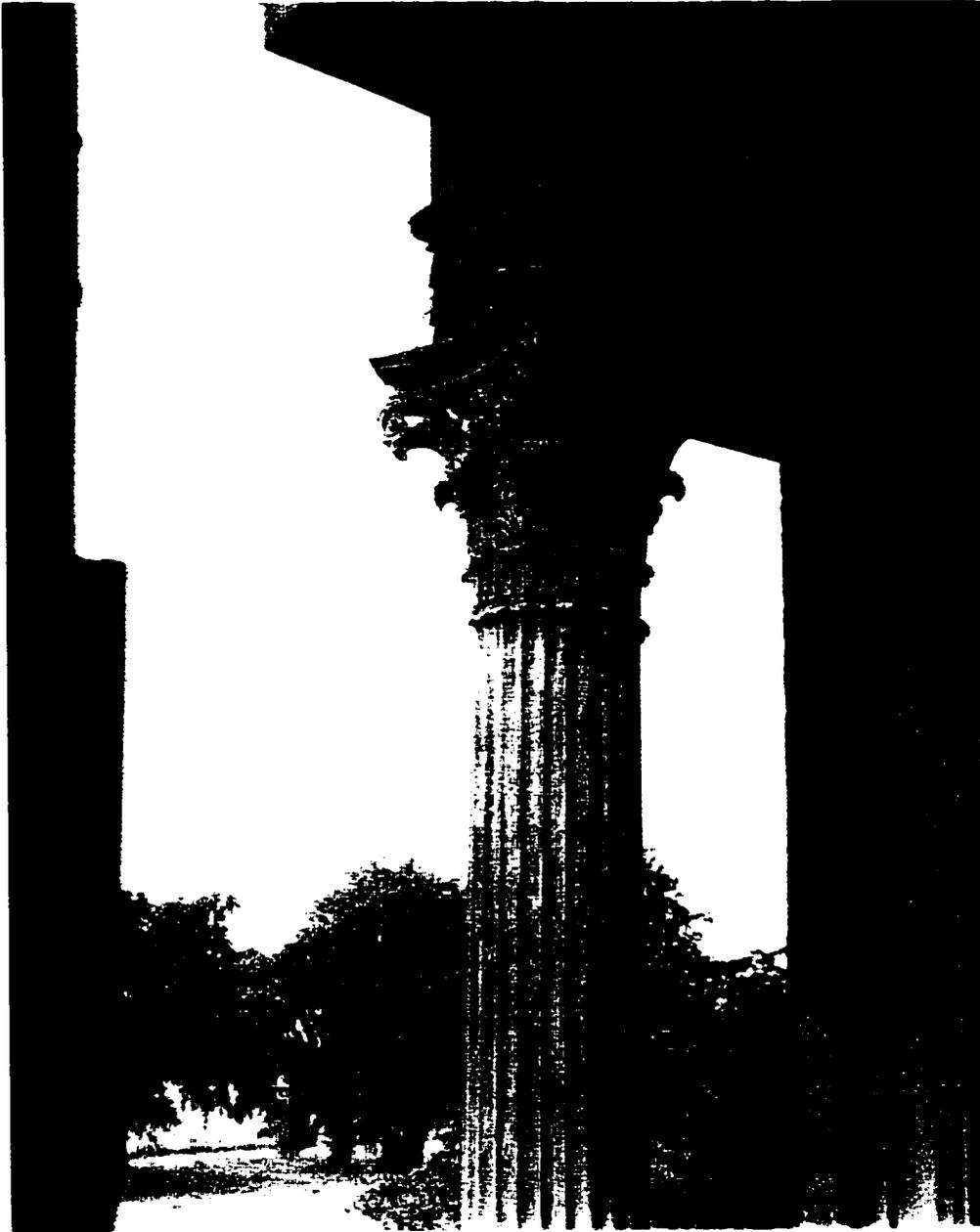


5.5 Belle Grove House (Photo courtesy Historic New Orleans Collection, acc. # 1983.47.4.2710.)

In his exterior and interior decorative designs for Belle Grove, Henry Howard also drew heavily on designs published by Minard Lafever (1798-1854) in his 1835 *The Modern Builder's Guide*.⁶ James Dakin had worked with Lafever, and provided many of the drawings for *The Modern Builder's Guide*. As such, Howard's time with Dakin would have provided an opportunity to study more formally Lafever's designs, and to see them at play in Dakin's work.

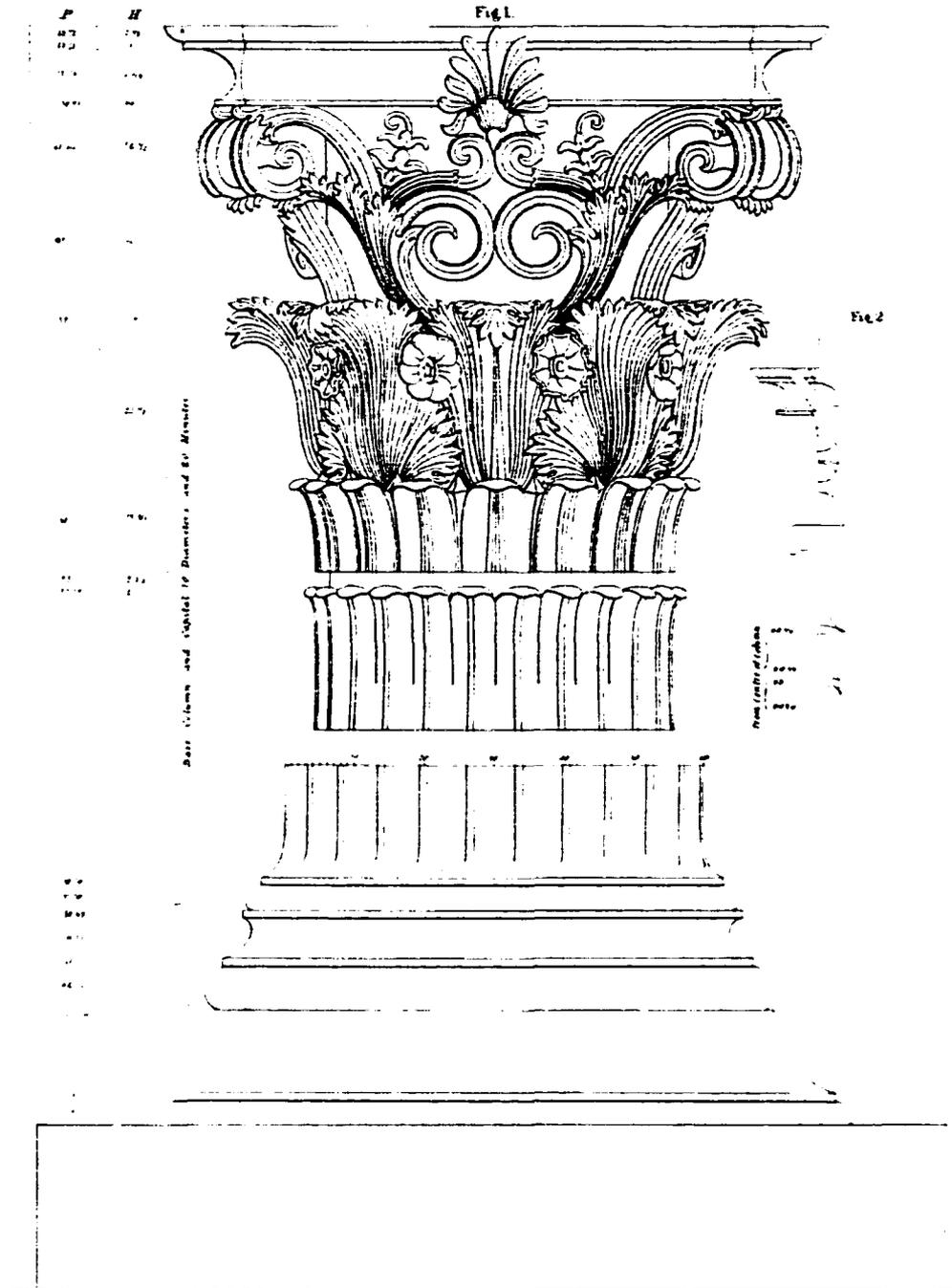
Howard's use of Lafever's designs can be seen in his earliest work. At Madewood House, Howard used columns based directly on Lafever's designs. Across the front of Madewood, a series of six ionic columns based on Lafever's adaptation of the temple of Minerva Polias at Athens support the principal temple pediment.⁷ Inside, Corinthian columns and capitals taken directly from Lafever's designs support the staircase, break up the entry hall, and flank both the front door and the stair hall-landing door.⁸ Lafever's "Design for a Centre Flower" appears throughout Madewood in the form of ceiling medallions.⁹ Howard's use of Lafever's designs did not end with his work at Madewood. All of these design elements appeared again in his work at Belle Grove, but in even greater profusion. Throughout Belle Grove House, Corinthian and ionic columns, plaster ceiling medallions, and even exterior porch support brackets were all based on Lafever's designs.

Henry Howard's use of Lafever's designs at both Madewood and Belle Grove may have been based on supply rather than demand. As both Robert Starr and Roger Kennedy have noted, composition ornament and ironwork were shipped regularly from Northern plasterworks and foundries to cities all across the South.¹⁰



5.6 Belle Grove House Exterior Column

Belle Grove House was famous for its six-foot cypress column capitals. The design owes its presence at Belle Grove to Howard's extensive use of decorative elements based on the designs of Minard Lafever. (Photo courtesy Richard Koch Collection, Southeastern Architectural Archive, Tulane University).

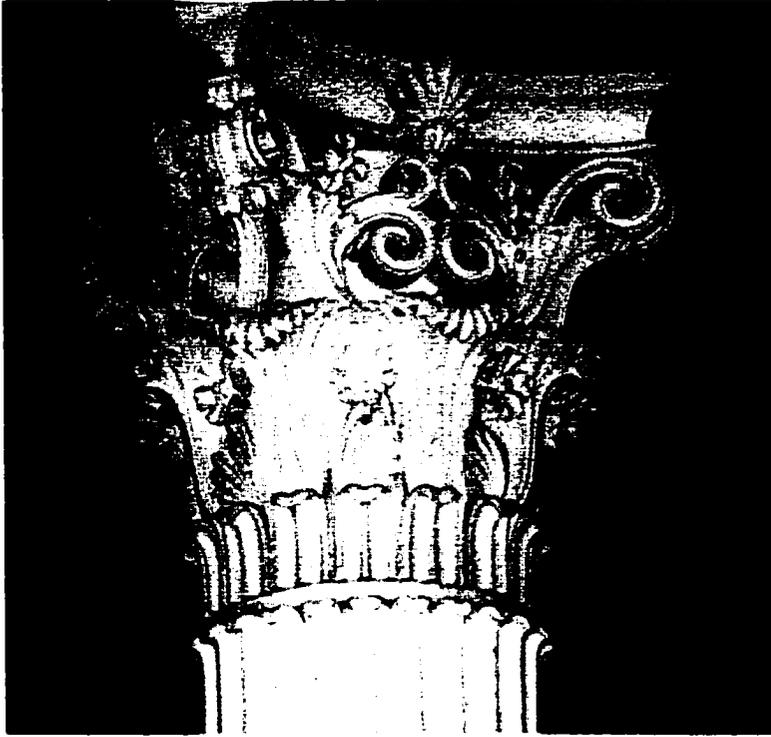


5.7 Plate 43 "Corinthian Column and Capital"

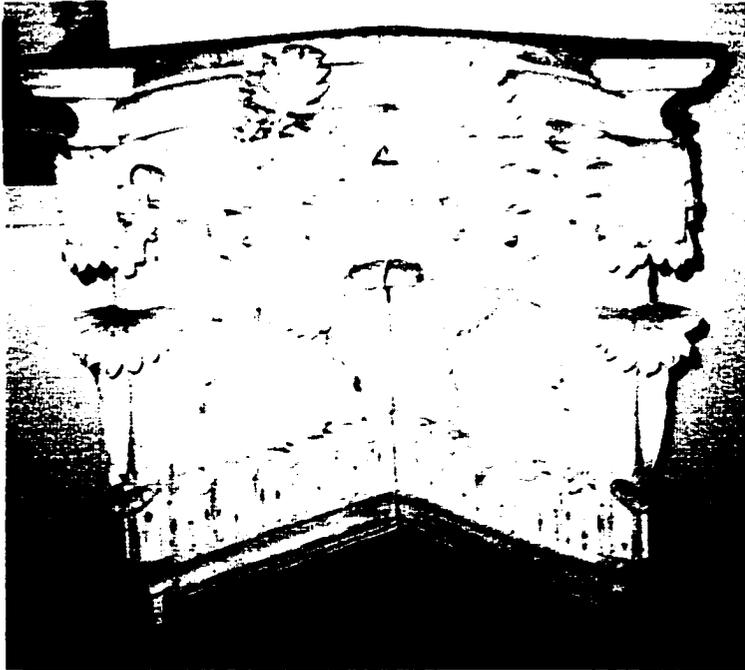
This illustration is taken from Minard Lafever's *The Beauties of Modern Architecture*. (Illustration courtesy Winterthur Library.)

The mania for the monument of Lysicrates in Athens, and the ready availability of mass-produced columns and capitals in both wood and iron, contributed to the mass distribution of the order. Houses as far-a-field as Gaineswood in Demopolis, Alabama (1860), Rattle and Snap in Tennessee (1854-56[?]), the Alexander Telfair house in Savannah (1820), and the Governor's Mansion in Jackson, Mississippi (1839-42) all feature columns and capitals based on the monument of Lysicrates as illustrated by Lafever. In New Orleans, diverse structures, including James Dakin's University of Louisiana (designs done 1847-55), and Alexander Thompson Wood's United States Custom House (1848-1881), feature Lafever's designs as well. Howard's choice of the Lysicrates columns and capitals at Belle Grove may also have resulted from his contact with some of the carvers making them in New Orleans. Although it is unclear, the capitals used on Belle Grove House may have been the work of one man – Estonian immigrant Waldemar Tallin, whose work is most noted not for the elegance of its carving, but for the way in which it was ingeniously produced with mass-produced jig-sawn parts.¹¹

Belle Grove can hardly be considered unique in its selection of materials. In addition to its column capitals, almost all the decorative elements at Belle Grove were of commonly available mass-produced patterns, purchased off-the-shelf from suppliers in the region. This holds true for the profuse ironwork railings at Belle Grove. Identical railings can be found at the Robert Grinnan House and on several other French Quarter townhouses, most notably at the Shinkel House, which has both railings and filigree work identical to that those at Belle Grove.



5.8 Madewood Plantation Column Capital (Photo by author.)



5.9 Belle Grove Column Capital (Photo by Author.)

Advertised in the Luther Holmes Foundry catalogs, the pattern of capital used at Belle Grove House was popular enough to still be in production in the mid-1880s.¹² The unusual arched iron terminals on Belle Grove House's first floor balconies are seen on townhouses in New Orleans as well. Belle Grove House's fabled silver hardware was also mass-produced, and similar examples can be found at Madewood House and at Houmas House just downriver from Belle Grove on the eastern side of the Mississippi. Belle Grove's mantels were of the most commonly available styles as well.¹³

In his creation of Belle Grove House Henry Howard drew together disparate design sources and a variety of decorative elements. At the same time, he copied the work of his teacher James Dakin and that of other prominent New Orleans architects. In the process, he introduced new forms and designs to the Lower Mississippi sugar country. Given his desire to create a plantation and house that would stand out, this may have been one of the strongest reasons sugar planter John Andrews selected Howard as his architect. As we will see in the next section, the design of the house and its interiors, while drawing on divergent sources, was just as carefully planned and highly purposeful as Belle Grove House's exterior.



5.10 Belle Grove Ironwork

This pattern of ironwork appears in New Orleans's French Quarter as well. (Photo courtesy Library of Congress).

¹ Chronology drawn from Charles Dufour's "Henry Howard: Forgotten Architect" in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* Vol. XI, No. 4, (December, 1952) pp. 24-27.

² Howard, Henry. "Autobiography" in *Henry Howard, Architect: An Exhibition of Photographs of his Work*. Samuel Wilson, ed. (New Orleans: Louisiana State Museum, 1952) pp. 24-29.

³ A more complete history of Dakin's career is found in Arthur Scully's *James Dakin, Architect: His Career in New York and the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973).

⁴ Elmes's influence is detailed in Roger Kennedy's *Greek Revival America* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1989).

⁵ This is based on the work of Arthur Scully in *James Dakin, Architect: His Career in New York and the South*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973).

⁶ One can track Lafever's designs to those of Normand, Mauch, and other European architects, some of whom put forward in the early 1810s the same designs Lafever proposed in his work. In influencing American architects, however, Lafever rightfully deserves credit for disseminating these designs.

⁷ Lafever, Minard. *The Beauties of Modern Architecture* (New York, D. Appleton & Company, 1835) plate 39.

⁸ *Ibid.*, plate 42.

⁹ *Ibid.*, plate 21.

¹⁰ S. Frederick Starr points to this phenomenon in his *Southern Comfort: The Garden District of New Orleans, 1800-1900* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

¹¹ The attribution to Tallin is based on the work of S. Frederick Starr in *Southern Comfort: The Garden District of New Orleans, 1800-1900* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989). No documentary evidence exists to prove Tallin created the column capitals at Belle Grove, but given Howard's previous use of Tallin's work at Madewood House it is likely that Tallin supplied those at Belle Grove.

¹² This is based on Luther Holmes Foundry Catalogs in the Louisiana Collection of Tulane University Library.

¹³ The remarkable commonality of building materials along the Lower Mississippi can be best seen in the photographs of Robert Tebbs and Clarence John Laughlin, among others.

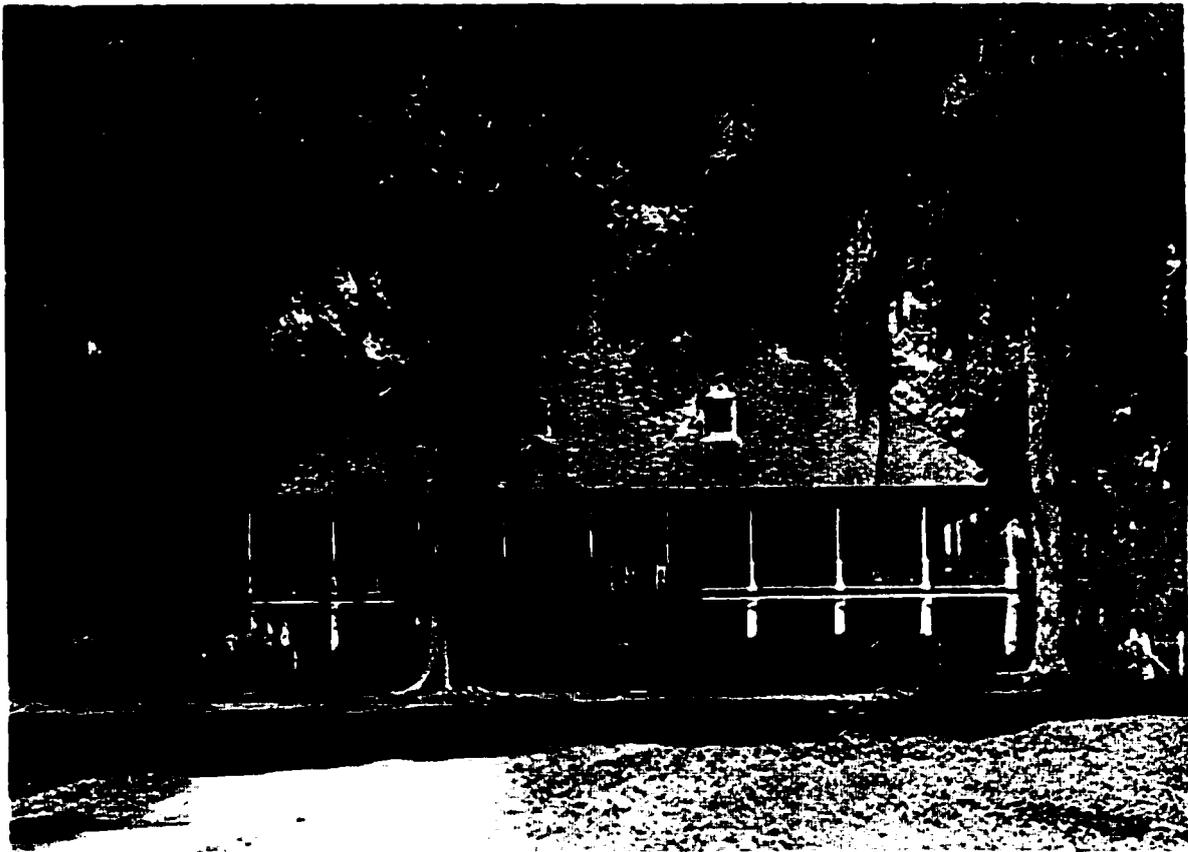
Chapter 6

BELLE GROVE HOUSE DESIGN

Before Belle Grove House was built, the exterior design of large Lower Mississippi houses followed two principal forms. The first form was typified by its raised basement, and is best seen at Parlange Plantation (1795-1810) and Homeplace Plantation (1801). This design, in part a response to climate, moved more personal spaces to the second floor. Large and prominent entry staircases served to differentiate the two spaces and focus the visitor's approach upwards toward the second floor. Visitors could also access these houses through their raised basements.

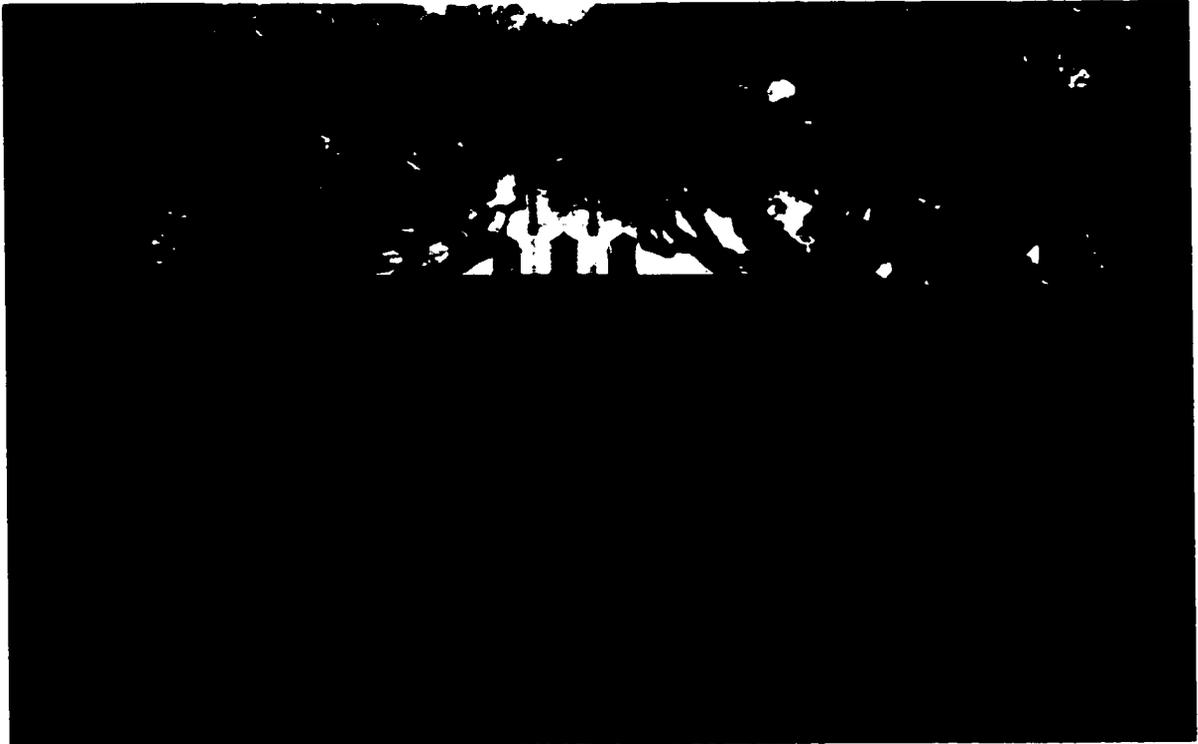
A second form, appearing in the region during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, is seen best at Oak Alley Plantation and Houmas Plantation. This plan is typified by an open and easily accessible first floor organized primarily as social space. These houses closely hug the ground and most windows reach the floor. As a result of this design, service activities were moved out of the houses and into separate structures, usually arranged nearby. This form reflected changing attitudes about sociability during the second quarter of the nineteenth century.¹

Belle Grove House differed radically from these two forms. The house had four floors, including a raised basement, two living floors, and an immense attic. A stair hall and library wing stretched to the rear of the house, and a servants' wing stretched to the left. At front and to the right, two massive porticos framed the house.



