A Textbook Study in Colonial Architecture

The Menokin house is one of the best-documented 18th-century houses in Virginia — and one of the few for which the original architectural drawings still exist. Because the drawing sheets were unsigned, however, the identities of both designer and builder remain a mystery. We can tell, however, that the Georgian-style mansion was influenced by the ideas of Italian architect Andrea Palladio. Its Neo-Palladian arrangement displays symmetric formality in the façade, flanked on both sides by dependencies (an office and kitchen, both two stories).

Similar to other mansions in Virginia and Edinburgh, Scotland, the house sheds light on early American homes. The Menokin Project will make it an architectural teaching hospital for students, researchers, and others.

The iron-infused sandstone used to build both Menokin (detail above) and Mount Airy was quarried locally.

PART OF THE LAND

The original materials used for the main Menokin house came from the nearby area — making it an integrated part of the landscape.

- Exterior: course-grained sandstone ashlar with brick backup and decorative stone trim; stucco added later
- Interior: wood, primarily white oak plus decorative pine paneling; painted plaster

RELATED SITES

Menokin is inextricably linked to two other nearby historical homes:

Mount Airy
- Owned by John Tayloe II, father of Rebecca Tayloe Lee
- Where Rebecca Tayloe Lee was raised
- Built in 1758
- Designer unknown
- Premiere example of colonial Anglo-Palladianism in America
- 2 miles from Menokin

Stratford Hall
- Where Francis Lightfoot Lee and Richard Henry Lee grew up
- Also the birthplace of General Robert E. Lee
- Built in the 1730s
- 17 miles from Menokin, on the opposite shore of the Northern Neck

Architectural historian Thomas Waterman drew this 1932 rendering of Menokin. Waterman said Menokin was unusual in that it possessed the qualities of a mansion although modest in actual dimensions. Also, being a stone house made Menokin unusual for a Virginia home, which were usually made of brick during that period.