6.1 Parlange Plantation House

With its raised basement and second floor primary living spaces surrounded by a colonnade, Parlange is very much a first generation Lower Mississippi Creole mansion house. (Photo courtesy Library of Congress.)



6.2 Oak Alley House

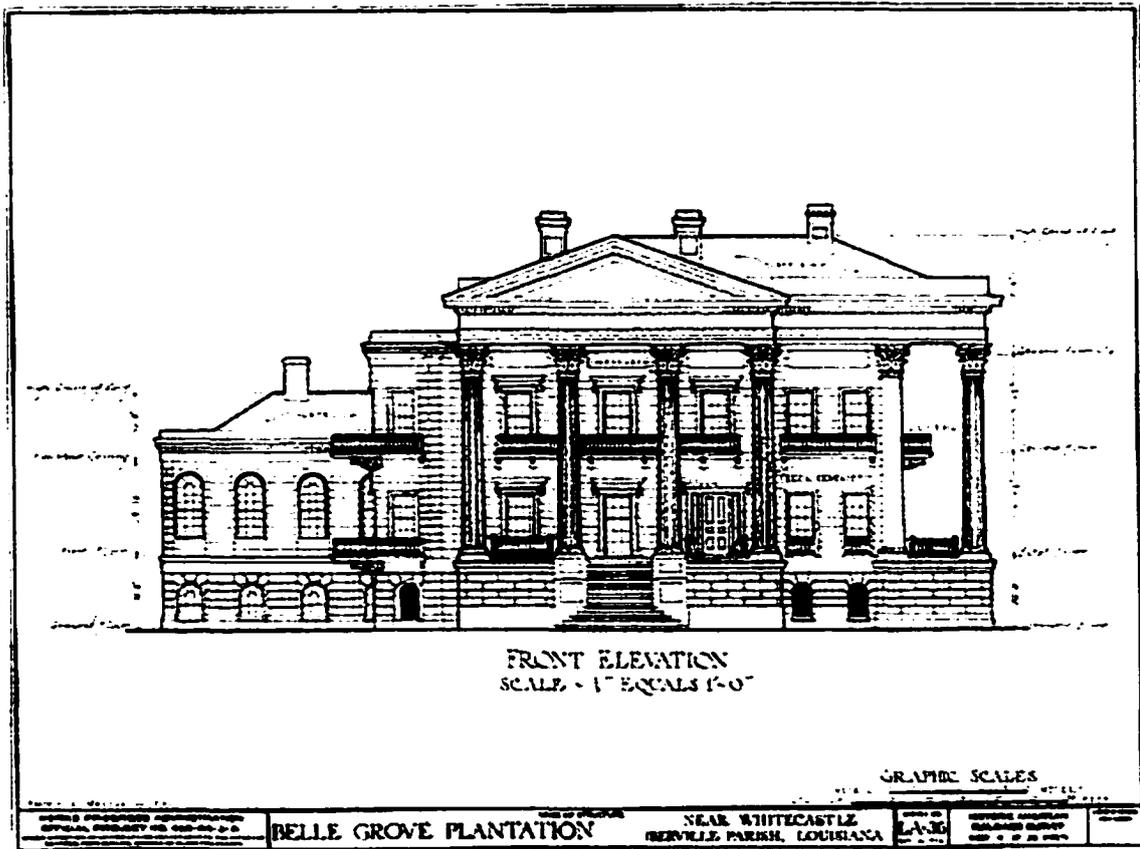
Perhaps the best-known Lower Mississippi plantation house, Oak Alley exhibits classic second generation proportions and room arrangement. (Photo by the author.)

One factor in the novelty of Belle Grove House's design was John Andrews's desire to communicate not only wealth, but also sophistication. The most important way in which Belle Grove House communicated this sophistication was in its scale and massing. The house was 52 feet high from the first step of the entrance stairs to its pediment, 109 feet wide, and 106 feet deep; a scale little short of monumental. Two porticos added an additional 13 feet to the front and right sides of the house. By comparison, the main house at Evergreen Plantation stands just 34 feet tall and measures 66 feet across and 40 feet deep, with a significant portion of the house being exterior colonnade. Uncle Sam, another large sugar plantation house, measured a more stately 45 feet tall, 93 feet wide, and 83 feet deep, including colonnades. But, the actual living space within the house measured just 67 feet wide and 57 feet deep.

Sheer size alone was not the only way in which Belle Grove House stood out. Design was an active partner, and the use of architectural strategies pointed to the highly developed tastes of the Andrews family. Unlike other houses in the Lower Mississippi sugar country, Belle Grove House presented one sweeping façade that ran the full height of the structure, uninterrupted by balconies, hip roofs, or dormers. This design allowed anyone standing at the foot of the entry stairs a view of the full 52-foot height of the main façade.

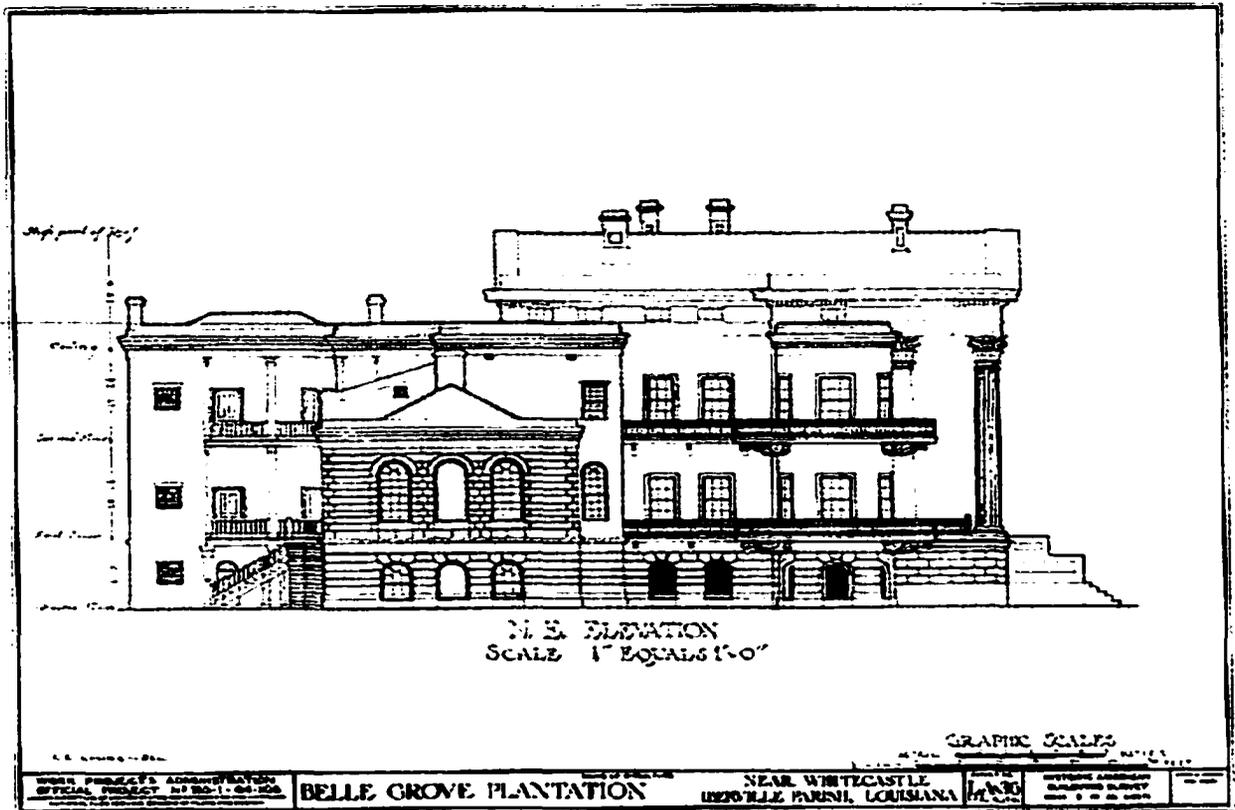
Henry Howard used other strategies to enhance the scale and massiveness of the house. Belle Grove House was designed in a U shape, with the servants' wing and library wing creating a courtyard off the dining room. This was not apparent from the front and sides of the house, and as a result the house appeared much larger than it really

was. In addition, the servants' wing was constructed in such a way that it appeared to be part of the more social spaces of the house. With its immense arched windows and its lack of exterior doors, the servants' wing looked from the front more like a ballroom than maids' quarters.²



6.3 Belle Grove Plantation House Front Elevation

Seen at left is the servants' wing, just behind the half-turret. Note as well the left portico's lack of a full pediment and entry stairs. (Illustration courtesy Library of Congress.)



6.4 Northeast Elevation of Belle Grove House

No known photograph shows the rear library wing intact from this side. This view provides the best sense of the house's scale and massiveness, and would have been the view of the house seen first when approaching Belle Grove Plantation by steamboat from New Orleans. (Illustration courtesy Library of Congress.)



6.5 Belle Grove House

This photograph shows the servants' wing to the left. With its large Italianate windows and rusticated foundation, this wing appears to be part of the more social spaces within Belle Grove House. In reality, it housed two large kitchens on the lower level and maids' quarters above. (Photo courtesy American Architect and Building News.)

On the other side of the house, the library wing was attached to the house by a stair hall, which was indented slightly from the main block. This made the wing appear longer and larger than if it had been connected directly to the house.

Belle Grove House's Italianate form also communicated the sophistication and urbanity of the Andrews family. With its asymmetrical massing, its wildly irregular series of rooflines, and its use of curvilinear forms, Belle Grove House would have appeared shockingly modern in comparison to its more traditional neighbors. The distribution of its chimneys and its linear form would have been more familiar to the residents of New Orleans than those of Iberville Parish. For further effect, the library loggia was constructed entirely of iron. In a region where wealthy planters and their families traveled regularly by river to New Orleans for shopping and entertainment,³ it would have been indelibly clear how closely Belle Grove House followed new styles.

The strongly contrasting sides of Belle Grove House reinforced this idea. From the Mississippi River, Belle Grove House presented a Greek revival form, with its porticos, heavy Corinthian columns, and strong front pediment. The use of quoins and the rusticated base added to the classical theme of the house. From this direction, only the servants' wing to the right broke up the classical proportioning of the front façade. From the rear, Belle Grove presented a very different face. This side of the house presented a variety of points of access, a profusion of porches and loggias, and a diversity of surface treatments, including exposed brick, stucco, and wood. With its different masses all tied together asymmetrically, the house rightly deserved its reputation for having been "a wildly irregular pile."⁴



6.6 Belle Grove House Stair and Library Wing (Photo courtesy Richard Koch Collection, Southeastern Architectural Archive, Tulane University.)



6.7 Belle Grove House

Viewed from the Mississippi River, the house presents its more classical face. (Photo courtesy Library of Congress.)



6.8 Belle Grove House Servants' Wing

This view shows the entrances to the servants' wing. Missing is the library wing, which would have provided more points of entry. (Photo courtesy Richard Koch Collection, Southeastern Architectural Archive, Tulane University.)

Why did Belle Grove present such radically different faces to the world? The answer lies in part in understanding that the house had two very different audiences. The front of the house represented the more public approach to the house, and the goal was to impart to guests an impression of age and antiquity. A house that reflected centuries of civilization added to the impression of permanence and gave the plantation a sense of history. Belle Grove House's Greek revival features were going out of fashion when the house was built, but a house that appeared to have been designed and built years earlier would have added to the impression that the Andrews family had long been established in the area. The use of classical elements on the front of the house was done to lend the impression that the family had enjoyed many long years of prosperity.

To the rear of the house a very different but equally purposeful message was sent about the family, this time pointing to their modernity. The rear of the house sent the message to anyone working on the plantation and anyone inspecting its fields that Belle Grove Plantation was an up-to-date, modern sugar operation with an equally modern and up-to-date house. With its cistern system, attached water closets, and roof vents, it also would have been clear that Belle Grove House was very much a place of technical innovation.

Decoration also played a role in reinforcing the taste and sophistication of the Andrews family. As we have seen, the massing of the house advertised the modernity of the family, but in its decoration, the message was subtler, pointing to an appreciation of the fine arts, education in ancient history and early civilizations, and an understanding of architecture and classical orders. The columns on the two porticos played the major role

in signally the family's sophistication and an appreciation for the antique. The eight columns were all fluted, an added expense and one that was designed to communicate discerning taste. Fluted columns do appear at both Madewood and Woodlawn, but for Belle Grove House, Henry Howard went further, adding elaborate six-foot carved Corinthian capitals, an extravagance not seen before in the area surrounding Belle Grove, and one that pointed to a greater appreciation of classical orders.

By contrast, houses close to Belle Grove Plantation, including those at Evergreen, Houmas, Oak Alley, and Ashland, were all constructed with plain columns topped with Tuscan capitals. Others, like Bocage, had even simpler square columns topped with modest square capitals. Belle Grove House also differed in that its columns were paired with matching pilasters that spread across the interiors of each portico. This use of paired columns and pilasters departed dramatically from traditional Lower Mississippi plantation house design, which generally featured strikingly smooth and barren exterior walls enclosed by columns. As they served no real structural purpose, the pilasters would have been especially indicative of the degree to which the Andrew family could indulge their expensive tastes.

Belle Grove House's rusticated exterior stuccowork and quoins were also major departures from traditional Lower Mississippi designs, and served to point to a level of sophistication in excess of that of other planters. In almost all cases, brick houses along the Lower Mississippi were covered with stucco, reflecting the taste for the Greek revival and its traditional use of stone. A good layer of stucco also added insulation, purified design, and protected bricks and mortar. But at Belle Grove, stucco did more. The

addition of rustication pointed strongly toward an appreciation for older and more European, and thus more expensive and desirable, designs. At the same time, the rustication was unneeded and pointed to the ability to afford solely decorative touches. Equally important, and much like the use of Greek revival design elements, rustication served to imply that the house was an old family seat, and by association, that the Andrews family enjoyed a long and noble history in the region.



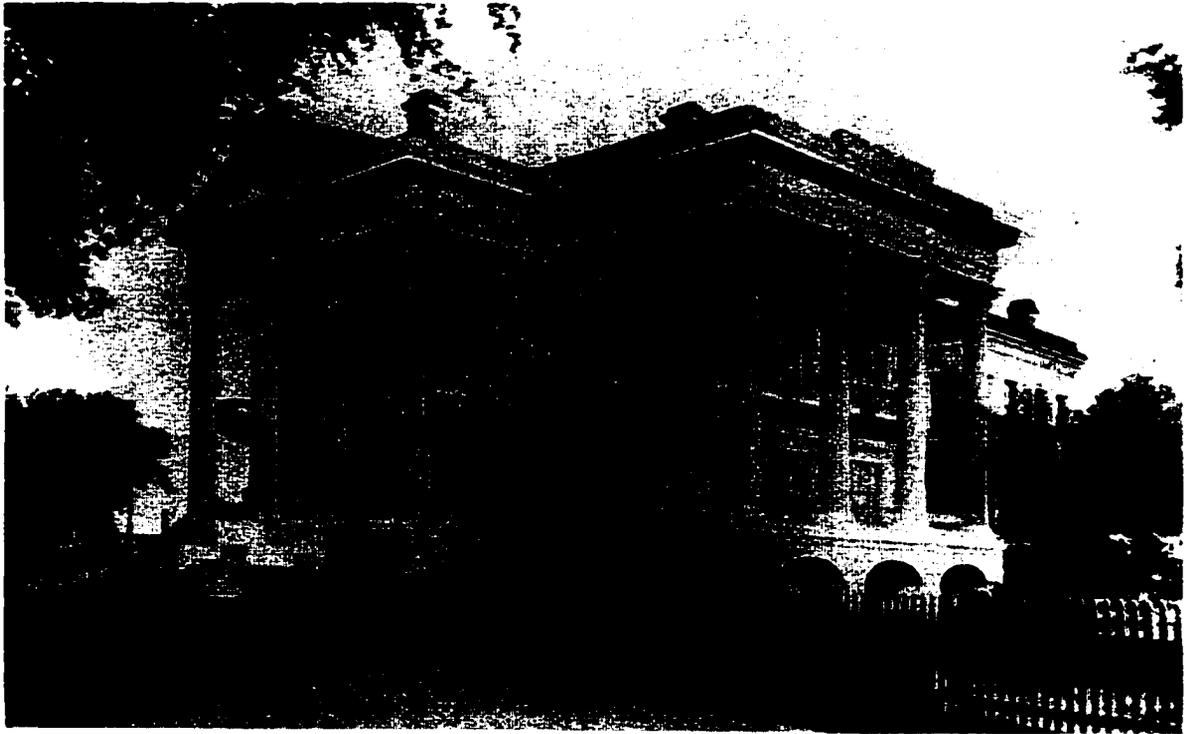
6.9 Belle Grove House Side Portico

By the time this photo was taken in the 1920s, trees had grown to obscure the house. From this angle Belle Grove House appeared its most massive. (Photo courtesy Richard Koch Collection, Southeastern Architectural Archive, Tulane University.)

The profusion of cast iron at Belle Grove House, designed in a style familiar in New Orleans and Natchez but not along the Lower Mississippi, also served to point out the Andrews family's urban and up-to-date tastes. When Belle Grove House was built, most plantations in the area could rely on a plentiful and nearly cost-free supply of wood, and more often than not wooden railings and handrails enclosed balconies and colonnades. Most of these were of the simplest design, with flat handrails and square or round balusters. Some houses went beyond this level of decoration. At Madewood, the upper balcony railing is supported by diamond-crossed vertical balusters, and at Ducros (Terrebonne Parish) modest iron railings were used along the second-floor colonnade. At Belle Grove, expensive iron railings to rival the finest of New Orleans enclosed all of the balconies. Along the library wing of the house, even more ironwork, including the elaborate cast iron loggia, served to amplify this statement. This use of ironwork also signaled the ability to afford more expensive maintenance work. In an environment where humidity regularly ranges in the 90th percentiles, and where frequent rains washed over Belle Grove House's exposed balconies and loggia, the use of native cypress would have been a more sensible, but clearly less extravagant choice.

The profuse use of windows and the level of variety in their design also served to reinforce the Andrews family's high level of taste. Before Belle Grove, many large houses such as those at Evergreen, Oak Alley, and even Madewood used on average only three types of openings: main doors, floor-to-ceiling windows, and standard casement windows in service areas.⁵ Remarkably, at Oak Alley only two window forms were used throughout the entire house. At Belle Grove House, by comparison, 10 separate window

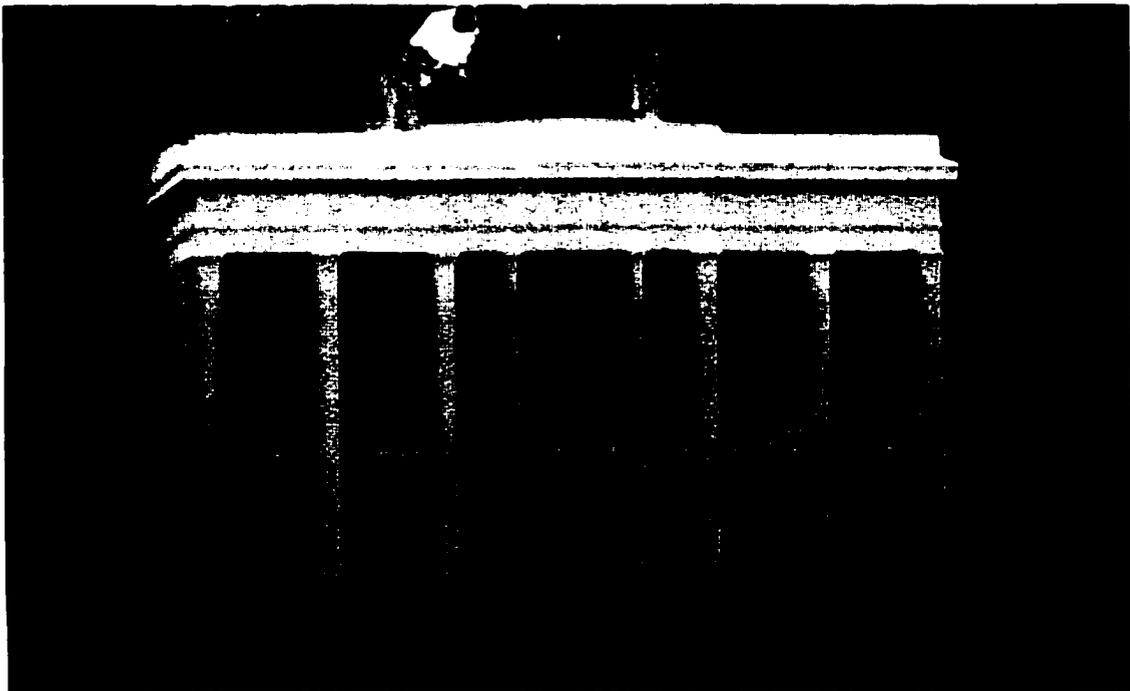
forms occurred on the first floor, ranging from those across the principal portico, to the tripartite windows of the reception room and first-floor bedroom, and to the tall arched windows of the servants' wing. The second floor included nine different window forms, and while some were identical to those on the first floor, the windows above the dining room and library differed dramatically. Finally, the attic and raised basement added 10 more forms to the list. In all, some 26 different windows were used throughout the house, creating a diversity of form not seen before on the Lower Mississippi. This alone would have advertised the sophistication of the house's owners.



6.10 Belle Grove House

In this view the diversity of Belle Grove's windows is evident. (Photo courtesy Richard Koch Collection, Southeastern Architectural Archive, Tulane University.)

Exterior trim, moldings, and other decorative elements also played a role in displaying the sophisticated tastes of the Andrews family. The majority of large Lower Mississippi plantation houses included multipart moldings across their facades. Several, as seen at Bocage (1801-1840), included more detailed cornices with dentils. But at Bocage the dentil moldings only stretch across three sides, and the rear of the house is strikingly plain. By contrast, Belle Grove House's four sides were graced with dentil moldings. By continuing the line of dentil moldings around the house, and by using expensive windows in the rear of the house, the effect created was one that pointed to a degree of design and taste in excess of that at other Lower Mississippi plantations.



6.11 Bocage Plantation House

At Bocage only the side of the house facing the Mississippi enjoys a colonnade. (Photo by the author.)

The use of moldings and their level of intricacy also added to the impression of excess. Belle Grove House's exterior included a large number of massive hand-carved elements, including the Italianate details above the doors and windows, the highly carved support brackets for the second-floor balconies, and the large column capitals. At the same time, the use of hoods over the arched windows of the library wing signaled an understanding of the latest urban styles.

One further aspect of Belle Grove House's exterior stood out and pointed to the urbanity and sophistication of the Andrews family. Unlike the muted mauves and creams typical of its neighbors, Belle Grove House was a riot of color. In addition, the extensive care dedicated to the exterior's painting pointed to the ability to afford large amounts of labor and materials. The house, originally painted first blue, then pink, and then covered with a lavender wash, required extensive labor and materials to paint. Additional colors, straw yellow for the columns and deep red for the trim, added to the striking nature of the house. All of this served one central purpose. These colors would have stood out strongly amongst an endless sea of green sugar cane, calling attention to the house from both field and river. Given its height and color, the lack of high levees at the time, and given that the trees along its drive to the river were small at construction, the house would have been visible for miles up and down the river, a goal which the Andrews family clearly desired.

The exterior decoration of Belle Grove House and its design and massing made a strong statement about the Andrews family's tastes. As we will see, once inside, the house conveyed a very different message about the family.

¹ This point is well supported by the letters, journals, and diaries contained in the extensive *Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations from the Revolution through the Civil War*, Kenneth Stampp, ed. (Frederick: University Publications of America, 1985). These records relating to the Lower Mississippi show a significant level of interaction and intermarriage between large sugar plantation families.

² Just how effective this strategy was is clear from the number of twentieth century writers, including Clarence John Laughlin, who claimed that this wing was the setting for elaborate balls and parties.

³ The importance of New Orleans to sugar planters as a center for consumption and entertainment is also born out in correspondence contained in the *Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations from the Revolution through the Civil War*, Kenneth Stampp, ed.

⁴ Koch, Richard. *Belle Grove, White Castle Vicinity, Iberville Parish, HABS LA-36* (Washington: Historic American Buildings Survey, c1933). pp. 3.

⁵ Descriptions of plantation houses and structures are based in part on additional Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) reports, as well as first-hand documentation by the author.

Chapter 7

BELLE GROVE HOUSE INTERIORS

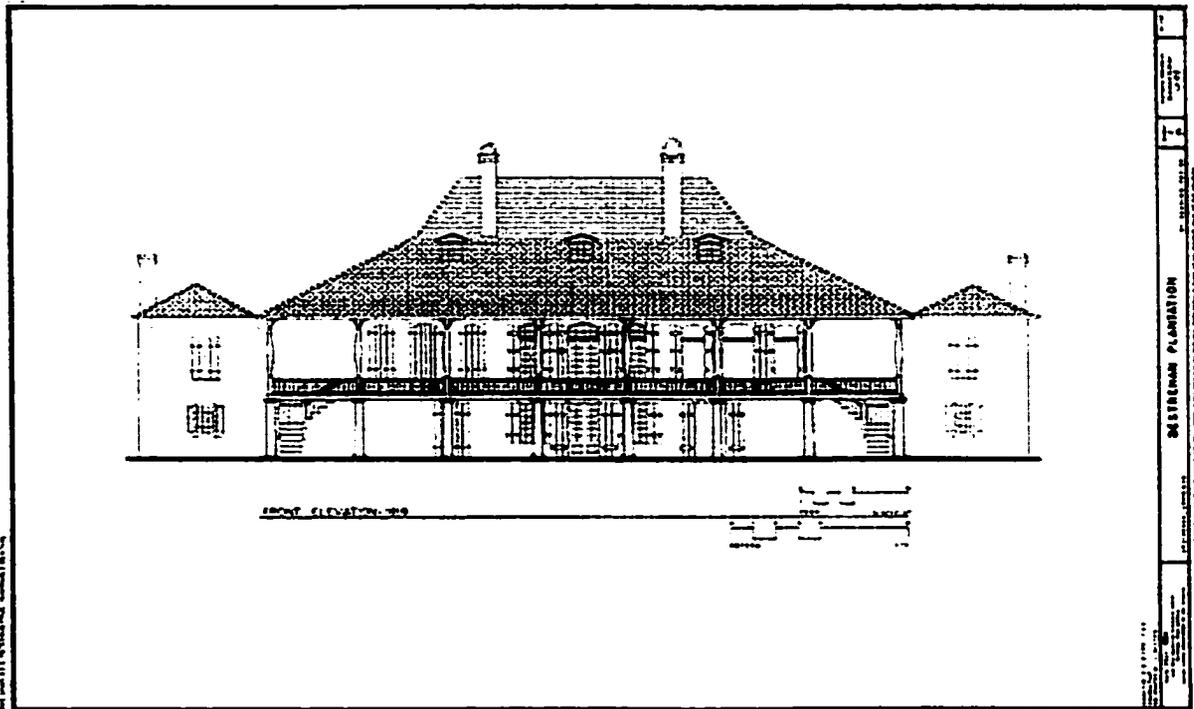
The extensive care dedicated to Belle Grove House's exterior was applied in even greater measure to its interior spaces. Unlike earlier Lower Mississippi plantation houses, Belle Grove House's asymmetrical form allowed for a more inventive layout of rooms and a more elaborate system of social exchange, intimacy, and privacy. Freed from the strictures of the traditional central block and colonnade form, Henry Howard created an interior that gave more flexibility to the ways family members, visitors, and house slaves interacted and lived with one another. In the process, Howard created a house that helped codify sociability and privacy at a level not seen before along the Lower Mississippi.

Architect Richard Koch was the first to consider that the design of Belle Grove House and the layout of rooms within it reflected a system of varying layers of sociability and privacy. Focusing on the upstairs bedrooms, Koch wrote, in 1933: "The second floor had six bedrooms with closets and dressing rooms and so divided by halls as to give a privacy not found in other plantation houses."¹ Some years later, Harnett Kane, proposed that Belle Grove House's interiors focused around courting, and that the layout of rooms provided varying degrees of privacy for young couples, while providing contiguous spaces for close chaperoning.

These arguments fall short of addressing fully the highly intricate ordering of space within Belle Grove House, and fail to do justice to the extent to which Henry Howard created a house with successive and extensive layers of privacy.

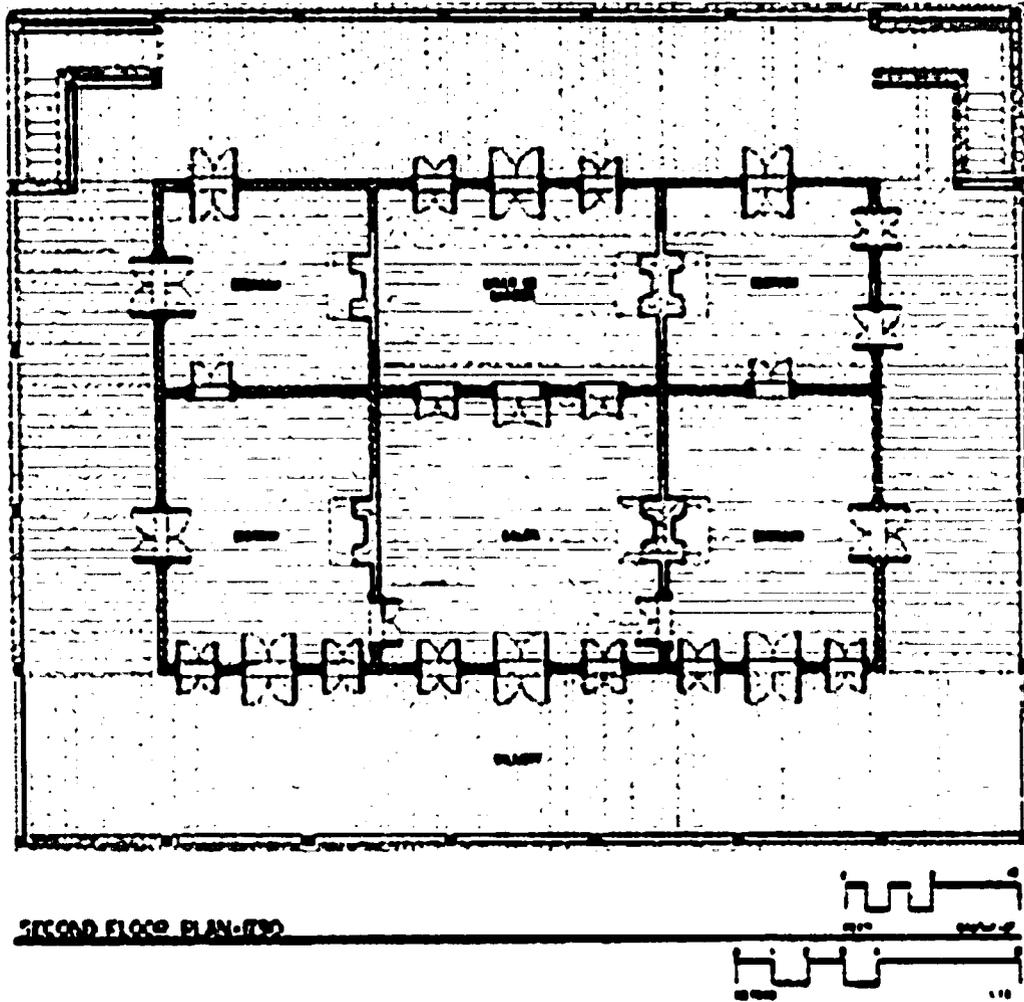
Prior to the construction of Belle Grove House, two interior house forms dominated the Lower Mississippi sugar country. The first and oldest was a house form dating to Louisiana's early settlement, based on rooms laid out *en suite* (without hallways) and *en filade*, (in a line).² Often described as the Creole plan, this arrangement allowed for good air movement through the house, but at the cost of decreased privacy. These Creole houses usually consisted of a central block with an encircling colonnade that provided shade and served as the only hallway. Many of these houses had exterior staircases.

The Creole plan was especially tenacious on the Lower Mississippi. One of the best examples of this house form, and one that shows just how long the Creole plan was popular, is Destrehan Plantation House, originally constructed in 1790. With its fully encircling double colonnade, exterior staircases, and lack of hallways, Destrehan was in 1790 considered a relatively up-to-date house. By the time Destrehan was reconstructed in 1840, most new houses in the area included interior hallways and staircases. But despite the removal and replacement of the original windows, doors, and shutters, and the enclosure of the rear portico, the only change made in the layout of Destrehan's first floor was the addition of pocket doors between the two central rooms. After all of this remodeling, Destrehan remained very much an eighteenth-century Creole *en suite* mansion house.



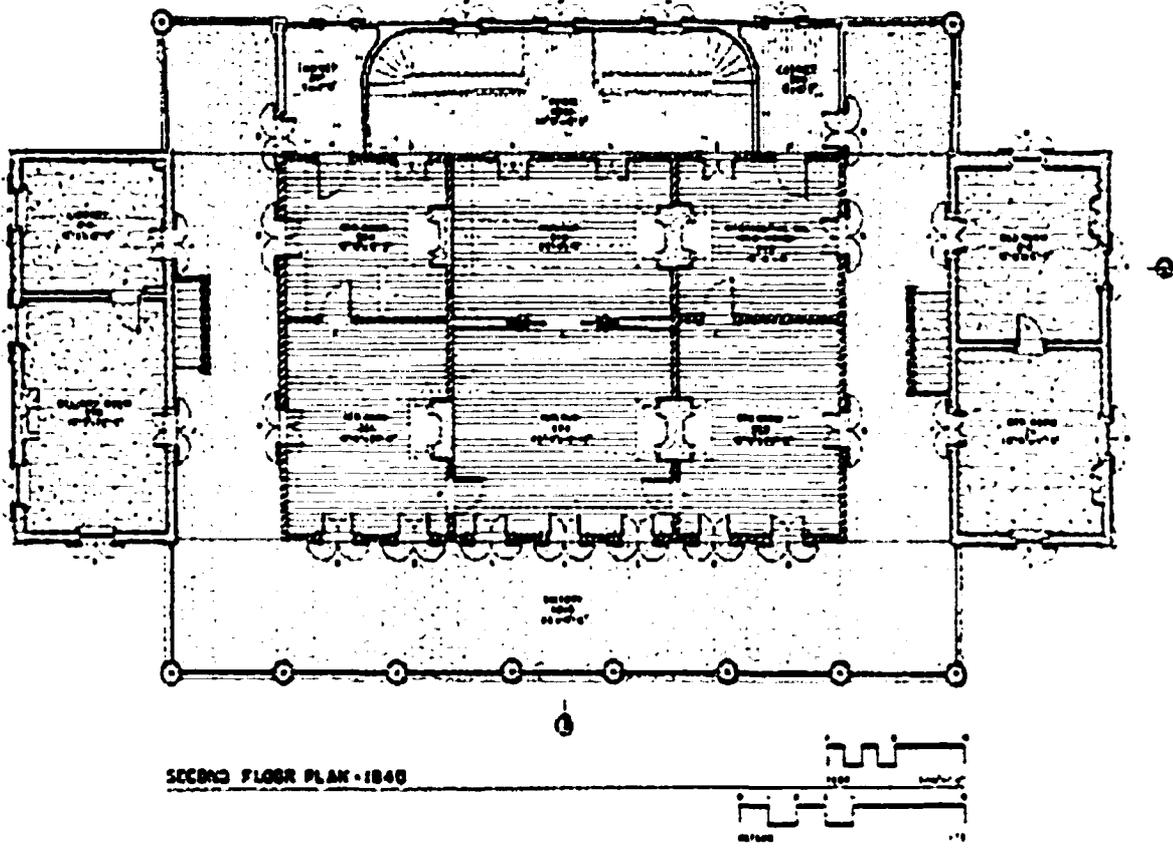
7.1 Destrehan Plantation House

The main house as seen after extensive remodeling, including the addition of two flankers located to the sides of the house and accessible from the colonnade. Destrehan is perhaps the best example of how tenacious the Creole floor plan could be in the face of new and changing styles. (Illustration Courtesy Library of Congress.)



7.2 Destrehan Plantation in 1790

In this floor plan, all rooms open into each contiguous room, with the staircases relegated to the corners of the colonnade. (Illustration courtesy Library of Congress.)

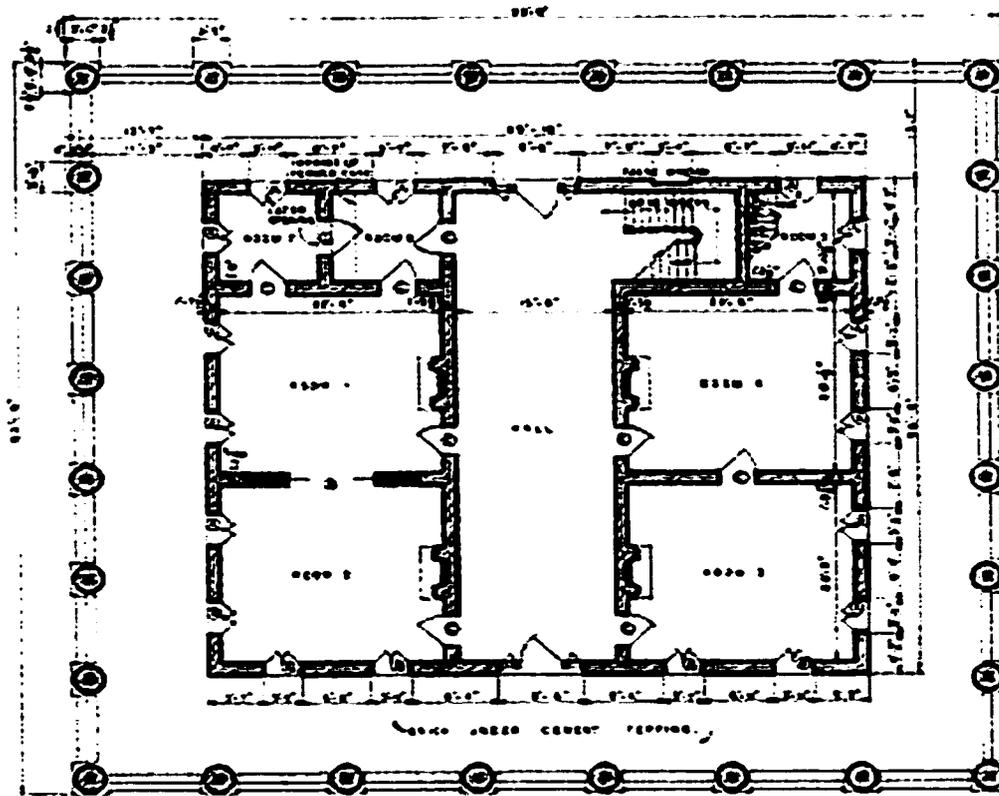


SECOND FLOOR PLAN - 1840

7.3 Destrehan Plantation as Remodeled in the 1830s

Despite the addition of flankers, and the construction of interior staircases, all rooms open on to one another in the traditional Creole manner. (Illustration courtesy Library of Congress.)

A second large house form developed during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, and while still typified by the central block and colonnade form, these houses had interior staircases and central halls. This form is represented by houses including Uncle Sam in St. James Parish, originally constructed in 1837, but rebuilt in the 1840s. Although Uncle Sam was razed to expand the Mississippi levee, much documentation exists of Uncle Sam's structures. With its central hall and flanking double rooms, and with its large staircase at the right rear of the hall, Uncle Sam was an example of the second-generation house form on the Lower Mississippi.



7.4 Uncle Sam Plantation First Floor (Illustration courtesy Library of Congress.)

It is important to recognize that the exteriors of these second-generation houses were for the most part identical to those built in the earlier *en suite* form. As late as the mid-1850s, Creole *en suite* houses were still being built on the Lower Mississippi. One example of the duration of this form is San Francisco (1852-1856), located across the river and to the south of Belle Grove Plantation in St. John the Baptist Parish. With its steamboat Gothic loggia, its Gothic revival dormer windows, and its elaborate painted interior decoration, San Francisco represents in many ways the best of the Victorian style on the Lower Mississippi. San Francisco reconciled the earlier Creole style with the much more up-to-date central hall form. San Francisco's interior included a central hall, but the rest of the house consisted of a series of connected rooms, each opening into the next, in the earlier *en suite* plan.

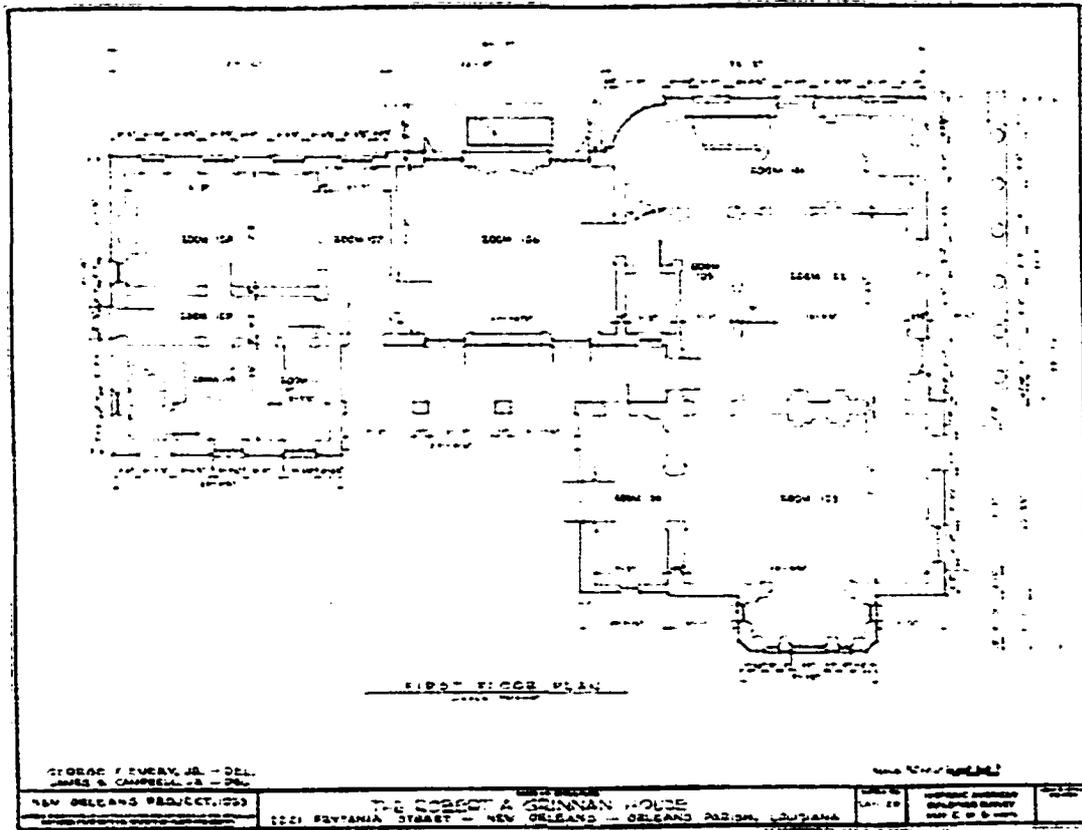
By the time Henry Howard began work on Belle Grove House he had already begun to reject the earlier plantation house forms and experiment with non-traditional approaches to the layout and proportioning of interior rooms. In his work at Madewood Plantation, Howard created a classic temple-form Greek revival mansion house, possibly in deference to his Yankee clients, the Pugh family.³ With its immense Ionic columns and central front door, Madewood is perhaps the finest example of the pure Greek revival on the Lower Mississippi. But Madewood's interiors are a dramatic counterpoint to the house's exterior. In his layout of the interior of Madewood, Henry Howard abandoned the more traditional hall and four-room block form, creating instead a much more fluid and inventive floor plan designed to break up the symmetry of the house. From the main hall a cross-hall bisects the left half of the house.



7.5 Madewood Plantation House

This hallway runs across the house parallel to the front portico, forming a T with the entrance hall. Rooms on each side of the hall are different in size and decoration. The faux-marbre painting on the door surround is typical of Madewood's interior spaces. (Photo by the author.)

Henry Howard's level of creativity at Madewood pales in comparison to the work that he was doing concurrently on the Robert A. Grinnan House in New Orleans.⁴ The four rooms of the ground floor, paired and set at right angles to each other, are divided by a front stair hall. Each room is a distinct entity, and thanks to the use of hallways and a loggia, it is possible to move from one end of the house to the other without cutting through any of the four principal rooms. At the same time, each room in the Grinnan House is a different size, and the parlor includes a large rectangular bay facing the garden that breaks up the symmetry of the house's facade.⁵



7.6 Robert A. Grinnan House (Illustration Courtesy Library of Congress.)

The Robert A. Grinnan House was in many ways a proving ground for Henry Howard's work at Belle Grove Plantation. But at Belle Grove, the interior of the house began in reality at the foot of the main portico. As we have seen, the main portico, standing fully 52 feet tall, or the equivalent of a modern five-story building, served to present forcefully the wealth and position of the Andrews family and to remind those arriving at the house of their subordinate place within the social structure of the plantation. Importantly, the front door of Belle Grove House was located to the right of the marble front steps in the first of the three bays facing the drive. This served to visually cut the visitor off from the house. Stylistically, the house would have been more balanced had the front door been located in the central bay, as at Madewood and Woodlawn and most other large houses along the Lower Mississippi.

But the house's porticos operated at a very subtle level. At the time Belle Grove House was built, the standard design for major Lower Mississippi plantation houses was for the second-floor balconies to extend out to meet the columns. This design was the result of structural challenges and served to tie the columns to the exterior walls of the house. From the standpoint of comfort, these wide colonnades served to shade the floors below. At Belle Grove House, the second-floor balconies did not extend out to meet the columns on each portico, and were in fact quite narrow. This achieved two goals: first, with the columns unbroken, they appeared to be taller; and second, shorter balconies allowed family members to look down on visitors even after they had reached the front door. An added benefit was the ability to control access to the balconies by shortening them within the frame of the portico and only extending them under three windows.



7.7 Belle Grove House

This view shows Belle Grove House's 12-foot high marble stairs. The front door was to the left of the entry stairs. (Photo courtesy Louisiana State Museum.)

The location and scale of the front door also served to make a powerful statement about the importance of the house and its residents. To reach the front door, the visitor was required to climb marble stairs rising 12 feet above the lawn. From the front yard, iron railings blocked any clear view of the front door. On the way to the front door, the visitor first had to pass a large window providing a view of the drawing room. The windows on the front portico, each measuring 10 feet tall and three-and-a-half feet wide, and with the thinnest of mullions, provided a view of the parlor and served to advertise the house's elegant interiors much like shop windows. With the pocket doors between drawing room and parlor and the doors to the dining room open, the large central window would have provided a view of the entire depth of the house. Even if a visitor was *not* admitted to the house, the layout of the front door and windows provided a view of its lavish interiors. This was counteracted, however, by the front door, which was constructed of solid cypress panels and surrounded by small lights. It is noteworthy that at this more vulnerable point of exchange, where a visitor could in fact gain access to the house, a greater level of security and privacy reigned.

The front door was not the only entrance to Belle Grove House, but alternative entrances were few and far apart. As noted earlier, the subordinate portico at Belle Grove House stood fully 12 feet above the yard, and lacking entrance stairs it was inaccessible from outside. The only other entrances were at the rear of the house and difficult to find. These entrances were located at the rear of the servant's wing, and at the rear of the stair hall/library wing, well hidden from sight, and were clearly not intended for visitors.



7.8 Belle Grove House Front Door (Photo courtesy Historic New Orleans Collection, acc.# 1974.25.26.33.)

At the same time, access to Belle Grove House's 12-foot tall raised basement was only available at the rear of the kitchen, and below the dining room. Storage entrances were also located below the subordinate portico, but all of these points of access were well hidden from the front through the use of screening and latticework. Clearly, the goal was to require the visitor to climb the main stairs and arrive at the front door.



7.9 Belle Grove House

This rear view of service wing shows the entrances to the kitchens and servants quarters. By the time of this photo the library wing had collapsed. It included five exit doors on two floors. (Photo courtesy Richard Koch Collection, Southeastern Architectural Archives, Tulane University.)

Just how far Belle Grove House broke with tradition and the extent to which the restriction of access occurred in the house is evident when considering other large houses built along the Lower Mississippi. Houses in the immediate area, including those at Oak Alley, Evergreen, Houmas, Ashland Belle Helene and Uncle Sam, all had many rooms on both floors with direct outside access. It is evident from their design that slaves and visitors made use of the same exterior and interior doors. Only at Belle Grove was there a firm delineation between the two.



7.10 Uncle Sam Plantation House (Photo courtesy Library of Congress.)



7.11 Ashland (Belle Helene) House

Ashland's design provided external access to nearly every room in the house. The second floor colonnade served as a hallway, and offered access to all rooms from the outside. (Photo courtesy Library of Congress.)

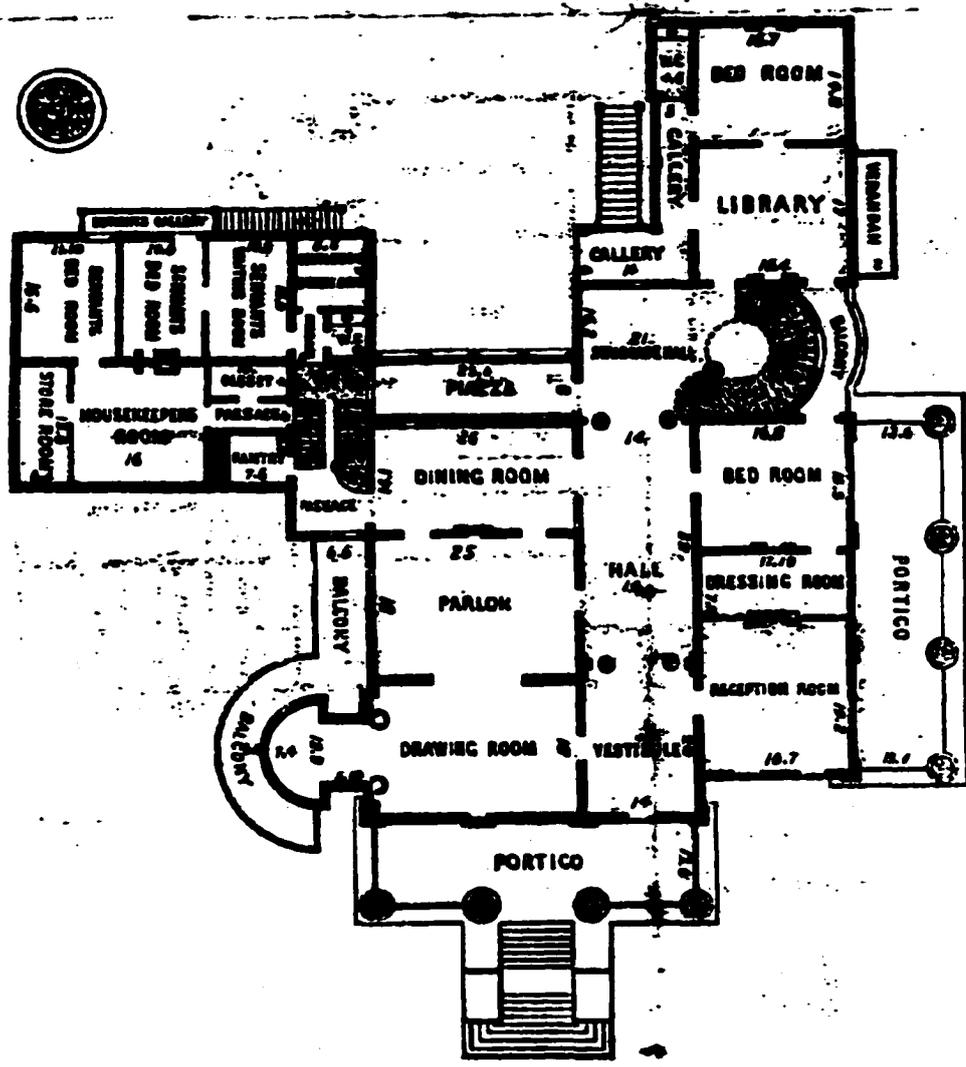


7.12 Evergreen Plantation House

In addition to numerous exterior doors and large windows, the external staircases added to the accessibility of second floor rooms. (Photo by the author.)

Just as the front portico served to remind visitors of the social and economic superiority of the Andrews family, interior spaces served to further inform visitors about the social hierarchy in place on the plantation. Once inside Belle Grove House, the visitor was not guaranteed acceptance. The acceptance or rejection occurring at the front door could also occur in Belle Grove House's interior spaces. This was achieved in many ways, ranging from the layout of the principal social spaces, the use of architectural detail, to the use of color and the level and style of decoration inside the house.

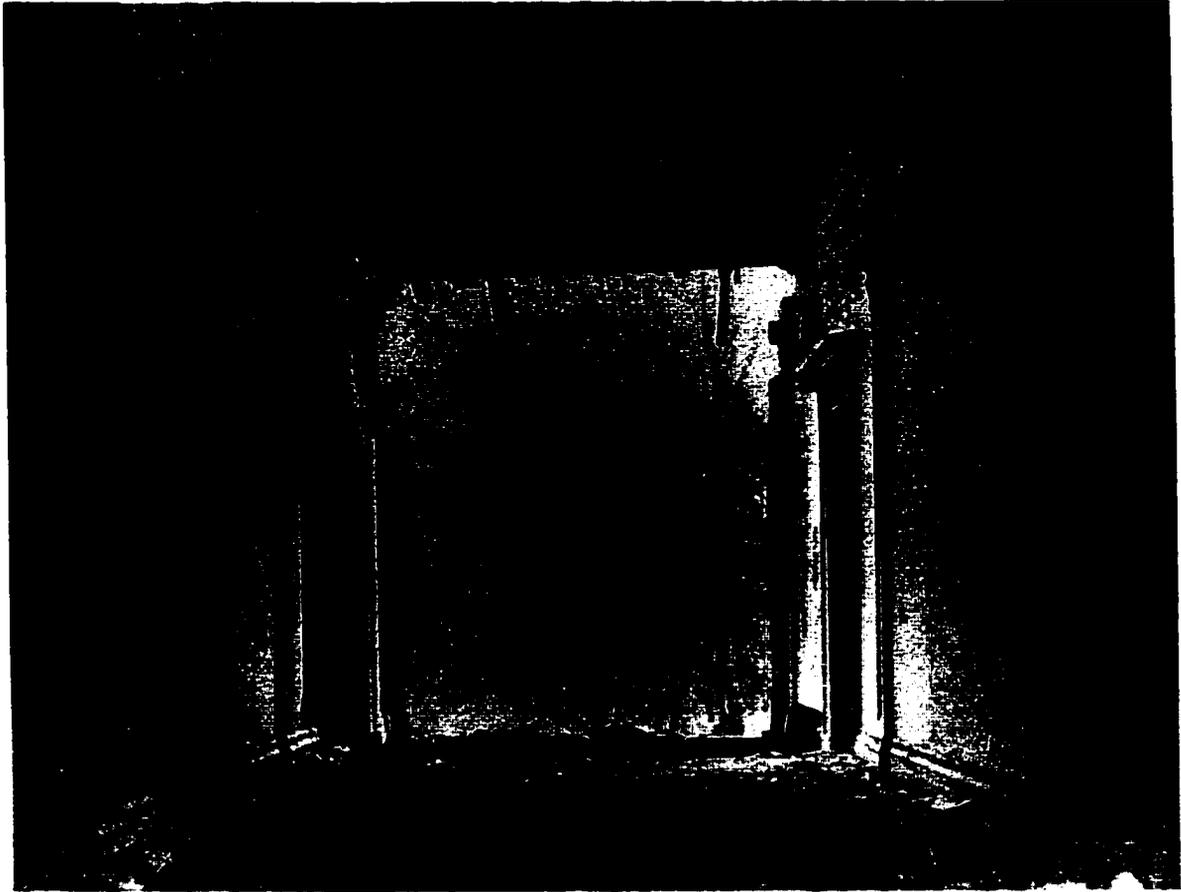
The layout of rooms was the foremost and strongest way in which differing layers of sociability, privacy, and servitude were addressed at Belle Grove Plantation. This is no clearer than in the arrangement of the primary social spaces: the drawing room, parlor, dining room, and half-turret. By the time Henry Howard designed Belle Grove House, he had already experimented with differing approaches to the relationship between double parlors. At both Woodlawn and Madewood, Howard paired parlors of roughly identical dimensions and located them in such a way that they served as the most public spaces of these houses. In both cases, solid pocket doors divided the rooms. With Belle Grove House, Howard created a more complex system of space, designed to give a greater level of control and privacy within the primary social spaces. Unlike at Woodlawn and Madewood, Belle Grove House included a separate reception room to the right of the front entry. As a result, visitors could be received and yet denied access to the main interior social spaces.



PLAN OF FIRST FLOOR.

7.13 Belle Grove House First Floor Plan

This plan is from the 1868 sale advertisement prepared by Barstow and Pope of New York. (Illustration courtesy Historic New Orleans Collection.)

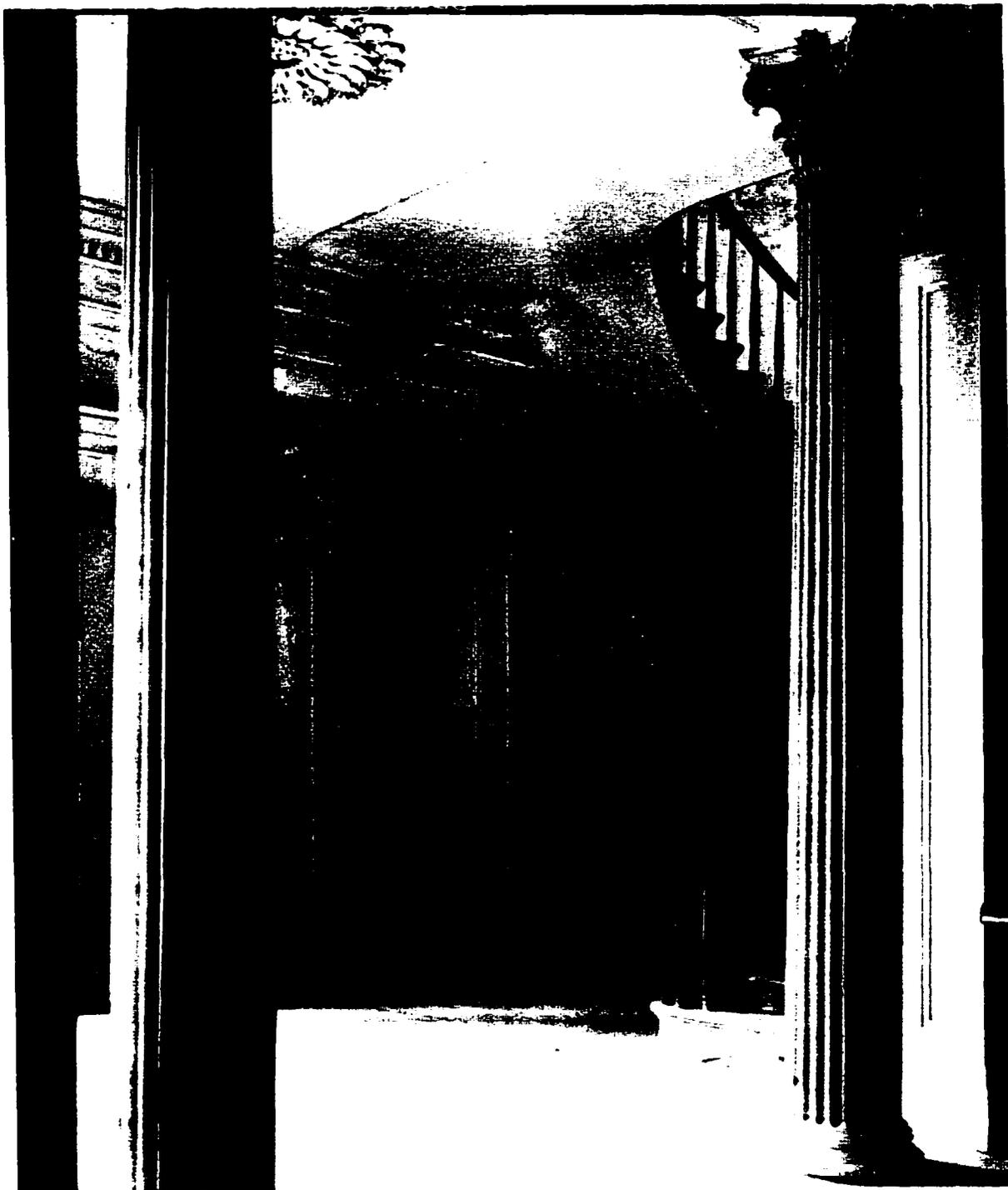


7.14 Belle Grove House Principal Hallway

Note the paired square pilasters and the lack of transom windows. Originally, two columns flanked these pilasters. At the end of this hallway would have been the stair hall, the entrance to which was flanked by paired pilasters and another pair of round columns. (Photo courtesy Historic New Orleans Collection, acc.# 1981.47.4.1457.)

The main hallway in Belle Grove House played the largest role in controlling access to the more private interior rooms. This hallway, stretching fully 48 feet in length, 16 feet in height, and 14 feet in width, was the first space within the house a visitor entered and was the largest physically. While the hall provided access to the more private areas of the house, it had two key transition points at which exclusion could occur. The first was located at that point in the front hall where the reception room and drawing room ended. At this point a pair of columns divided the hall, creating in effect a fore-hall in line with the most public rooms, and a rear hall in line with the more private parlor, dining room, and first-floor bedroom. The placement of these columns is especially significant because from the front hall, with both the drawing room and reception room doors closed, there was no way to tell where the front rooms flanking the hall ended. A second pair of columns marked the transition to another layer within the house. Flanking the stair hall, these columns served to mark the transition from the social hall, drawing room, parlor, and dining room to the more private family bedrooms.

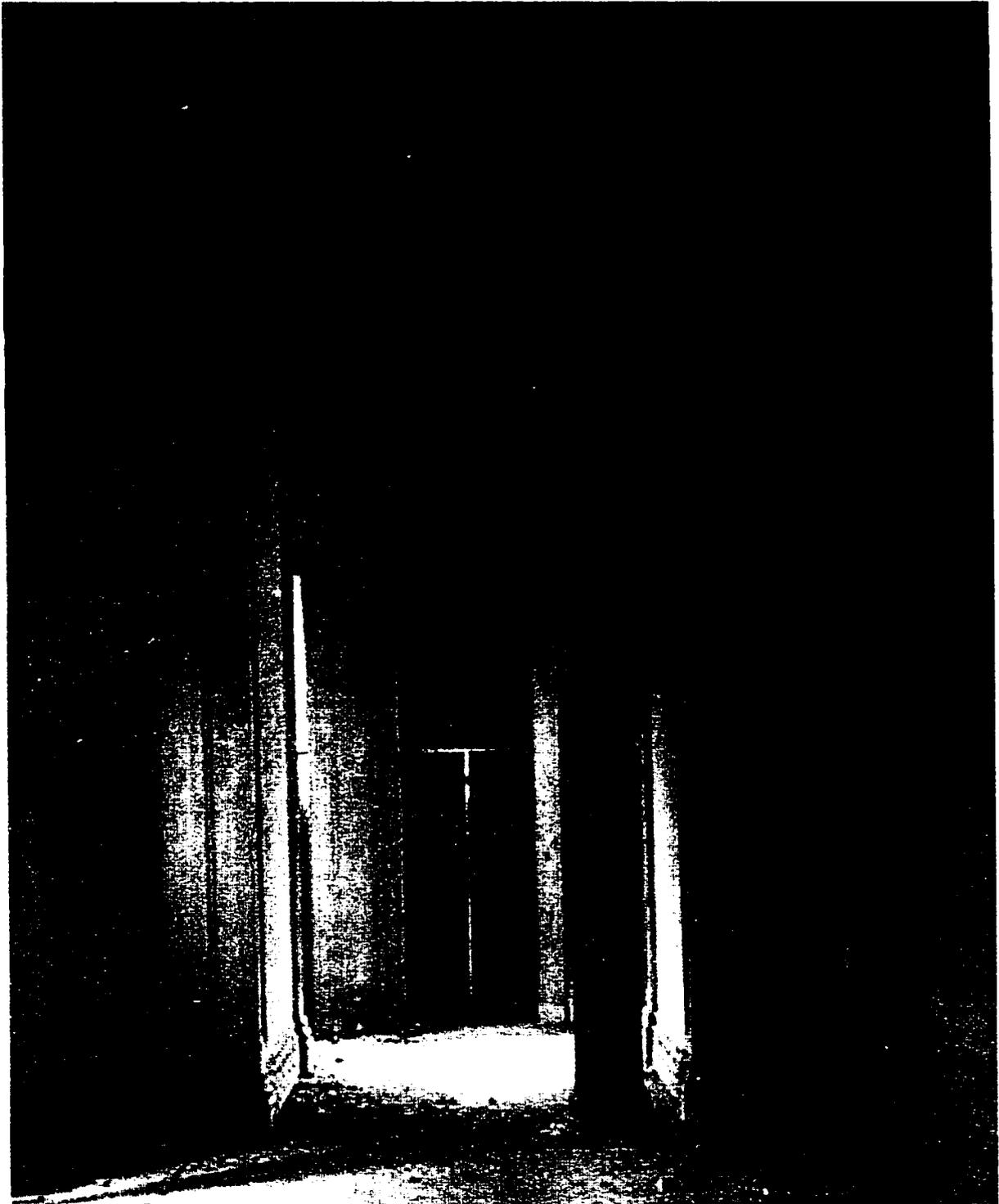
At the back of the hall, the main staircase rose to the right. Despite its scale and elegance, this staircase could not be seen from the front door. As a result, most visitors would have had no idea how to reach the upper floor, greatly increasing its inaccessibility. At the end of the hallway, on one side of the main stair hall, a back door led out of the house. Normally this might be considered a second major entrance, but this entrance was only reached after climbing the stairs outside John Andrews' bedroom and library. This door probably served more as a family and servants' entrance, and it is important to note that the door was identical to those leading to bedrooms.



7.15 Belle Grove House Stair Hall (Photo courtesy Louisiana State Museum.)

A similar play of sociability and privacy occurred within the drawing room, parlor, and half-turret. The drawing room, the first room entered from the hall, was the most accessible of the three spaces and would have been the room most often used for entertaining. With its northwest exposure, multitude of large windows, shading portico, and cross-ventilation, the drawing room would also have been the most comfortable room on the first floor of the house. Off the drawing room, the half-turret would have provided a second layer of privacy, and much like the hallway entrance to the stair hall, it was separated from the drawing room by a pair of columns. Several writers have described the half-turret as a place for young men to woo John Andrews' daughters.⁶ While this story is unverified, it is well documented that this small room was further separated from the drawing room by a set of heavy curtains hanging just in back of the columns.

The relationship between the drawing room and half-turret was similar to that between the drawing room and parlor. Ironically, the parlor, less well ventilated and with a limited view of the plantation, was the largest room on the first floor of the house. From the drawing room a pair of pocket doors served to isolate the parlor, and from the few photographs of this portion of the house it is evident that they were well used.⁷ By the time Belle Grove House was built, pocket doors were being replaced by a more open approach to double parlors, as seen at Howard's next major work, John Randolph's Nottoway. Despite Howard's extensive experimentation with Belle Grove House's interiors, it would appear that he fell back on an earlier and outdated system of division between drawing room and parlor, but one that would give a greater level of privacy to the inner parlor.



7.16 Belle Grove House Drawing Room and Half-turret (Photo courtesy Library of Congress.)

From the parlor, two large doors led directly into the dining room, and this design merits close attention, both for its novelty and for the role it played in protecting the more private areas of the house. This design allowed for direct progression from the more formal drawing room to the more intimate parlor and then to the dining room. In a way, this design resembled the earlier Creole house form with its rooms *en suite*. But in Belle Grove House, the massive hallway would have allowed access to the dining room without two rather awkwardly located doors in the parlor wall. The preferred route from parlor to dining room was most likely through these doors. As a result, this route would have excluded visitors from the more private rear hall and stairs. It is worth noting that at no other house did Henry Howard allow for direct flow from drawing room to parlor to dining room. At most other Howard houses, including those at Madewood and Nottoway, going from parlor to dining room required negotiating the main hall.

An additional layer of privacy, this time between social and business spaces, occurred within Belle Grove House. Thanks to documents dating from the sale of Belle Grove Plantation in 1868, it is apparent that solely John Andrews occupied the library wing of the house.⁸ From the front entrance, this was the least accessible part of the first floor, and one might normally conclude that Andrews' personal space was purposefully the most removed from both visitors and family. But the design of his bedroom and library considered more issues than just privacy. These rooms opened onto a gallery that provided access down a flight of stairs to the rear yard, and offered direct communication with the entire plantation. The outside access to John Andrews' library and the overall

organization of Belle Grove as a plantation indicate that these rooms were used as a place of business.

Unlike other large plantations on the Lower Mississippi, most notably Uncle Sam, Houmas, Evergreen, and Nottoway, Belle Grove Plantation lacked the traditional suite of plantation offices. As a result, John Andrews must have conducted the business of the plantation in his library. By this design, Andrews was able to seal off the rest of the house while doing business. Just as important as Andrews' ability to seal off the more private portion of his house was his ability to enter and exit the house without navigating the more social spaces at the front of the house.

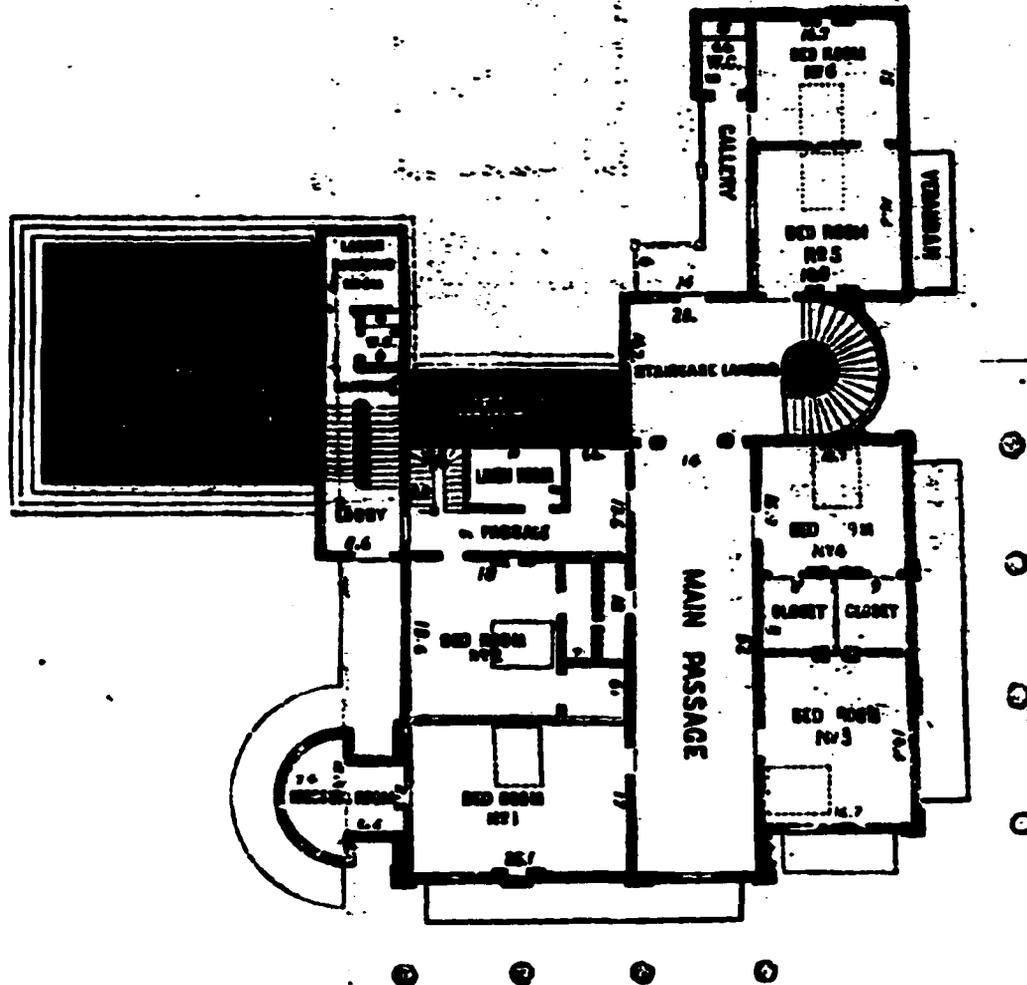
Just as the stair hall divided John Andrews' business activities from the more private spaces of the first floor, a second staircase served to divide and distance day-to-day service activities from the rest of the house.⁹ Belle Grove Plantation was unusual in that a significant number of slaves lived within the house, in the wing to the northeast of the dining room. This wing contained three bedrooms for slaves, storerooms, closets, a servants' waiting room, a pantry, and a water closet, all located above the two large kitchens on the lower level. Much like John Andrews' rooms, this space was separated from the main house by a staircase leading from the kitchens up to the dining room door, and then up to the second floor. As a result, slaves living in the house were isolated and distanced both by their relegation to a distinct and separate space, and by the use of the staircase as a border zone between their functional and the family's social activities.

Gender also played a role in the organization of Belle Grove House's interiors. By 1852, the year construction began on the house, the Andrews family included seven

members living at home. Given the number of bedrooms at Belle Grove House, each family member could enjoy a private bedroom, a rarity and the result of the house's massive size. The 1868 sale agreement between Henry Ware and John Andrews shows that Andrews occupied the rear bedroom on the first floor, and that his daughters occupied the second floor. As further evidence of this gender division between the two floors, the plans drawn up for the 1868 sale of Belle Grove indicate that the first floor included a "gentlemen's' bathing room", with a "ladies' dressing room" located directly above.¹⁰ Given that the design of this room was identical to the gentlemen's bathing room below, this may have been a ladies' bathing room instead of a dressing room, but what is important is that the two spaces and levels are identified along gender lines.

The arrangement of rooms on the second floor was as complicated as that on the first, and the bedrooms were arranged to indicate three distinct levels of importance. The first and most dominant were the pair of bedrooms above the parlor and drawing room. The front bedroom, with its plaster rosette and half-turret, and its balconies along two sides of the house, was the most important bedroom. In all likelihood, this was the bedroom of the eldest daughter. Behind the front bedroom, and reflecting the organization of the first floor, was a larger but less impressive room. Both of these rooms had their own dressing rooms.

Across the hall, two secondary bedrooms were ranged along the subordinate portico. Much smaller in scale, these rooms had small closets instead of dressing rooms. Further back, the last pair of bedrooms, even smaller in scale and lacking both dressing rooms and closets, completed the series.



PLAN OF SECOND STORY.

7.17 Belle Grove House Second Floor Plan

This plan was drafted as part of the 1868 sale advertisement. At upper right is the “ladies dressing room” corresponding to the gentlemen’s as indicated in figure 8.8. (Illustration courtesy Historic New Orleans Collection.)

These rooms, while providing separate spaces for the young women in the family, should not be considered as solely private family spaces. As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has pointed out, nineteenth-century female friendships, especially rural ones, reflected their intensity in the way in which women young and old shared intimate personal space. In her study of social intimacy between schoolgirls, Smith-Rosenberg notes, “In sharp contrast to their distant relationship with boys, young women’s relations with each other were close, often frolicsome, and surprisingly long lasting and devoted. They wrote secret messages to each other, spent long solitary days with each other, curled up in bed together at night to whisper fantasies and secrets.”¹¹ This kind of female intimacy did not end with girlhood, and Smith-Rosenberg further argues, “Rural women developed a pattern of more extended visits that lasted weeks and sometimes months, at times even dislodging husbands from their beds and bedrooms so that dear friends might spend every hour of every day together.”¹²

Given Belle Grove Plantation’s rural location and the number of daughters in the family, the presence of female guests must have been part of everyday life. At the same time, the number of bedrooms could have provided room for some guests to have their own rooms, but on the Andrews’ sale documents none of the upstairs bedrooms are indicated as guest rooms, and no bedroom has more than one bed. Female friends may have stayed in the same rooms as their hosts, and slept in the same beds, and as a result, the upstairs floor of the house was nearly as important a social space as the main floor.

As noted earlier, given the number of daughters in the family, each had a private bedroom, and this would have provided guests with a level of privacy not experienced in many houses at the time. The 1860 Iberville Parish census shows that most families could not offer children a place to entertain guests separate and apart from other family members. In many of these families bedrooms were shared by both genders. Only in a small handful of houses could each child enjoy private space.¹³

Color also served to define and delineate layers of sociability and privacy within the house, and the way in which color defined social and private spaces in Belle Grove House was not reflected in other houses in the region. As Barbara Sorelle Bacot has pointed out, Creole houses were generally painted white on the exterior, and interior rooms were either unpainted or whitewashed with lime.¹⁴ As Edgar deN. Mayhew and Minor Myers have written, the preference in Greek revival interiors was for soft muted colors used consistently through rooms and reflecting the muted tones of exterior surfaces.¹⁵ Evidence of these preferences is found in the few well-documented Lower Mississippi interiors. Houses at Woodlawn Plantation and Houmas Plantation were known to have originally had plain white walls throughout.¹⁶

At Belle Grove, the principal social spaces, including the entrance hall, reception room, drawing room, and parlor, were all painted the same color, a sign of their shared function as the primary social spaces within the house. Based on one remaining column capital, now in the collections of the Louisiana State Museum, and on the color chart Richard Koch developed for the house,¹⁷ these spaces were originally painted an ocher. This flow of color, spreading fully throughout the four principal social spaces, including

the half-turret, and stretching back to the end of the entrance hall, would have given an impression of unity and continuity to the primary social spaces and increased the impression of massive scale.

The dining room was painted a different color, and this created visual separation from the more public rooms. Given that the dining room was visible through two doors leading from the parlor, the use of a different color also advertised its presence. A second goal, achieved through the use of color, was to define the dining room as a separate space and to communicate that the room required a level of intimacy different from that required for admission to the more public drawing room and parlor.

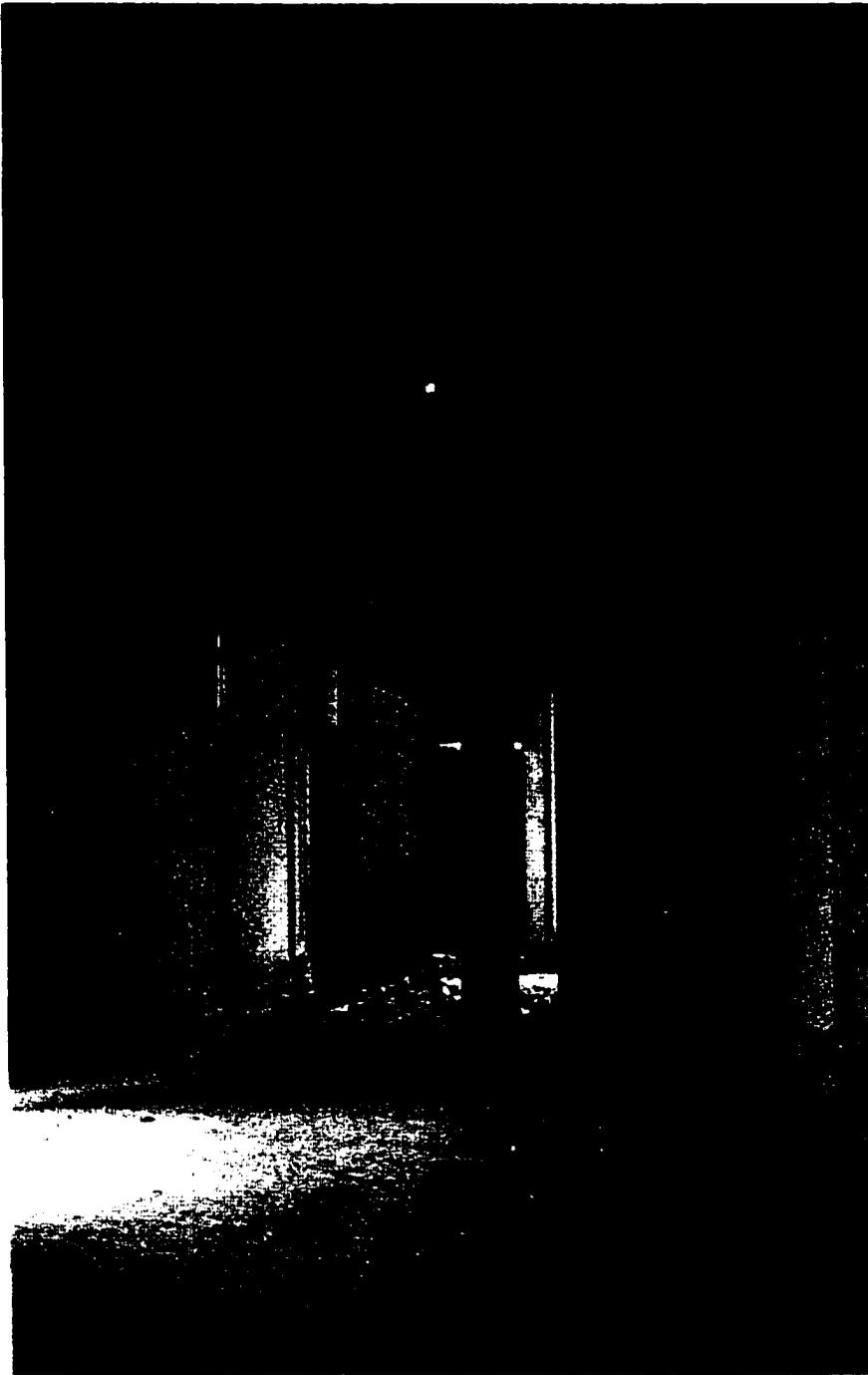
This same system was employed in the front hall. Painting the hall all one color made the hall seem longer, this despite the paired columns that divided the hall into an entry and interior. At the end of the front hall, the stair hall, painted what family members remember as a light blue, communicated by this difference in color the separate and more intimate nature of the space. One other room provided an intersecting point between the dominant social spaces on the first floor of the house (the drawing room, parlor, hall, reception room, and dining room). The first-floor bedroom, located behind the reception room, served as a guest bedroom. It was the furthest point at which many visitors would be admitted into the house, and in reflection of this it was painted a color that appears in no other room in the house.¹⁸

The use of interior architectural elements in Belle Grove House also served to define the varying layers of social and private space within the house. The house's interiors made use of columns and pilasters to an extent not seen in other Lower

Mississippi plantation houses. The most public rooms contained columns and pilasters identical in design to those found on the exterior of Belle Grove House, providing visual flow from the portico to the hall to the drawing room and parlor. The drawing room, the focal point of entertaining at Belle Grove Plantation, was ringed with a total of 15 paneled pilasters, each topped with an elaborate Corinthian capital. At the corners flanking the fireplace, two pilasters were joined at a 45-degree angle to round the corners, and at the entrance to the half-turret, two pilasters were joined similarly to cap these corners. In addition to these pilasters, a pair of columns flanked this entrance. All of these columns and pilasters demonstrated the extent to which the Andrews family could afford to embellish their house with elaborate decoration.

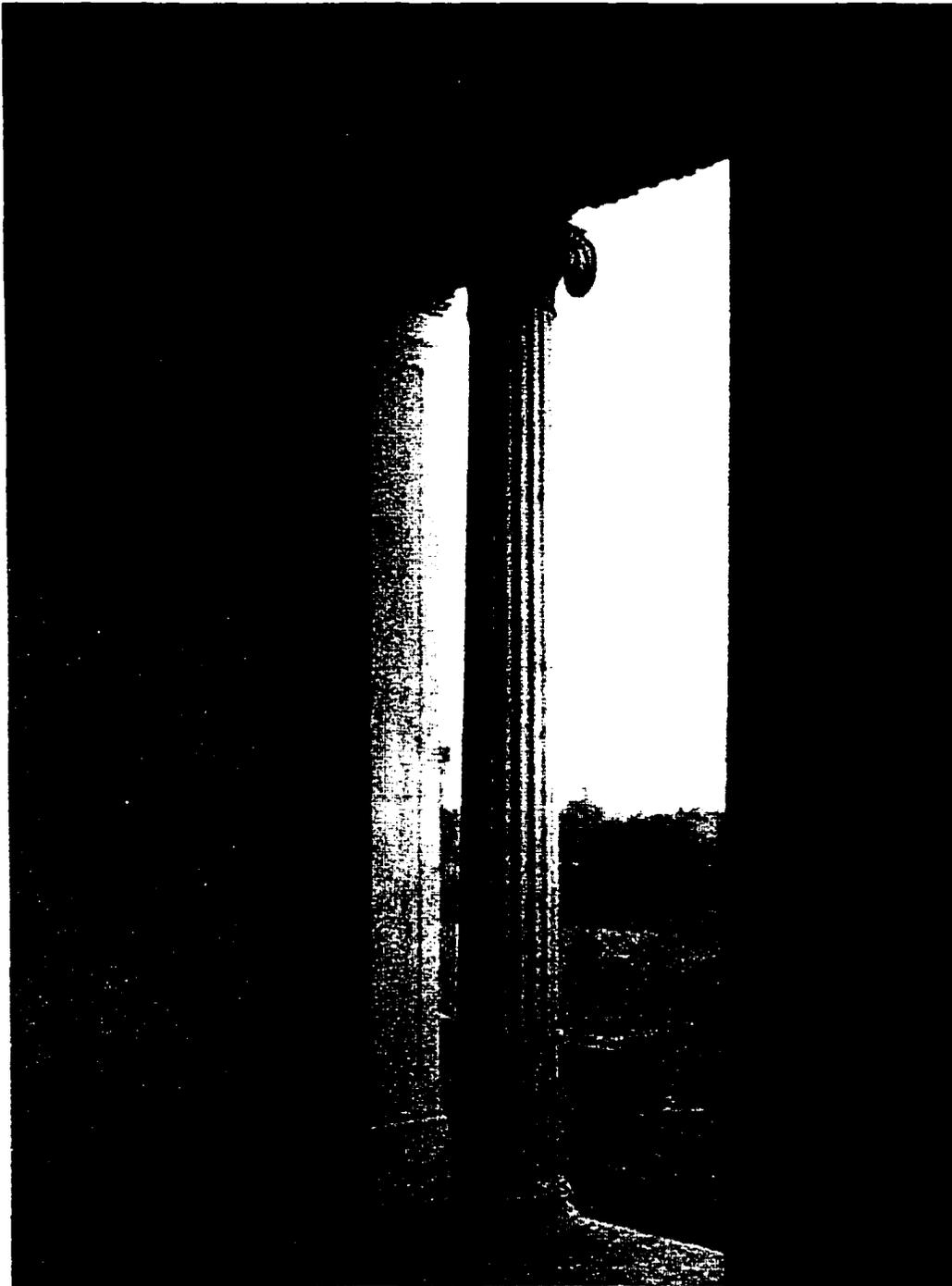
Pilasters identical to those in the drawing room and parlor flanked the first floor hallway, and served to unify these three spaces. At the end of the hall, double pilasters capping the corners were arranged on each side of a pair of columns in the same way as those at the entrance to the half-turret. Down each side of the hall additional pilasters broke up the space and identical cornice moldings were also used in all three spaces.

Through the use of these elements Henry Howard was able to unify the most visible and social spaces of the house. Howard was also able to define and order space through the use of different classical orders. While the first floor was exclusively decorated with Corinthian columns, two much simpler ionic columns flanked the second-floor stair hall. This shift signaled the secondary nature of the upstairs rooms.



7.18 Belle Grove Drawing Room

In light of its importance as a social space, this room made the most lavish use of columns and pilasters. (Photo courtesy Library of Congress.)

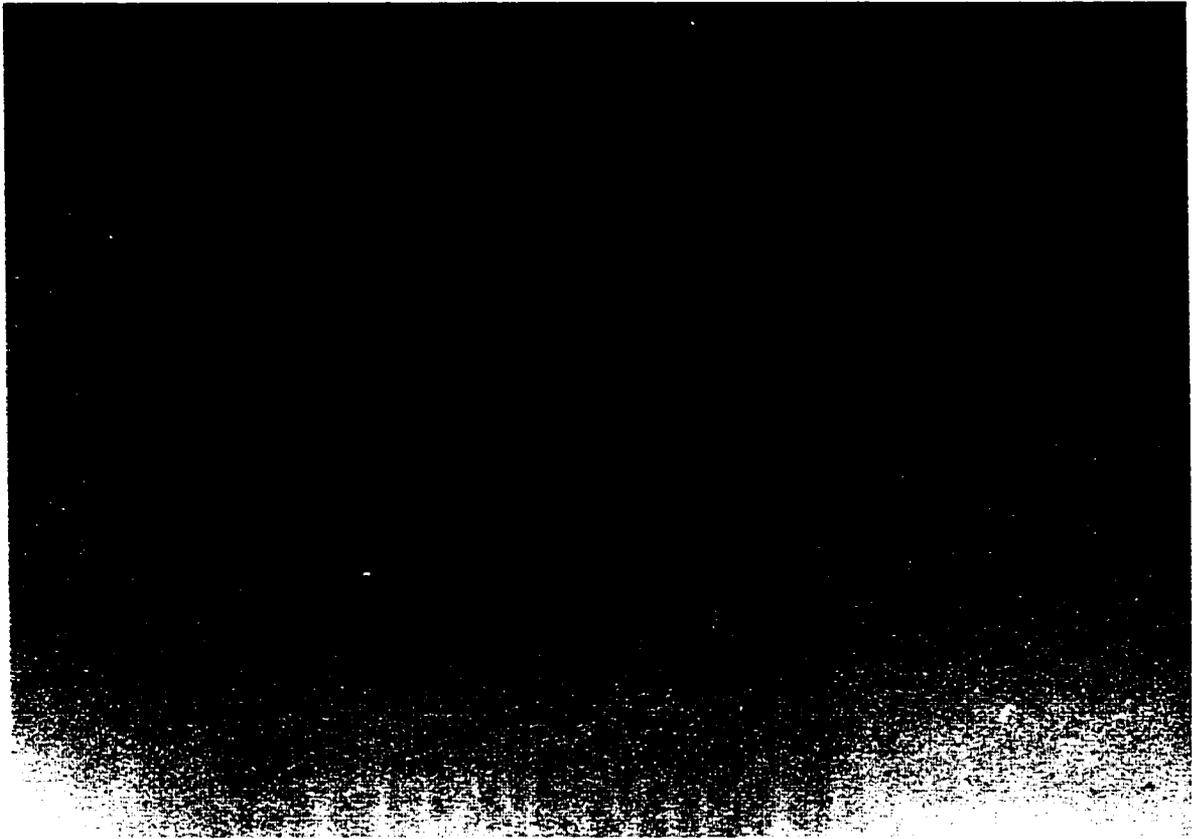


7.19 Belle Grove House Second Floor Hall

The use of classical orders served to identify and differentiate space, as seen here at the second floor stair hall landing. The lower floor's capitals were Corinthian in design. (Photo courtesy Library of Congress.)

The decoration of Belle Grove House's dining room was different from that of the drawing room and parlor in one other striking way. Unlike other Lower Mississippi plantation houses, the dining room had no fireplace. In a climate where regular freezes were a part of life beginning in the fall, and in a region well versed in the vicissitudes of raising fragile sugarcane in a climate less than ideal for its cultivation, this omission is all the more unusual. This raises two possibilities: first, that the family used an alternative space for dining during the winter, or that entertaining at Belle Grove Plantation was far more limited than some accounts lead one to believe.¹⁹

Columns and pilasters were not the only elements Henry Howard used to define and order space within Belle Grove House. Large plaster rosettes were found in the center of all ceilings on the first floor, with the exception of the library and John Andrews' bedroom. Much like the paired columns, the two rosettes in the hallway also served to divide the hall into two distinct spaces. A rosette in the first-floor bedroom served to signal that this was not entirely a private space. No other rooms in Belle Grove House had plaster rosettes, with the exception of the upstairs front bedroom. This may be related to the fact that this was the largest and most visible room on the second floor. Given that Belle Grove House's second floor balconies extended only slightly out over the porticos, and given that anyone reaching the front door would have had a clear view of the ceiling in this room, the plaster rosette may have been added to give the impression that Belle Grove House's second floor was as elaborately decorated as its first.



7.20 Belle Grove House Drawing Room Plaster Rosette

Rosettes occurred in the primary social spaces, in the first floor front bedroom, and the large bedroom at front on the second floor. Like the columns used in Belle Grove House, these rosettes were based directly on the designs of Minard Lafever. (Photo courtesy Richard Koch Collection, Southeastern Architectural Archive, Tulane University.)

One further aspect of Belle Grove House's interior decorative elements that merits attention is the unusual design of the house's interior doors. Alone among large houses on the Lower Mississippi, the house's first-floor doors did not have transom windows. This is all the more remarkable given the climate of the region and the importance of air circulation to the moderation of temperature and humidity. Given the way in which the first floor rooms were laid out, and their lack of cross-ventilation, transom windows would have contributed greatly to reducing humidity on the first floor. But in addition to providing airflow and cooling, transom windows reduce the amount of privacy in rooms. By designing the first floor without transom windows, Henry Howard created a series of rooms that could be completely shut off from one another. Doors on the upper floor did have transom windows, but this was a less public part of the house. Away from visitors, comfort was provided at the cost of a loss of privacy.

All of this raises one central question: why was privacy so important, and why did Henry Howard design Belle Grove House in a way that provided many more layers of privacy than seen at other houses in the region? The extensive interplay of social and private space may have been the unintended result of Henry Howard's strong reliance on design books, as seen in his work on Belle Grove House's exterior. But no known design book shows the kind of arrangement of space as Henry Howard used it at Belle Grove House. At the time of its completion, the spatial arrangement of rooms was unique to Belle Grove House.²⁰ As such, other explanations for the house's intricate interior organization must be considered.



7.21 Belle Grove House Drawing Room

The door from the drawing room to the main hallway. (Photo courtesy Richard Koch Collection, Southeastern Architectural Archive, Tulane University.)

One of the strongest influences on the layout of the interiors in Belle Grove House may have been a shift occurring in how family life and privacy were viewed in America. An increasing emphasis on the individual's needs in relation to those of the greater family, and his or her need for self-determination and personal space emerged at mid-century.²¹ As Clark Clifford has pointed out, "The family was considered to be a hierarchy ranging from the husband at the top to the children at the bottom. It was a hierarchy in which each person was independent and had individual responsibilities and yet all were united by ties of affection and intimacy. Isolated from the outside world...the family separated life into distinct public and private spheres and held each up to somewhat different expectations for each."²²

Changing perceptions of what activities should or should not occur at home may also have influenced the interior organization of Belle Grove House. Writing of the home in antebellum America, Daniel Walker Howe has argued, "As the home became less a center of economic production with the decline of family farms and handicrafts, it was left free to concentrate more than ever upon the socialization of the children. The emphasis shifted from the home as a place of productive activity to the home as a place of family community."²³ At the same time, and as Michell Perot has pointed out, the increasing separation of male and female household members contributed to the need for expanded space that could be divided between distinctly male and female spheres.²⁴ All of these issues played out in the design of Belle Grove House's interiors.

Authors more contemporary to the construction of Belle Grove House, including Andrew Jackson Downing and Gervase Wheeler also promoted the idea that houses should incorporate public and private spaces, and that houses should include diverse spaces to provide social interaction and individual privacy.²⁵ In Belle Grove House, the number of social spaces and bedrooms reflected their ideas. But more than plan books and changing attitudes about privacy contributed to the unusual nature of Belle Grove House's interiors. Family structure was equally as important. As Rudy Ray Seward has noted, the period 1850-65 saw dramatic changes in the American family, its size, structure, and age distribution.²⁶ This shift was accompanied by changes in the way families made use of domestic space. Ironically, while average family size decreased during the time Belle Grove House was designed and constructed, overall household size remained constant, the result of a growing trend for servants, slaves, boarders, and extended family members to reside together under one roof. As a result, increasing contact with domestic staff and a resulting growth in modesty reshaped the American interior.²⁷

What little has been written about the Andrews family has not addressed fully what goals the family had for Belle Grove House, and just how the structure of the family influenced the design and use of the house. In 1840, some 16 years before they built Belle Grove House, 15 individuals resided in the Andrews household, including one boy and one girl less than five years of age; four girls between 10 and 15; one young woman between 15 and 20; four women between 20 and 30; and two men between 30 and 40. John Andrews and his wife rounded out the household.²⁸ All were white. Unfortunately,

due to the limitations of the 1840 United States census, it is unclear just how many of these people were actually family members and how many were boarders or workers living in the house. It is also unclear what kind of house this diverse group lived in, but census data show that all 15 resided in the same house and that this house was located close to where Belle Grove House was eventually built.²⁹

By 1850, Belle Grove House had been designed, but the Andrews' family had changed dramatically. A total of just seven individuals lived in the Andrews household. This group included John Andrews; his two daughters, Catherine, age seven, and Angela, age five; a son, John, five years old; and three non-family members including Mrs. Higgins, age 57, Miss Higgins, 24, and Mary Shiels, age 37. As in 1840, all these individuals were white. It is important to recognize that the census of 1850 is as incomplete as that of 1840, and more family members may have been at school or residing in other parishes. Two of John Andrews' daughters were not included in the 1850 census: Virginia, who would have been 14 at the time, and P. Andrews, (Andrews' daughter Penelope, named for her late mother), who would have been 12. It is unclear why these two daughters were not included in the census, but they may have been attending boarding school. What is clear is that the number of people living in the Andrews' house had decreased by over 50 percent between 1840 and 1850.

By 1860, three years after Belle Grove House was completed, the family had again changed dramatically. John Andrews at that time lived in the house with four daughters, listed as P. Andrews, 22; Virginia Andrews, 24; Angela Andrews, 19; and Kate Andrews, 18. One additional family member, F. Andrews, aged 26, rounded out the

household. For the first time, no outsiders were living in the Andrews' household, other than slaves living in the service wing. Ironically, the family moved into Belle Grove House at a point when its numbers were at their lowest.

What, then, does this tell us about the use of space and organization of rooms in Belle Grove House? Perhaps most importantly, it points to very different motivations than family size for the design of the house. The data also challenge past assumptions about the Andrews family and their need for such a massive and elaborate house. Given that the number of bedrooms exceeded the number of family members, it can hardly be argued that a growing family motivated John Andrews to build on the scale he did. Equally important, if Belle Grove House was constructed for so few family members, the emphasis on privacy is all the more notable. Given that the number of rooms for social activities was greater than the number of family members, one can begin to get a sense of just how isolating and private an experience life in the house could have been.

The Andrews' family structure may have played a role in the design of the house, but isolation was arguably not one of the motivations for the design of Belle Grove House. Harnett Kane was the first to consider that the interior spaces inside Belle Grove House related to the family's large number of daughters. He argued that with such a profusion of young daughters, and with a dearth of worthy male suitors in Iberville Parish, Andrews built a house that would attract and impress eligible bachelors. Kane proposed that Belle Grove House's interiors were designed in layers because each represented a step in the rituals of courtship. He wrote, "The tower-like section near the main portico turned out to be an extension of the drawing room. Draperies were in place,

so that the oval chamber thus created was partly private. As time went by, it was known as the “flirtation room,” a point fraught with dangers to the unattached male. The room, too, held what became a storied “courting sofa.” Seated upon it, at least eleven swains succumbed to the appeal of eleven Louisiana Belles.”³⁰

Kane was not alone in his interpretation of Belle Grove House as being built to convince young suitors of the family’s position and power, with room layout based on the elaborate ritual of mid-nineteenth century courtship.³¹ Kane and others speculated that Belle Grove House and neighboring Nottoway were both constructed with marriage in mind, including Nottoway’s fabled white ballroom, designed, it was claimed, for weddings only. Whether true or not, the white ballroom clearly related to a desire to impress.

According to accounts of the importance of courting, the Andrews daughters are depicted as having faced slim pickings in the searches for suitable husbands. But a closer look at the demographics of Iberville Parish does not support this assumption. In 1860, two years after Belle Grove House was completed, four Andrews daughters over 18 were unmarried and living at home. At this time, Iberville Parish could boast 32 single women over the age of 16 residing in households with family wealth in real estate of over \$100,000. Single men in households with similar wealth were more plentiful. Some 46 marriageable men were in this group. This meant that for every 10 single men of comfortable property, there were just seven single women in the same economic class.



7.22 Nottoway House White Ballroom

The principal room at Nottoway, John Randolph's response to Andrews' Belle Grove. Designed by Henry Howard as well, the white ballroom was a much more public space than the intricate social spaces seen in Belle Grove House. (Photo by the author.)

Even more striking is the ratio of single men and women in households worth over \$100,000 between 19-25.³² In this subset, there were 17 single men and eight single women in Iberville Parish in 1860. In effect, there were twice as many marriageable men than women within the Andrews' family's socioeconomic group, and within the same age group as the Andrews daughters.

This is not to say that John Andrews did not build Belle Grove House in part to impress suitors, or that the layout of the principle social spaces wasn't done in part to encourage supervised and regular courtship. With four single daughters, marriage and the attraction of appropriate suitors could have been a major focus of the John Andrews' intentions. But marrying off his daughters may not have been the only courting Andrews intended. By the time he commissioned the design of Belle Grove House, John Andrews was already a widower. The massive scale of the house and its design may have related to his need or desire to marry again. Lacking the extensive kin networks typical of other residents of Iberville Parish, the only way Andrews could have increased his holdings was to form a partnership, as some did, or to marry one of the many wealthy widows in the area.

Regardless of his own bachelorhood, the primary focus of Andrews' efforts surely would have been his daughters. To better understand to what extent marrying off his four daughters played a role in the design and layout of Belle Grove House, we should look to what became of these young women. According to family tradition, daughter Emily married a wealthy French financier named Edouard L. Schiff, whom she met at the opera in New Orleans. These same traditions relate that Schiff and his wife and son waited out

the Civil War in Paris, where he died. But the records of the United States Army include a very different Emily of Belle Grove Plantation, listed as Mrs. E.L. Shiff. Records refer to her husband as Edward Shiff. An Edward L. Shiff appears in New Orleans city directories prior to the Civil War, working as a minor commercial merchant. After the Civil War, E. L. Shiff disappears from all records. In all likelihood, Emily Andrews married a New Orleans merchant, perhaps a French immigrant. Family legend may have embellished the story, but one clue points to the true nature of Edward/Edouard Schiff/Shiff. After the war, Emily Andrews Shiff married a James Major and moved to Texas. Just where the wealth of the French financier disappeared is unclear, but it was obviously not enough to keep Belle Grove Plantation.

Other Andrews daughters fared less favorably. Virginia Eliza Andrews died unmarried in 1911. Penelope Lynch Andrews married Governor Paul Hebert on August 3, 1861, in what was widely regarded as an arranged marriage.³³ Angela Lewis Andrews married Colonel Malcolm Edward Morse (C.S.A.) of New Orleans, whose father, Isaac Edward Morse was briefly a U. S. Representative from Louisiana. Catherine Andrews married Charles Pulaski Knowlton, a New Yorker and hotel clerk at the St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans. The couple later lived in the Northeast, then in California, and at Santa Maria, a modest farm east of Baton Rouge. The main house at Santa Maria, a simple five-bay house, would have represented a major step down from Belle Grove House. Her marriage to a Yankee hotel clerk must have been a sore disappointment for John Andrews. In his will he disowned her.

Rather than being rooted in the desire for marriage, the elaborate nature of Belle Grove House's interiors may have been a reaction to and against the unusually high number of outsiders living within the house. One of the unusual and more modern features of Belle Grove House's design was the massive kitchen and servants' wing located on the left side of the house. Unlike most plantations, where fire prevention concerns meant that cooking was done in a separate structure, at Belle Grove Plantation cooking went on within the main house, in close proximity to the dining room.

The service wing also included washrooms, pantries, and bake ovens, bringing these activities into the house as well. The large storage spaces under the house would have increased traffic in and out of the house, and the slave jail, located directly under the dining room, added to the number of outsiders living in the house. This design represented a departure from traditional plantation organization along the Lower Mississippi, and while it would have provided ready access to and communication with those serving the house, it would have meant a loss of privacy.³⁴

The complex nature of the relationship between masters and slaves and the close proximity of a group of slaves and their direct access to the house and family may have played a role in the family's desire for spatial separation from the servants' wing. To reach the main house from the servants' wing required passing through a narrow passage with doors at each end, through the rear stair hall and then through another door into the dining room. The same type of negotiation occurred upstairs. Slaves going from the servants' quarters would have climbed the stairs and then passed through two additional doorways to reach the bedrooms. These layers of space provided family members nearly

the same level of privacy experienced in houses that relegated washing, cooking, storage, and the sleeping quarters of slaves to separate structures.

At the same time, there was a clear acknowledgement of the need for privacy on the part of all residents of the house. Remarkably, it would appear from the 1868 sales documents that the housekeeper had her own room, complete with a fireplace. This room served as a hallway from one of the other servants' rooms but would have provided a striking amount of privacy for a slave. And while the slaves comings and goings were visible from John Andrews' bedroom, slaves were able to enter and exit the house without navigating its more public rooms. Slaves probably benefited from the fact that their quarters were separated from the house by the rear stairs. In addition, the three other slaves' rooms all reached the rear stairs without passing through or by the housekeeper's room.³⁵

As we have seen, the interior of Belle Grove house was striking both from the standpoint of its room layout, and in the level of decoration of its primary social spaces. In the next section, we will consider how furnishings played a role in this equation.



7.23 Belle Grove House Service Wing

The service wing at Belle Grove House, with the two large kitchens on the lower level exposed due to structural failure. These kitchens were separated from the main house by a staircase that would have provided some fire protection. Under the main house were two massive storage rooms and a slave jail. (Photo courtesy Historic New Orleans Collection, acc.# 1983.47.4.1090.)

¹ Koch, Richard. *Belle Grove, White Castle Vicinity, Iberville Parish* (HABS LA-36) (Washington: Historic American Buildings Survey, c1933) pp. 3.

² Barbara Sorelle Bacot documents this point at length in her essay “The Plantation” in *Louisiana Buildings 1720-1940, the Historic American Buildings Survey* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997) pp. 99-103.

³ The Pugh family had come to Louisiana from New England and the resemblance of Madewood to New England Greek revival mansion houses has not gone unnoticed. Whether the Pugh family dictated its design to Henry Howard is unclear.

⁴ Barbara Sorelle Bacot, Jesse Poesch, and Arthur Scully have all proposed that the Robert A. Grinnan House was one of Henry Howard’s most creative works. From the standpoint of its interior arrangement the house does represent a major departure from traditional regional forms.

⁵ One must exercise caution in crediting Henry Howard for all of the innovations at both the Robert A. Grinnan house and Belle Grove, as, just like with his work on Belle Grove House’s exterior, Howard relied on plan books and the work of others in his design and arrangement of the rooms in both houses.

⁶ Harnett Kane is responsible for the invention of this notion. Its veracity is unproven.

⁷ This observation is based on a Robert Tebbs photo (1933.0122) in the collections of the Louisiana State Museum, which shows strong and clear wear on both doors. Although this may have occurred during the years following the departure of the Andrews Family, the extent of the wear points to long and hard use.

⁸ Andrews, John. “Petition to Sell Joint Property of John and Penelope Lynch Adams Andrews to Henry Ware” October, 1868. Louisiana State Archives.

⁹ This use of the staircase as a way to separate family from servants is well discussed in Carolyn Brucken’s 1991 University of Delaware Master’s thesis “Victorian Privacy: an Analysis of Bedrooms in Middle Class America.”

¹⁰ These citations are taken from the sales documents prepared by Barstow and Pope in 1868.

¹¹ Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America” in *The Signs Reader, Women Gender and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) pp. 47.

¹² Ibid., pp. 36.

¹³ This is borne out by the United States Censuses of 1850 and 1860.

¹⁴ Bacot, Barbara SoRelle and Jesse Poesch. *Louisiana Buildings, 1720-1940: The Historic American Buildings Survey* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997) pp. 108.

¹⁵ Edgar deN. Mayhew and Minor Myers, Jr. *A Documentary History of American Interiors from the Colonial Era to 1915* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980) pp. 140.

¹⁶ Richard Koch's Historic American Buildings Survey documentation of Woodlawn Plantation (HABS LA-20) and Houmas Plantation (HABS LA-26) provides color charts that show the prevalent use of plain white throughout both houses.

¹⁷ Richard Koch did not leave any record of how his numerical system related to the colors used inside Belle Grove House, but with remaining architectural fragments, descriptions of the house in its heyday, and from comparison with other systems of color identification from the 1920s and 1930s, it is possible to reconstruct some of Koch's color plan.

¹⁸ While it is possible to extrapolate colors of other rooms based on existing architectural fragments and despite Richard Koch's extensive notes, the color of the guest room cannot be determined. It is only evident from Koch's numerical system that the guest room was painted a color that does not repeat in any other room.

¹⁹ The principal source of the mythology of Belle Grove's lavish interior decoration can be traced to William Edward Clement's *Plantation Life on the Mississippi* (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Company, 1962); Harnett K. Kane's *Plantation Parade: The Grand Manner in Louisiana* (New York William Morrow and Company, 1945); and Lyle Saxon's *Old Louisiana* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1929).

²⁰ The similarity with Nottoway is extensive, but the construction of Nottoway dates to after Belle Grove's completion.

²¹ Clark Clifford makes this point in his *The American Family Home: 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

²² Clifford, Clark. *The American Family Home: 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986) pp. 35.

²³ Howe, Daniel Walker. "American Victorianism as a Culture," *American Quarterly* 27, No. 5, pp. 530.

²⁴ This phenomenon is documented by Michell Perot in *A History of Private Life: From the Fires of the Revolution to the Great War, Vol. 4* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990).

²⁵ This shift is best seen in Andrew Jackson Downing's *The Architecture of Country Houses* (New York: D. Appleton, 1850) and Gervase Wheeler's *Rural Homes, or Sketches of Houses suited to the Country Life with Original Plans, Designs, &* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1851).

²⁶ Seward, Rudy Ray. *The American Family: A Demographic History* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978) pp. 34-57.

²⁸ This is conjecture based on the ordering of houses in the U.S. Census of 1840, and by the fact that the family continued to reside somewhere on the plantation throughout construction of the house.

²⁹ This is based on the numerical system used by the Census takers. Andrews' residence number remains constant before and after Belle Grove house was constructed.

³⁰ Kane, Harnett T. *Plantation Parade* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1945) pp. 240-241.

³¹ The persistence of this version of Belle Grove's story is seen in the works of Lyle Saxon, William Edwards Clement, Clarence John Laughlin, and innumerable others.

³² These and all references to family structures, net worth, and ratio of sons to daughters are drawn from the United States Censuses of 1840, 1850, 1860.

³³ This story occurs throughout writing on the subject of the Andrews family.

³⁴ Most journals from sugar plantations on the Lower Mississippi indicate that the proverbial Big House was more fortress than social space. Accounts in the *Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations from the Revolution through the Civil War*, Kenneth Stampp, ed. consistently indicate that houses were locked at night, once all slaves had left the house. Interestingly, at Belle Grove it would appear there was no lock on the door from the service wing into the dining room.

³⁵ That these quarters were occupied by slaves until the end of the Civil War is borne out by the United States Census of 1860.

Chapter 8

FURNISHING BELLE GROVE

In all, the physical arrangement of rooms in Belle Grove House operated on a more subtle and purposeful level than earlier plantation houses. Normally, one might assume that the house's furnishings also played a role in defining private and social space. Regrettably, no reliable description or inventory remains to document how Belle Grove House was furnished upon completion. Numerous accounts, including those by Williams Edwards Clement, Harnett Kane, and Lyle Saxon, describe Belle Grove House's furnishings with as much romance as do their accounts of the plantation as a whole. Just seven years before its ultimate demise, these authors celebrated the lavish nature of Belle Grove House's interior spaces and the exorbitant sums spent on furnishings, works of art, and other decorative objects. Based largely on family reminiscences, these accounts all describe Belle Grove House's furnishings as palatial.¹

Extravagant descriptions of the Andrews family's furnishings may be in part the result of a reliable but much later account of the contents of Belle Grove House. These records, compiled in 1908 after the death of James A. Ware, then owner of Belle Grove Plantation, include an inventory of the contents of Belle Grove House. Furnishings included 27 pieces of upholstered parlor furniture, five bedroom suites, two dining tables, three marble-top sideboards, dozens of oil paintings and prints, hundreds of statuettes, numerous decorated plates and jugs, several sets of silver flatware, a 116-piece China fish

set, and a pipe organ. The sheer volume of objects in the house points to its extensive decoration and a strong attraction to decorative objects.²

This later documentation does little to provide a sense of how Belle Grove House was furnished during the period immediately after its construction. Because of the lack of any records of the house's original furnishings at that time, a more circumspect and tangential approach must be taken, using those records that provide clues to the level and nature of interior decoration during the time the Andrews family lived at Belle Grove. Several sources are invaluable in this effort, including census records from the period just before and immediately after Belle Grove House's construction; records of income and expenses of the plantation for the years before, during, and immediately after the construction of the house; and patterns of consumption typical of Belle Grove Plantation's era and location.

Completion of Belle Grove House coincided with one of the worst years for Lower Mississippi sugar. Disease, bad weather, and early freezes all played a role in substantially reducing crop levels. In 1856-57, Belle Grove produced just 178 hogsheads of sugar, less than 20 percent of the crop produced two years earlier. Despite a record cash price of more than 100 dollars per hogshead being paid in New Orleans that year, Belle Grove's gross income for the year was only \$26,034, less than half that of the year before and almost two thirds less than its record production level. Production did rise during the following three years, but it was not until 1859-60 that the plantation recovered. By this time, it would have been painfully obvious that a civil war was coming.

It is within this economic and political context that Belle Grove House was furnished. It is important to recognize that gross income from sugar production had to support the construction and furnishing of Belle Grove House, but was reduced substantially by the expenses of continued modernization of the sugarhouse machinery, completed in 1849, 1852, and 1857. At the same time, approximately 165 people called Belle Grove Plantation home, including six family members, an overseer and his family, paid laborers, and some 148 slaves. While living expenses for these four primary groups differed widely, some basic level of food, shelter, and clothing was necessary to all, and these costs reduced funds available for furnishing Belle Grove House.

Given the expenses of an operation on Belle Grove Plantation's scale, major investments were required in fixed assets such as land, equipment, and slaves. Given that the house cost \$80,000 to build,³ the construction of Belle Grove House represented a major outlay of John Andrews' net profits. Despite claims that Andrews paid for construction of the house with one year's profits,⁴ the cost of constructing Belle Grove House was paid with net income accumulated over a period of years, possibly beginning as early as the late 1840s, a period when the fortunes of Lower Mississippi sugar planters took a decided turn for the better.⁵ The extensive outlay of capital for construction costs, followed by the calamitous sugar crop of 1856-57 and the onset of the Civil War probably left very little net income for the furnishing of Belle Grove House. As a result, the level of interior decoration of the house may have been actually rather modest.

Additional data support this assumption. Thanks to the censuses of 1850 and 1860, it is possible to gain a better sense of the interior furnishing of Belle Grove House

during the period immediately following its construction. By 1850, John Andrews had holdings of \$180,000 in real estate, including cane fields, extensive woodlands, and a portion of the bayou to the rear of his property. This figure also includes improvements such as barns, the sugarhouse, and other outbuildings. This, along with 135 slaves, made John Andrews the fifth wealthiest resident of Iberville Parish, measured by real estate.⁶

More significant to understanding the level and style of furnishings in Belle Grove House is the 1860 census, which for the first time included valuations of personal property. These valuations provide a clear sense of how Belle Grove House was furnished. By 1860, John Andrews was the thirteenth wealthiest resident of Iberville Parish when measured by the value of his real estate holdings. But census data relating to personal property places greater distance between Andrews and his neighbors. In 1860, the Andrews family, having lived in Belle Grove House for three years, owned what the Census described as a total of \$10,000 in personal property. In comparison to other planters in Iberville Parish, this is a modest sum. Twenty of John Andrews' neighbors owned more personal property than did his family, with the largest owner of personal property counting over \$250,000 in personal possessions. Five other Iberville Parish residents could count over \$100,000 in personal property.

The size of Belle Grove House in relation to other houses in the Parish also supports the conclusion that it was relatively modestly furnished. The Andrews family ranged their \$10,000 worth of personal property throughout some 50 rooms covering three floors. Those other planters with \$10,000 worth of personal property, including Edward Moore, Isaac Erwin, and Widow C. N. Brusle, lived in significantly smaller

houses. John Andrews' neighbors whose personal property far exceeded his own included Robert C. Camp (\$17,000 in personal property), Lucien Marionneaux (\$17,000) and R. C. Downs (\$80,000). It is clear that the level of decoration, when measured in dollars per square foot, places Belle Grove House well behind its neighbors in the number and quality of its furnishings.⁷

One more factor is worth consideration in an evaluation of Belle Grove House's interior furnishings. In a region of wealth, and in an area marked by lavish new domestic construction, many sugar planters along the Lower Mississippi inherited the relatively modest tastes of their French antecedents. In large houses where original furnishings remain, including Nottoway, those furnishings are for the most part mass manufactured American-made rococo-revival sofas, chairs, and beds of modest decoration and design. In part, this modesty may have been as much a result of supply as demand. As scholar Stephen Harrison has pointed out, two systems of supply fed the Mississippi Valley: furniture produced within the region, largely in New Orleans, that reflected a tradition of simplicity, and speculative furniture, imported into the region from both Europe and the American mid-west, most of which was designed for middling merchant and farming families.⁸ In all likelihood, the furniture in Belle Grove house derived from both these sources.

The low level of personal property also points to real financial struggle. As we will see in the following section, this low level was a harbinger of what was to come for the Andrews family and Belle Grove Plantation.

¹ Stories of Belle Grove House's lavish furnishing have proven especially tenacious. As late as the 1960s, the interior decoration of the house was described as providing the Andrews family with grandiose surroundings.

² This is based on the "Estate Inventory made after the death on September 8, 1908 of James A. Ware" as found in Richard Koch's Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) report on Belle Grove Plantation.

³ This figure occurs throughout writing on Belle Grove. The sale documents, prepared by Barstow and Pope indicate that the cost of constructing the house at \$75,000.

⁴ The payment for Belle Grove's construction with one year's profits is a claim made by Kane, Clement, Saxon and others.

⁵ This is evident again through the reports prepared by Pierre Antoine Champomier and through the data provided in both Cohen's and Gardner's New Orleans city directories. The scale of construction occurring on the Lower Mississippi at this time also points to a relatively high state of prosperity for large sugar planters.

⁶ This information is drawn from the 1850 United States Census.

⁷ These figures are found in the 1860 United States Census.

⁸ This discussion is based on the invaluable work of Stephen G. Harrison in his "Furniture Trade in New Orleans, 1840-1880: The Largest Assortment Constantly on Hand." Master's thesis, University of Delaware, 1997.

Chapter 9

BELLE GROVE ENDS

In the winter of 1868, John Andrews signed his ownership of the house and plantation called Belle Grove over to Henry Ware. In exchange, Andrews received \$25,000 in cash, and the promise of \$25,000 more with security provided through the deed to two lots in New Orleans. As the *Weekly Iberville* of January 25, 1868 reported:

We learn that John Andrews, Esq., one of the most wealthy, sagacious and progressive planters in this Parish, has recently sold his splendid Estate, lying below Bayou Goula, to Henry Ware, Esq., of New Orleans for the sum of \$50,000 cash. This property is one of the finest and best improved in Louisiana and while we regret to lose Mr. Andrews from our community, we hope that Mr. Ware will develop the resources of his purchase and prove equally as valuable a member of society as Mr. Andrews has been – with whom we part with regret, and with our best wishes for his future prosperity and happiness.¹

Ware was no stranger to Iberville Parish, nor was he the kind of carpetbagger that would come to be an icon of the reconstructed South. Years earlier, he had been Andrews' partner in the establishment of Belle Grove Plantation, and Ware could count a number of his new neighbors as family members. The price he paid for Belle Grove Plantation reflected both the desperation of John Andrews and the financial upheaval that

accompanied both the Civil War and Reconstruction. Ironically, the price Ware paid for all of Belle Grove Plantation was roughly one-half of what John Andrews had paid to construct and furnish Belle Grove House 11 years before.

The Ware family returned Belle Grove Plantation to profitability, adding a horse racetrack with a new house at its center. For another 65 years descendants of Henry Ware lived at Belle Grove. Then, in the 1920s devastating crop failures bankrupted a number of Lower Mississippi sugar planters. In 1923, the Iberville Planting Company purchased Belle Grove Plantation. By 1926, Belle Grove House had passed through the hands of Cecil G. Robinson and then to Norman Meyer. By the late 1920s the house began to deteriorate drastically, with the collapse of the library wing.²



9.1 Belle Grove House Collapsing

The base of the right portico exhibits a stress crack caused by settlement. Also evident is the bowing outward of the wall and inner pilaster closest to the fallen library wing. (Photo courtesy Historic New Orleans Collection, acc.# 1983.47.4.504.)

What followed was a scenario well known to preservationists in 1930s America. By the time Clarence John Laughlin and Walker Evans photographed Belle Grove House, it had lost large sections of roofing; the iron balconies had been looted; major sections of the two massive porticos had begun to fall; and most tellingly, the interior had begun to deteriorate as water poured freely through its rooms. Thanks to Laughlin's obsession with Belle Grove House, several new owners appeared during the 1940s, each pledging to restore the house, but each left disillusioned by the degree of deterioration and the immense costs required for a successful restoration. In the few extant photographs from the early 1950s, it is apparent that Belle Grove House was irretrievably ruined. Finally, in 1952 the house was burned to its foundations by an arsonist.

But the demise of Belle Grove House was not solely the result of the end of slavery, the sugar cane diseases that plagued the region, its abandonment in the 1920s, or the looting of the House in the 1930s. Even with extensive care, regular maintenance, and financial security, Belle Grove House could not have survived. To understand the true source of Belle Grove House's demise, one must look not to studies of sugar income and plantation expenses, but instead to a more modern understanding of engineering and the challenges architect Henry Howard faced but could not overcome in constructing a house on such an unprecedented scale.

In many ways, Belle Grove House was a very modern house. As we have seen, its original design departed from forms common throughout the Lower Mississippi in its time. Running water, an attached kitchen, water closets, and the unusually high level of autonomy and privacy it offered its residents would not become common in the American

South until years after its construction. Its slate roof, copper flashing, and attic cisterns were all unusual for Belle Grove House's time and location.

Despite its innovations, Belle Grove House was built with little apparent appreciation for the new challenges its modern systems posed. Henry Howard, never formally trained as an architect or engineer, unfortunately for posterity miscalculated the kind of stresses modern systems would place on the overall structure, and he failed to build a house capable of withstanding the test of time. Principal among Howard's miscalculations was the sheer weight of a 52 foot-tall brick and stucco structure. In his plans for Belle Grove House's foundation, which consisted of the raised basement, Howard relied on exterior and interior brick walls to support the upper three floors of the house. This construction technique was common in his time, and structures throughout the South relied on brick walls and piers, with wood joists and beams at cross-angles to support the weight of a structure and its contents. The strength of these walls and piers was crucial because the outermost walls of such a foundation must support the weight of all upper walls and roofs.

In photographs, this would appear to have been the case with Belle Grove House. The foundation sections under the two porticos and under the front steps and half-turret were massive—easily four times thicker than the interior foundation walls. Unfortunately, these walls supported only the weight of the columns. To Howard's credit, the outer foundation brick piers and walls under the columns were sufficient to support the porticos.

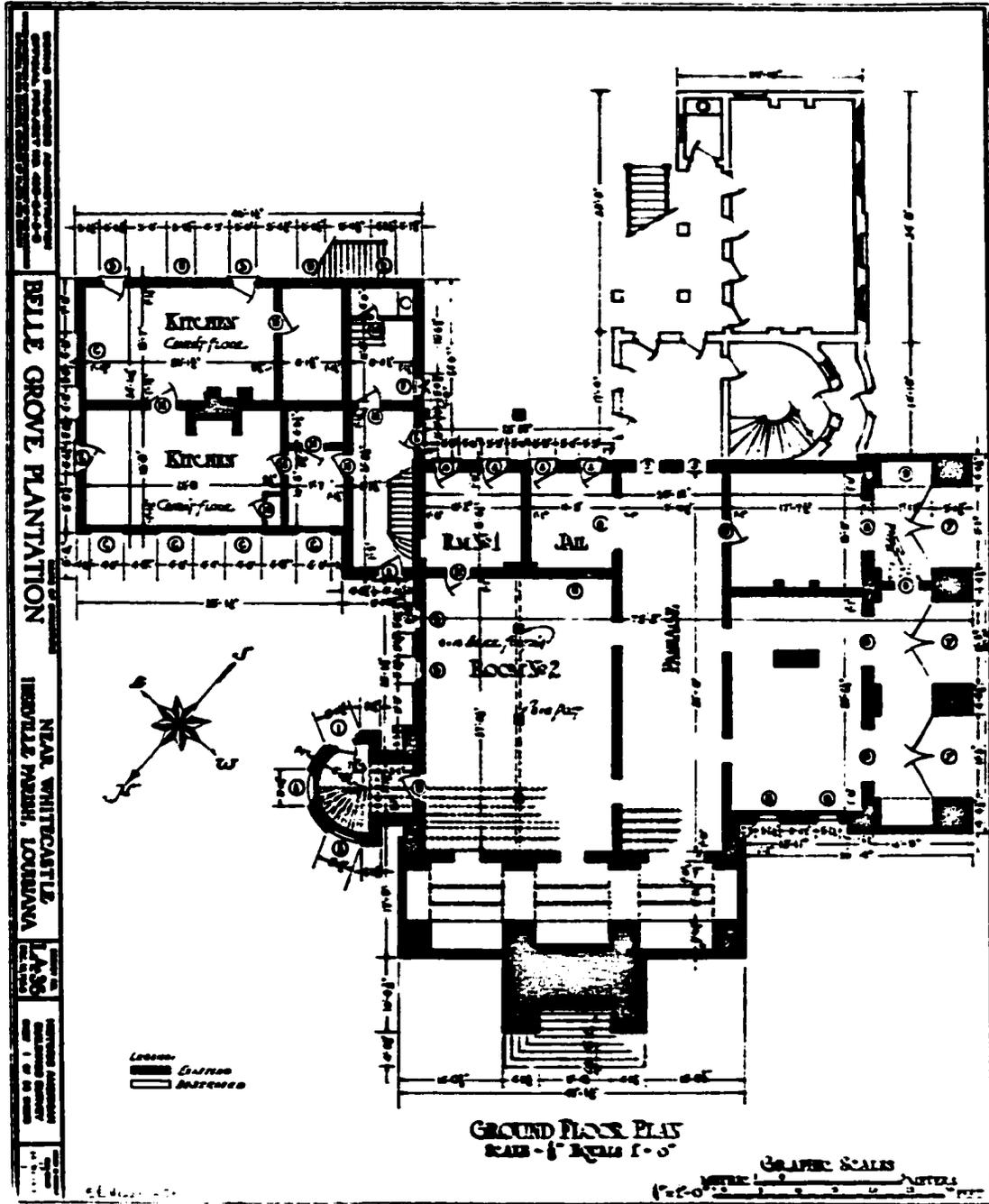


9.2 Belle Grove House

The house with all ironwork stripped and windows destroyed. Early problems included the exposed balconies on the turret, and the system for directing water off the portico at right. In this photograph, taken during the 1940s, the foundation of the right portico has failed, opening a large hole. Above, the pediment has begun to fail as well, covering the column capitals in the left-hand side of the photo. (Photo courtesy Richard Koch Collection, Southeastern Architectural Archive, Tulane University.)

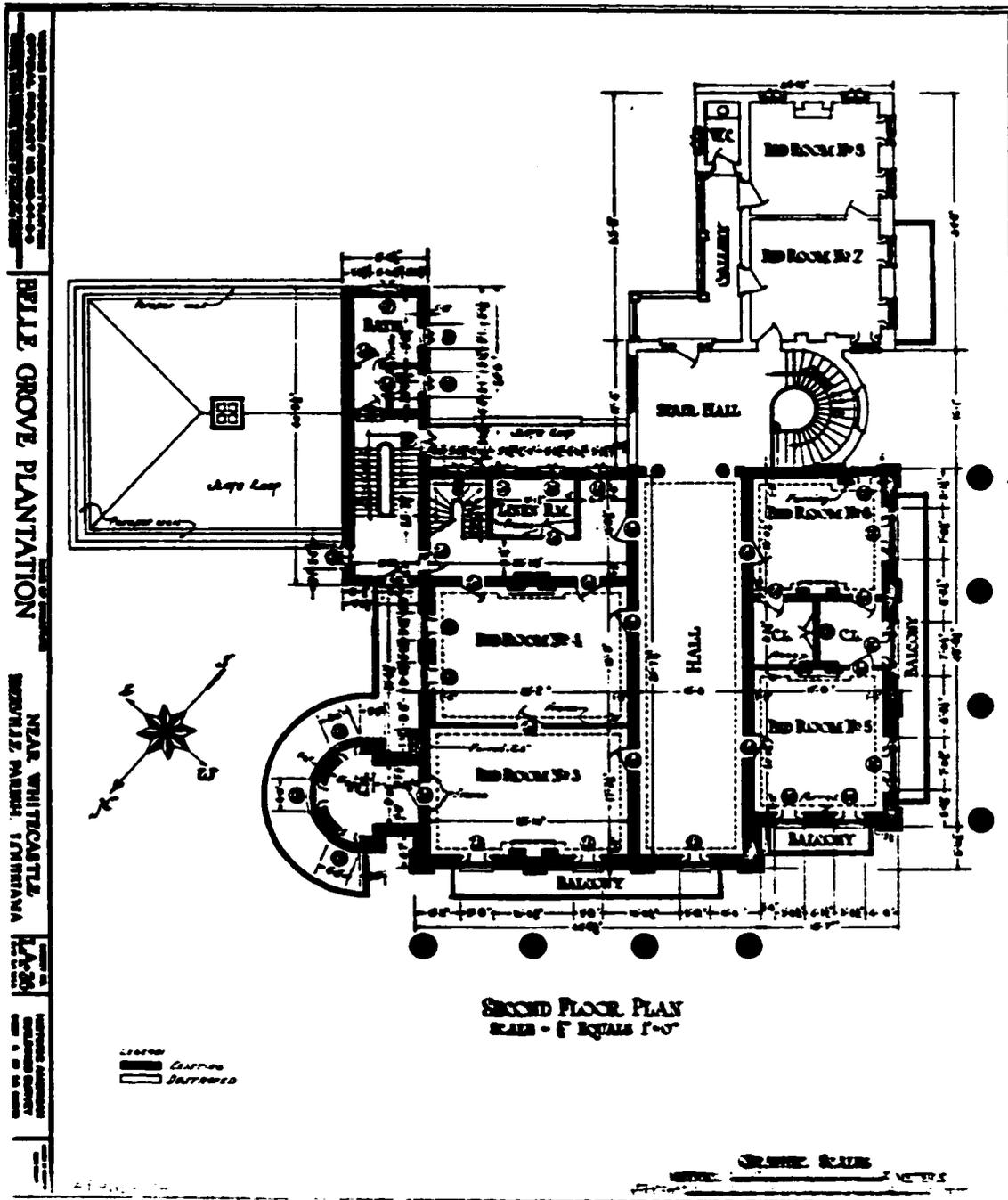
Unfortunately, the remaining foundation walls should have had this kind of strength, but did not. At the same time, the inner foundation consisted of two narrow walls running from the front of the house to the back, located to the right of the main portico, with a large summer beam supported by piers in the basement that formed the third support wall. Adding to the problem was the scale of the outer walls on the two main living floors, which were more substantial than the foundation walls below them. Adding in the weight of the stucco and the cast iron balconies, the upper walls weighed significantly more than those below.³

These structural flaws made Belle Grove House a top-heavy house in its construction. But the greatest problem came in the design of the uninhabited attic floor, the tallest space in the house. In order to simplify the construction of the roof joists, the weight of the roof running from the front portico toward the rear dining room was transferred to the outer wall at right, and to the interior wall between the hall and reception rooms. Almost none of the weight of the roof was transferred to the wall running between the hall and the parlors. This would not have been especially problematic had this first load-bearing wall been of sufficient strength to support half the weight of the roof. Sadly, it was not. Given that Belle Grove House's roof was covered in English slate, the weight on this inner wall exceeded its load-bearing capacity. These flaws meant that Belle Grove House was inherently prone to problems as it began to settle. The cracks and failures seen in John Clarence Laughlin's photographs of Belle Grove House, visible both in the foundation and interior walls, occurred as the structure began to bow outward.



9.3 Belle Grove House Basement Plan

The outer walls of the central block are thinner in the service wing, and the four blocks that support the columns can be seen at lower center and to the right. Across Room No. 2 three posts support a summer beam. (Illustration courtesy Library of Congress.)



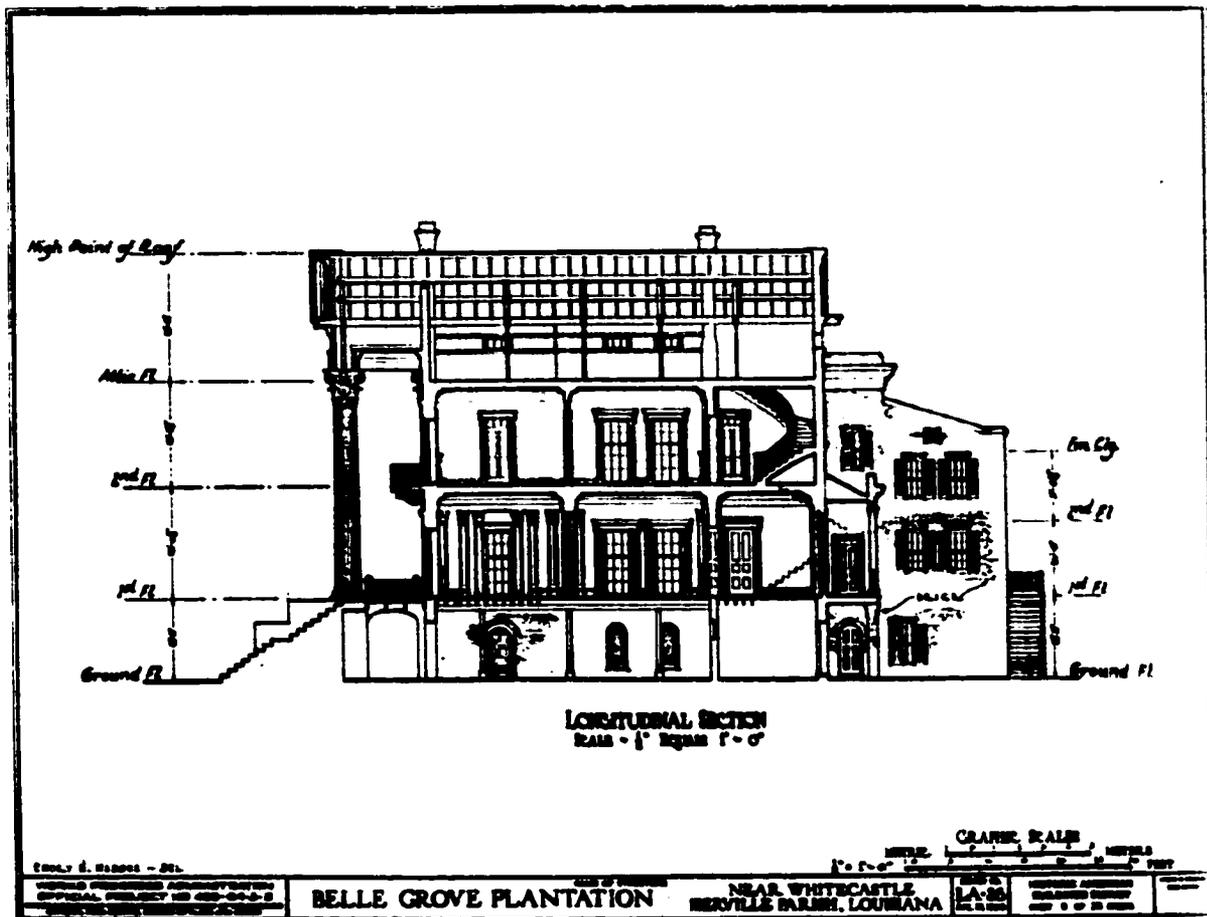
9.5 Belle Grove House Second Floor Plan

As below, the two front bedrooms (here labeled numbers three and four) provide no structural support to the weight being transferred from the roof. As such, the weight of the roof was transferred onto the outer walls. (Illustration courtesy Library of Congress.)

These cracks occur in two places. Those of the raised basement foundation tend to be vertical, indicating that the weight was forcing the foundation walls outward. Those on the interior run vertically, indicating that the walls of the house were bulging outward under the force of gravity.

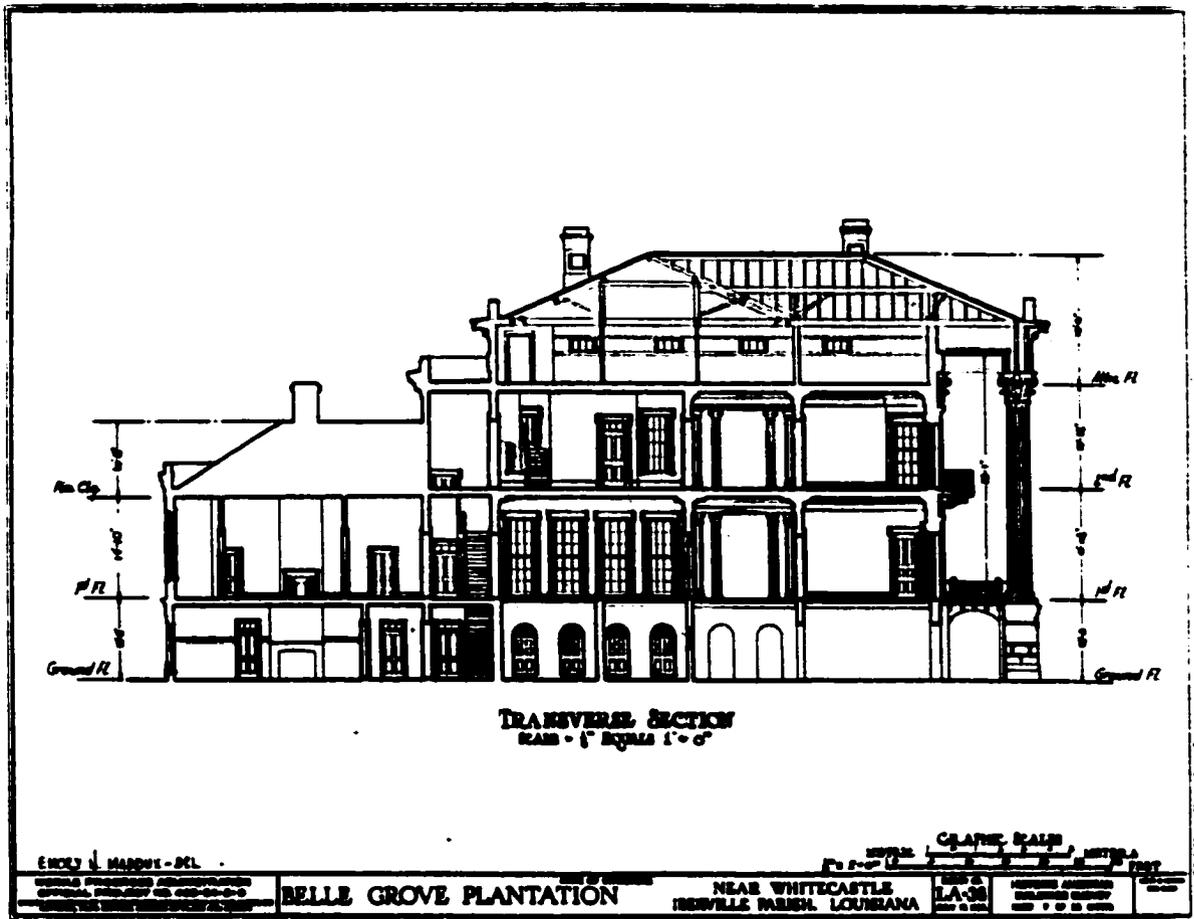
But a slate roof alone did not exert the kind of force needed to expand and buckle Belle Grove House's walls and foundation. The true culprit lay hidden in Belle Grove House's attic, which contained two water cisterns each capable of holding 10,000 gallons of water drawn from the roofs. The cisterns would have made life at Belle Grove Plantation much more convenient to say nothing of the added sanitary benefits. But the force of roughly 10 tons of deadweight located at the center of the attic pushed the limits of Belle Grove House's engineering beyond the red line, and was a crucial factor in the structural failure of the house. This deadweight served in effect as a jackhammer, driving Belle Grove House deeper into Louisiana mud.

Evidence of the extent to which the central portion of the house was sinking downward is apparent in the early failure of the library wing. This section lacked the weight of the cisterns. As a result, the library wing was more stable than the main body of the house. This did not ensure its survival. Once the main body of the house began to settle and expand outward, the library wing sheared off from the main house, collapsing into a pile of rubble. Robert Tebbs' photograph of the rear stair hall, one of the few taken while the wing was still standing, shows large cracks along the floors, ceilings and walls that marked the beginning of this separation and failure.



9.6 Belle Grove House Longitudinal Section

The vast fourth floor attic contained the pair of 10,000-gallon cisterns, filled with rainwater from the roof. This weight was transferred in part to the interior walls. Unfortunately, the dividing interior walls were not sufficiently supported in the basement. (Illustration courtesy Library of Congress.)



9.7 Belle Grove House Transverse Section

In this drawing, it is clear that the weight transferred at center down along the first interior wall on the left is not sufficiently supported in the basement. In addition, the drawing room on the first floor and the two bedrooms above lacked interior walls that should have supported the weight above. This transferred most of the weight of the roof onto the exterior wall of the portico on the left-hand side of the house. This portico was the first to fail. (Illustration courtesy Library of Congress.)



9.8 Belle Grove House Stair Hall

By this time, the front portion of the house had begun to settle, causing the cracks seen in the center of the ceiling and floor, and forcing the staircase out of plumb. This staircase and library wing collapsed as it was sheared off the main house. (Photo courtesy Louisiana State Museum)

In the end, Belle Grove House's undoing was structural and not social or economic. The house was built with serious flaws and lacked the kind of rigorous engineering that its novel design and massive scale warranted. Henry Howard may have been aware of Belle Grove House's inherent problems. In his design for Nottoway, located just three miles from Belle Grove Plantation, Howard increased the strength of the house's outer walls, and designed a foundation capable of supporting three upper floors of the house. Today, Nottoway still stands.

Chapter 10

CONCLUSION

What then of Belle Grove? What does its demise tell us about the architecture of the Lower Mississippi and life on a nineteenth-century sugar plantation? What does its demise tell us about the challenges of architectural innovation? Why does Belle Grove live on in books, needlework, postcards, and paintings?

Belle Grove's destruction has served as its own cultural icon. In its heyday, Belle Grove was the ultimate expression of the power of sugar. In 1930s America, at a time when questions were raised about American culture, the abandoned plantation served as a reminder of all that was lost. In the 1940s, desperate attempts to save the house signaled a growing appreciation for Southern culture, perhaps most strongly demonstrated by the 1939 release of *Gone With the Wind*. In the 1950s, the house began to acquire its mythical status, as writers sought to reaffirm notions of "moonlight and magnolias" in the midst of racial and social upheaval. By the 1990s, the cult of Belle Grove had grown to the point where Belle Grove needlepoint kits became available at plantation museum gift shops throughout the South. Most recently, two column capitals, purported to be from Belle Grove, but of a design that did not occur in the house, sold for over \$2,500 on eBay. In many ways, the power of Belle Grove lies in its demise. In all likelihood, if still standing, it would not be the subject of this writer's fascination.



10.1 Belle Grove Plantation Today

A subdivision was built in the 1970s on the site of Belle Grove House. Some of the original live oak trees that once stretched from the Mississippi to Belle Grove House are still standing. Across the street, the levee fronts the Mississippi. Remarkably, sugar cane still grows in what were once Belle Grove Plantation's fields. (Photo by the author.)

¹ *Daily Iberville*, 3 October, 1868.

² The exact date of the collapse of the library wing is unknown, but can be placed to this date based on Robert Tebbs' photographs that show the wing still standing and subsequent photographs by Clarence John Laughlin that show the wing collapsed.

³ This and all discussion of the design and construction techniques used in Belle Grove house are based on the measured drawings made by Richard Koch as part of his Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) report on Belle Grove House (LA-36).

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APPENDIX A

1850 United States Census Iberville Parish landowners
with real estate worth over \$50,000

Name	Occupation	1850 Real Estate Value	1850 Number of Slaves
Madam Vaughn & Hebert		220,000	174
A. Sigur	Planter	220,000	140
Edward J. Gay	Planter	200,000	249*
J.R. Thompson	Planter	200,000	175
<i>John Andrews</i>	<i>Planter</i>	<i>180,000</i>	<i>135</i>
Paul Hebert	Planter	150,000	108
John Garlick	Planter	150,000	104
John H. Randolph	Planter	150,000	120
Madam Woodfolk		150,000	152
Louis Desbroy and Louis Desbroy, Jr.	Planters	150,000	85
D.J.P.M. Stone	Planter	140,000	101
C. Adams	Planter	140,000	91
Wm. H. Avery	Planter	136,000	137
Col. G.W. Butler	Planter	130,000	96
G. Schlater	Planter	127,000	
Madame C. Schlater		125,000	87
John Murrell	Planter	125,000	87
Madame Johns		120,000	71
C. Slack	Planter	120,000	112
Whitehall and Edwards	Planter	120,000	117
James N. Brown	Planter	117,500	115
Widow Lauve		115,000	61
Dr. H.G. Doyle	Planter	110,000	56
Robert Camp	Planter	107,000	95
Naubert Cropper	Planter	103,000	110
Madame Robison	Planter	100,000	84
Edward Moore	Planter	100,000	86
Madame Valery Hebert		100,000	65
Polard Dupuy	Planter	95,000	76
R. Arnous	Planter	93,000	18

F. N. Bissell	Planter and Merchant	90,000	55
A.D. Dubuclet	Planter	87,500	5
D.H. Orillon	Planter	86,000	41
John Hagan	Planter	84,000	96
Dodd and Beblieux	Planters	80,000	20
Doctor C. Clement	Planter	80,000	56
Madam E. Ricard		80,000	59
John A. Dardenne	Planter	80,000	76
G. W. Campbell	Planter	80,000	75
Isaac Erwin	Planter	80,000	96
A. Greaud & Brothers	Planters	80,000 96,000	74
Mrs. A.M. Dickinson		79,000	
Balz. Dupuy	Planter	75,000	72
O. & N. Landry Co.	Planter	70,000	
Robert Sewall	Planter	70,000	64
Mr. Harrison	Planter	70,000	55
Ulgar Baugon	Planter	65,000	33
George Desland	Planter	65,000	25
Doctor J. Pritchard	Planter	65,000	60
John Schlatre	Planter	60,000	
Wist Adams	Planter	60,000	35
G. W. Haygood	Planter	60,000	37
J.B. Crughead (John B. Craighead)	Planter	55,000	127
Alrohem Trier	Planter	55,000	30
Madam P.M. Lambermont	Planter	55,000	27
Dr. P. Winfree	Planter	55,000	
M. Hebert & Co.	Planter	50,000	64
Honore Daigreu (Daegue)	Planter	50,000	34
J. C. & J. LeBlanc	Planters	50,000	35
Lemon LeBlanc	Planter	50,000	
Conrad & Towles	Planter	50,000	39
Rils & Marenaux	Planter	50,000	16

***includes slaves willed to others**

APPENDIX B

1860 United States Census Iberville Parish landowners
with property valued over \$50,000 or
personal property valued over \$10,000, by value of property

Name	Occupation	Value of Property	Value Personal Property	Origin	Plantation	Slaves Owned
Widow A. Woolfolk	Planter	550,000	3,000	Maryland	Mound Plantation and Center Plantation	277
August Levert(2)	Planter	500,000	3,000	Louisiana		See above
Hotard & Labauve	Planters	450,000	0	N		187
Robert C. Camp	Planter	425,000	17,000	Virginia	Camp Plantation	127
E. W. Cropper	Planter	400,000	2,500	Louisiana		169?
Estate C.A. Slack		300,000	0	Not given		155
Dr. G.W. Campbell	Planter non res.	300,000	0	N	Trinity	114
(Widow?) H.L. Vaughn	Planter	300,000	3,000	Tennessee		180
Wd. E. Lauve	Planter	300,000	5,000	Louisiana	Celeste	120
Auguste Levert	Planter	300,000	3,000	Louisiana		62
Zenon Labauve	Attorney at Law (planter)	300,000	10,000	Louisiana	Belle View	16
Est. J.N. Brown	Planter	275,000	6,000	N		45
John Andrews	Planter	250,000	10,000	Virginia	Belle Grove	148
Theodore Sigur	Planter	250,000	5,000	Louisiana		93
Edward Moore	Planter	207,000	10,000	Tennessee		106

Widow John Hagan	Planter	203,500	8,000	Louisiana		96
John C. Chastrant	Planter	200,000	2,000	Louisiana		54
W.H. Avery	Planter non res.	200,000	8,000	N		135
Isaac Erwin	Planter	200,000	10,000	N. Carolina	Shady Grove	113
Captain J. Hart	Planter	200,000	2,000	Not give		63
William J. Bogan	Planter	200,000	1,500	Louisiana		81
Theodore Johnson	Planter	200,000	1,000	New York	Sunnyside	77
Gov. P.O. Hebert	Planter	200,000	10,000	Louisiana	Home Plantation	94
J.C. Ricar	Planter	200,000	1,000	Louisiana		91?
Wd. C. Adams*	Planter	200,000	500	Louisiana	Alhambra	102
John Randolph	Planter	200,000	6,000	Virginia		155
A. Dubuclet	Planter	200,000	6,400	Louisiana	Polard	7
J.P.R. Stone	Planter	200,000	250,000	Virginia	Evergreen	200
Wd. H.L. Vaughan	Planter	198,000	10,000	Louisiana	White Castle	180
John A. Sigur	Planter	190,000	5,000	Louisiana	Home Plantation	93(?)
Wd. I. Cropper	Planter	189,300	8,000	Louisiana	Home Plantation	110
John R. Thompson	Planter	182,400	4,000	Louisiana	Claiborne and Chatham	194
Gourier & Anger	Planters	180,900	17,000	Louisiana		?
Wily Barrow	Planter	180,000	1,000	Louisiana	Belmont	89
Wd. W.E. Edwards	Planter	180,000	2,000	Tennessee		61
Charles Mather	Planter	175,000	5,350	Louisiana		62
R.C. Downs	Attorney at Law	170,000	80,000	Delaware		78
Charles A. Brusle	Planter	160,000	7,750	Louisiana		56

Evarice Labauve	Planter	160,000	5,000	Louisiana	Celeste	187
F.A. Hudson	Planter	160,000	400	Maryland		82
P.J. Deslond & Widow Deslond	Planters	155,000	4,500	Louisiana	Cedars Grove	34
Widow M.L. Key	Planter	150,000	2,000	Maryland		44
James W. Pipes	Planter	150,000	1,000	Louisiana		71
Dr. T.S. Garrett	Planter	150,000	2,000	S. Carolina		78
Calvin W. Keep	Planter	150,000	400	Louisiana		78
H. Doyle	Planter	150,000	700	Maryland	Eureka	80
A. P. Marionneaux	Planter	145,000	1,000	Louisiana		67
Celestin LeBlanc	Planter	130,000	5,100	Louisiana		63
Wm. M. Thompson	Planter	130,000	600	New Jersey	Waverley	?
Widow J. LeBlanc	Planter	126,000	5,900	Louisiana		61
H. Von Phul	Planter	125,000	5,000	Missouri		52
Balthazar Dupuy	Planter	123,000	99,000	Louisiana		88
R.C. Downes	Attorney at Law	120,000	80,000	Maryland		92
James .L. Cole	Planter	118,000	1,500	Philadelphia	Rebecca(?)	85
C. Belchers plan.	Planter non res.	115,000	0	Not given		16
Widow E. Hough	Planter	100,000	1,000	Louisiana		?
Ernest Cropper		100,000	1,000	Louisiana		53
Wd. Thomas Lawes	Planter	100,000	100,000	Louisiana		87
N.N. Daniels	Planter	100,000	1,000	Kentucky		?
Lucien Marionneaux	Planter	100,000	30,000	Louisiana		50
Widow G. Dupuy	Planter	93,750	2,500	Louisiana		14

Thomas Whaley	Planter	90,180	343	Louisiana		70
William R. Boote	Planter	80,000	2,500	Georgia		55
Randal McGavock	Planter	80,000	900	Virginia		42
James H. Coulter	Planter	80,000	1,000	Delaware		37
Andre LeBlanc	Planter	76,000	4,000	Louisiana		41
George Mitchelltree	Planter	75,000	125	Kentucky		21
Widow C. Roth	Planter	71,000	1,200	Louisiana		32
Widow H. Martinez	Planter	70,000	1,500	Louisiana		31
C.D. Robertson	Planter	70,000	500	Louisiana		21
Augstin LeBlanc	Planter	70,000	1,000	Louisiana		26
J.A. Pritchard	Planter	65,000	1,000	Louisiana		36
George Garner	Merchant	65,000	400	Massachusetts		10
Hortanse Allen	Planter	65,000	1,000	Louisiana		31
Charles Kleinpeter	Planter	60,000	1,000	Louisiana		30
Zacarie Onore	Planter	60,000	0	Louisiana		19
Wd. E.S. Adams	Planter	60,000	1,800	Virginia		102
Widow Ursin Joly	Planter	55,600	1,800	Louisiana		34
Joseph N. Young	Planter	55,000	500	Louisiana		23
A. Toffier		55,000	0	Louisiana		5
George Schwing	Planter	53,500	1,000	Kentucky		13
Euphrasie Landry	Planter	51,300	500	Louisiana		26
R.A. Kearny	Druggist	30,000	15,000	Scotland		None
Benoit Keller		20,000	10,000	France		

Alexander Roth	Planter	20,000	25,000	Louisiana	Louisiana	19
Wd. C.N. Brusle		16,000	10,000	Louisiana		15+12
Norbert Marionneaux	Planter	10,000	12,000	Louisiana		15+3
Adonis Petit	Town recorder	10,000	11,000	Louisiana		15
Paul L. Hiriart	Physician	10,000	11,000	Louisiana		5
George Scratchley	Physician	10,000	20,000	England		9
Matilda Cropper		8,000	19,000	Louisiana		6
James L. Barker		6,000	10,000	Louisiana		6
Ludrick C. Beck	Planter	6,000	10,000	Germany		4
Adolphe Grass	Merchant	4,500	16,000	Louisiana		4
Mary E. Danos (widow)	Gardner	4,000	16,000	Louisiana		2
S. Leonard	Captain Steamboat	3,000	14,000	Louisiana		8
Samuel Kohn	Merchant	3,000	10,000	France		5
Antoine Derousselle		2,500	15,000	Louisiana		18
Angelina Landry		0	10,000	Louisiana		

***Mrs. Andrews' mother at Alhambra, ca. 1855**

APPENDIX C

1860 United States Census Iberville Parish landowners with
property values over \$50,000 or personal property over \$10,000
by value of personal property

Name	Occupation	Value of Real Estate	Value of Personal Property	State of Origin	Plantation Name	Slaves Owned
J.P.R. Stone	Planter	200,000	250,000	Virginia	Evergreen	200
Wd. Thomas Lawes	Planter	100,000	100,000	Louisiana		87
Balthazar Dupuy	Planter	123,000	99,000	Louisiana		88
R.C. Downs	Attorney at Law	170,000	80,000	Delaware		78
R.C. Downes	Attorney at Law	120,000	80,000	Maryland		92
Lucien Marionneaux	Planter	100,000	30,000	Louisiana		50
Alexander Roth	Planter	20,000	25,000	Louisiana		19
George Scratchley	Physician	10,000	20,000	England		9
Matilda Cropper		8,000	19,000	Louisiana		6
Robert C. Camp	Planter	425,000	17,000	Virginia	Camp Plantation	127
Gourier & Anger	Planters	180,900	17,000	Louisiana		?
Adolphe Grass	Merchant	4,500	16,000	Louisiana		4
Mary E. Danos (widow)	Gardner	4,000	16,000	Louisiana		2
R.A. Kearny	Druggist	30,000	15,000	Scotland		None
Antoine Derousselle		2,500	15,000	Louisiana		18
S. Leonard	Captain Steamboat	3,000	14,000	Louisiana		8
Norbert Marionneaux	Planter	10,000	12,000	Louisiana		15+3
Adonis Petit	Town	10,000	11,000	Louisiana		15

	recorder					
Paul L. Hiriart	Physician	10,000	11,000	Louisiana		5
Zenon Labauve	Attorney at Law (planter)	300,000	10,000	Louisiana	Belle View	16
John Andrews	Planter	250,000	10,000	Virginia	Belle Grove	148
Edward Moore	Planter	207,000	10,000	Tennessee		106
Isaac Erwin	Planter	200,000	10,000	N. Carolina	Shady Grove	113
Gov. P.O. Hebert	Planter	200,000	10,000	Louisiana	Home Plantation	94
Wd. H.L. Vaughan	Planter	198,000	10,000	Louisiana	White Castle	180
Benoit Keller		20,000	10,000	France		
Wd. C.N. Brusle		16,000	10,000	Louisiana		15+12
James L. Barker		6,000	10,000	Louisiana		6
Ludrick C. Beck	Planter	6,000	10,000	Germany		4
Samuel Kohn	Merchant	3,000	10,000	France		5
Angelina Landry		0	10,000	Louisiana		
Widow John Hagan	Planter	203,500	8,000	Louisiana		96
W.H. Avery	Planter non res.	200,000	8,000	Not given		135
Wd. I. Cropper	Planter	189,300	8,000	Louisiana	Home Plantation	110
Charles A. Brusle	Planter	160,000	7,750	Louisiana		56
A. Dubuclet	Planter	200,000	6,400	Louisiana	Polard	7
Est. J.N. Brown	Planter	275,000	6,000	Not given		45
John Randolph	Planter	200,000	6,000	Virginia		155
Widow J. LeBlanc	Planter	126,000	5,900	Louisiana		61
Charles Mather	Planter	175,000	5,350	Louisiana		62

Celestin LeBlanc	Planter	130,000	5,100	Louisiana		63
Wd. E. Lauve	Planter	300,000	5,000	Louisiana	Celeste	120
Theodore Sigur	Planter	250,000	5,000	Louisiana		93
John A. Sigur	Planter	190,000	5,000	Louisiana	Home Plantation	93(?)
Evarice Labauve	Planter	160,000	5,000	Louisiana	Celeste	187
H. Von Phul	Planter	125,000	5,000	Missouri		52
P.J. Deslond & Widow Deslond	Planters	155,000	4,500	Louisiana	Cedars Grove	34
John R. Thompson	Planter	182,400	4,000	Louisiana	Claiborne and Chatham	194
Andre LeBlanc	Planter	76,000	4,000	Louisiana		41
Widow A. Woolfolk	Planter	550,000	3,000	Maryland	Mound Plantation and Center Plantation	277
August Levert(2)	Planter	500,000	3,000	Louisiana		
(Widow?) H.L. Vaughn	Planter	300,000	3,000	Tennessee		180
Auguste Levert	Planter	300,000	3,000	Louisiana		62
E.W. Cropper	Planter	400,000	2,500	Louisiana		169?
Widow G. Dupuy	Planter	93,750	2,500	Louisiana		14
William R. Boote	Planter	80,000	2,500	Georgia		55
John C. Chastrant	Planter	200,000	2,000	Louisiana		54
Captain J. Hart	Planter	200,000	2,000	Not give		63
Wd. W.E. Edwards	Planter	180,000	2,000	Tennessee		61
Widow M.L. Key	Planter	150,000	2,000	Maryland		44

Dr. T.S. Garrett	Planter	150,000	2,000	S. Carolina		78
Wd. E.S. Adams	Planter	60,000	1,800	Virginia		102
Widow Ursin Joly	Planter	55,600	1,800	Louisiana		34
William J. Bogan	Planter	200,000	1,500	Louisiana		81
James .L. Cole	Planter	118,000	1,500	Philadelphia	Rebecca(?)	85
Widow H. Martinez	Planter	70,000	1,500	Louisiana		31
Widow C. Roth	Planter	71,000	1,200	Louisiana		32
Theodore Johnson	Planter	200,000	1,000	New York	Sunnyside	77
J.C. Ricar	Planter	200,000	1,000	Louisiana		91?
Wily Barrow	Planter	180,000	1,000	Louisiana	Belmont	89
James W. Pipes	Planter	150,000	1,000	Louisiana		71
A. P. Marionneaux	Planter	145,000	1,000	Louisiana		67
Widow E. Hough	Planter	100,000	1,000	Louisiana		?
Ernest Cropper		100,000	1,000	Louisiana		53
N.N. Daniels	Planter	100,000	1,000	Kentucky		?
James H. Coulter	Planter	80,000	1,000	Delaware		37
Augstin LeBlanc	Planter	70,000	1,000	Louisiana		26
J.A. Pritchard	Planter	65,000	1,000	Louisiana		36
Hortanse Allen	Planter	65,000	1,000	Louisiana		31
Charles Kleinpeter	Planter	60,000	1,000	Louisiana		30
George Schwing	Planter	53,500	1,000	Kentucky		13
Randal McGavock	Planter	80,000	900	Virginia		42
H. Doyle	Planter	150,000	700	Maryland	Eureka	80
Wm. M.	Planter	130,000	600	New Jersey	Waverley	?

Thompson						
Wd. C. Adams*	Planter	200,000	500	Louisiana	Alhambra	102
C.D. Robertson	Planter	70,000	500	Louisiana		21
Joseph N. Young	Planter	55,000	500	Louisiana		23
Euphrasie Landry	Planter	51,300	500	Louisiana		26
F.A. Hudson	Planter	160,000	400	Maryland		82
Calvin W. Keep	Planter	150,000	400	Louisiana		78
George Garner	Merchant	65,000	400	Massachusetts		10
Thomas Whaley	Planter	90,180	343	Louisiana		70
George Mitchelltree	Planter	75,000	125	Kentucky		21
Hotard & Labauve	Planters	450,000	0	Not given		187
Estate C.A. Slack		300,000	0	Not given		155
Dr. G.W. Campbell	Planter non res.	300,000	0	Not given	Trinity	114
C. Belchers plan.	Planter non res.	115,000	0	Not given		16
Zacarie Onore	Planter	60,000	0	Louisiana		19
A. Toffier		55,000	0	Louisiana		5

APPENDIX D

1860 United States Census Iberville Parish marriageable men and women in households with property valued over \$100,000, by value of real estate

Name	Occupation	Value Real Estate	Slaves Owned	Marriageable males - age	Marriageable females-age
Widow A. Woolfolk	Planter	550,000	277	One - 27 One - 21	One - 34 One - 19 One - 16
August Levert(2)	Planter	500,000		One - 20 One - 17	0
Hotard & Labauve	Planters	450,000	187	0	0
Robert C. Camp	Planter	425,000	127	One - 50	0
E. W. Cropper	Planter	400,000	169?	0	0
Widow of C.A. Slack		300,000	155	0	One - 31
Dr. G.W. Campbell	Planter non res.	300,000	114	0	0
(Widow?) H.L. Vaughn	Planter	300,000	180	0	One - 60
Wd. E. Lauve	Planter	300,000	120	One - 70	One - 25
Auguste Levert	Planter	300,000	62	One - 20 One - 17	0
Zenon Labauve	Attorney at Law (planter)	300,000	16	0	One - 17
Est. J.N. Brown	Planter	275,000	45	0	0
John Andrews	Planter	250,000	148	One - 26	One - 24 One - 22 One - 19 One - 18
Theodore Sigur	Planter	250,000	93	0	0
Edward Moore	Planter	207,000	106	1-age 55 1-age 25	0

				(son)	
Widow John Hagan	Planter	203,500	96	0	One - 34
John C. Chastrant	Planter	200,000	54	One - 17	0
W.H. Avery	Planter non res.	200,000	135	0	0
Isaac Erwin	Planter	200,000	113	One 20	One 18 One 16
Mad. Craighead	Planter	200,000	158	One - 21 One - 19 One - 18	One - 46
Captain J. Hart	Planter	200,000	63	0	0
William J. Bogan	Planter	200,000	81	0	0
Theodore Johnson	Planter	200,000	77	0	0
Gov. P.O. Hebert	Planter	200,000	94	One - 48 One - 16	One - 18
J.C. Ricar	Planter	200,000	91?	One - 72 One - 41 One - 35	One - 30
Wd. C. Adams*	Planter	200,000	102	0	One - 44 One - 18
John Randolph	Planter	200,000	155	One - 20 One - 18 One - 16	One - 21
A. Dubuclet	Planter	200,000	7	One - 49 One - 23	0
J.P.R. Stone	Planter	200,000	200	One - 20 One - 17 One - 16	0
Wd. H.L. Vaughan	Planter	198,000	180	0	One - 62
John A. Sigur	Planter	190,000	93(?)	One - 42	0
Wd. I. Cropper	Planter	189,300	110	0	One - 67
John R. Thompson	Planter	182,400	194	One - 47	0
Gourier & Anger	Planters	180,900	?	0	0

Wily Barrow	Planter	180,000	89	0	0
Wd. W.E. Edwards	Planter	180,000	61		One - 45
Charles Mather	Planter	175,000	62	0	0
R.C. Downs	Attorney at Law	170,000	78	0	0
Charles A. Brusle	Planter	160,000	56	0	0
Evarice Labauve	Planter	160,000	187	One - 67	0
F.A. Hudson	Planter	160,000	82	One - 33	0
P.J. Deslond & Widow Deslond	Planters	155,000	34	One - 33 One - 24	One - 26 One - 20 One - 28
Widow M.L. Key	Planter	150,000	44	One - 24 One - 22 One - 20 One - 18	One - 16
James W. Pipes	Planter	150,000	71	0	One - 16
Dr. T.S. Garrett	Planter	150,000	78	0	0
Calvin W. Keep	Planter	150,000	78	0	0
H. Doyle	Planter	150,000	80	One - 62	0
A. P. Marionneaux	Planter	145,000	67	One - 16	0
Celestin LeBlanc	Planter	130,000	63	0	0
Louis Desobry	Planter	130,000(?)	18	0	0
Wm. M. Thompson	Planter	130,000	?	0	0
Widow J. LeBlanc	Planter	126,000	61	0	One - age 30
H. Von Phul	Planter	125,000	52	0	0
Balthazar Dupuy	Planter	123,000	88	One - 41 One - 22 One - 19	0
R.C. Downes	Attorney at Law	120,000	92	0	0

James .L. Cole	Planter	118,000	85	0	0
C. Belchers plan.	Planter non res.	115,000	16	0	0
Widow E. Hough	Planter	110,000	?	0	One - age 60
Ernest Cropper		100,000	53	0	0
Wd. Thomas Lawes	Planter	100,000	87	One - 19 One - 18 One - 16	One - 20 One - 18
N.N. Daniels	Planter	100,000	?	0	0
Lucien Marionneaux	Planter	100,000	50	0	0

APPENDIX E

Belle Grove Plantation Income from Sugar and Molasses: 1850-1860

Year	Sugar in Hogsheads	Average price per hogshead	Gross income sugar	Molasses in gallons	Price	Gross income molasses	Total gross income
1850-51	580	60	\$34,800	40,600	.177	\$7,186	\$41,986
1851-52	604	50	\$30,200	42,280	.243	\$10,274	\$40,474
1852-53	304	48	\$14,592	21,280	.228	\$4,851	\$19,443
1853-54	852	35	\$29,820	59,640	.118	\$7,037	\$36,857
1854-55	1,052	52	\$54,704	73,640	.175	\$12,887	\$67,591
1855-56	656	70	\$45,920	45,920	.282	\$12,949	\$58,869
1856-57	178	110	\$19,580	12,460	.518	\$6,454	\$26,034
1857-58	582	64	\$37,248	40,740	.235	\$9,573	\$46,971
1858-59	542	69	\$37,398	37,940	.255	\$9,674	\$47,072
1859-60	721	82	\$59,112	50,470	.402	\$20,288	\$79,400

APPENDIX F

Belle Grove Plantation Income 1850-1860

