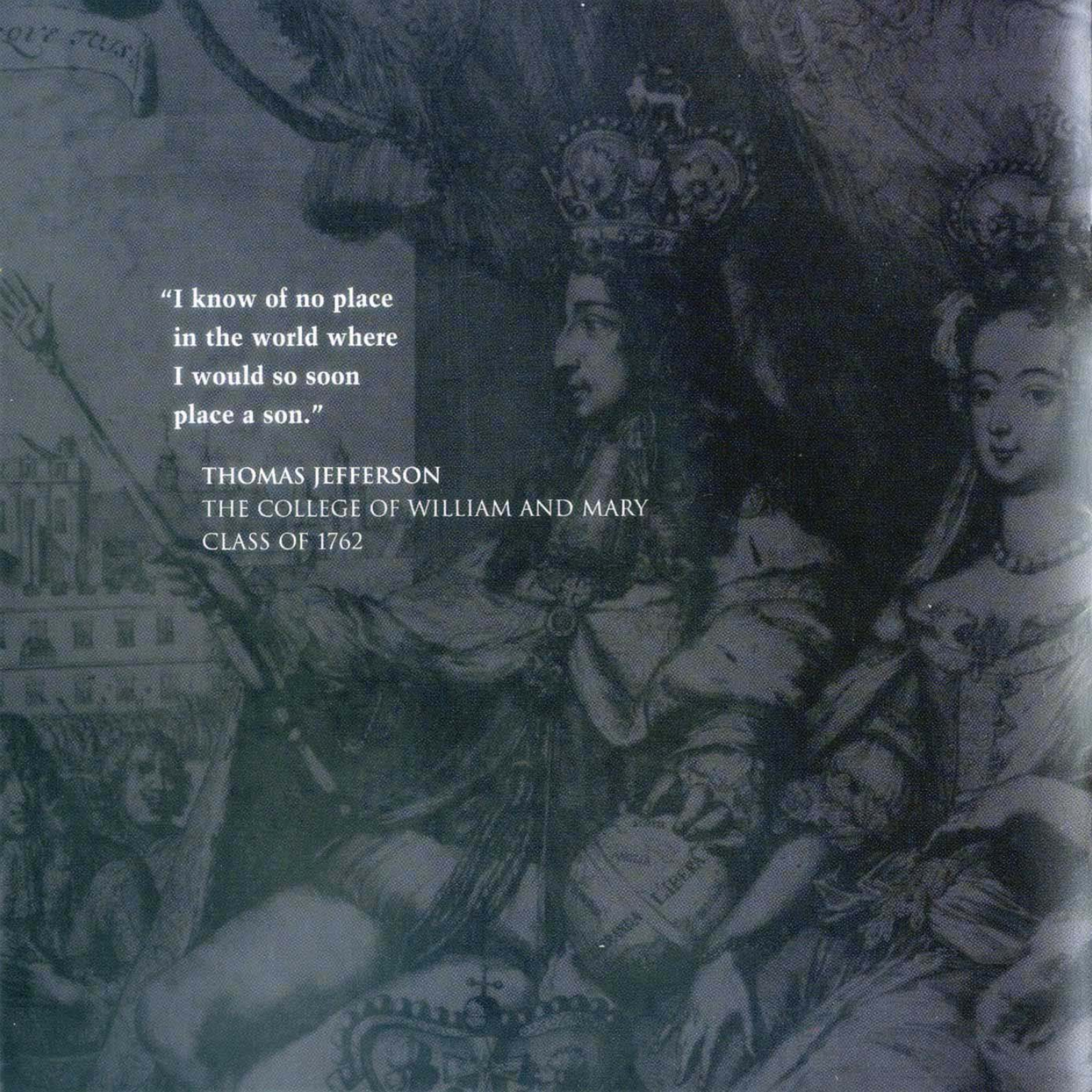


*The Sir Christopher Wren Building:
Architecture for the New World*



THE 1999 BRICK IN ARCHITECTURE AWARDS CALL FOR ENTRIES



"I know of no place
in the world where
I would so soon
place a son."

THOMAS JEFFERSON
THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY
CLASS OF 1762

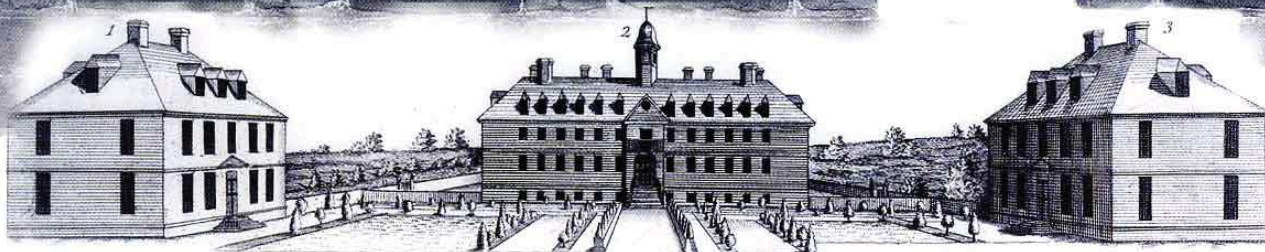


Three Hundred Freshman Classes and Still Standing

Gutted by fire three times, restored and renovated four times, and still in daily use after three hundred years, the Sir Christopher Wren Building at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia is an enduring, stately brick structure that helped define urban and academic architecture for a new nation.

"Whether by coincidence or design, the College... represents a new departure in collegiate design."

JAMES D. KORNWOLF
ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN
"So Good A Design" (1989)

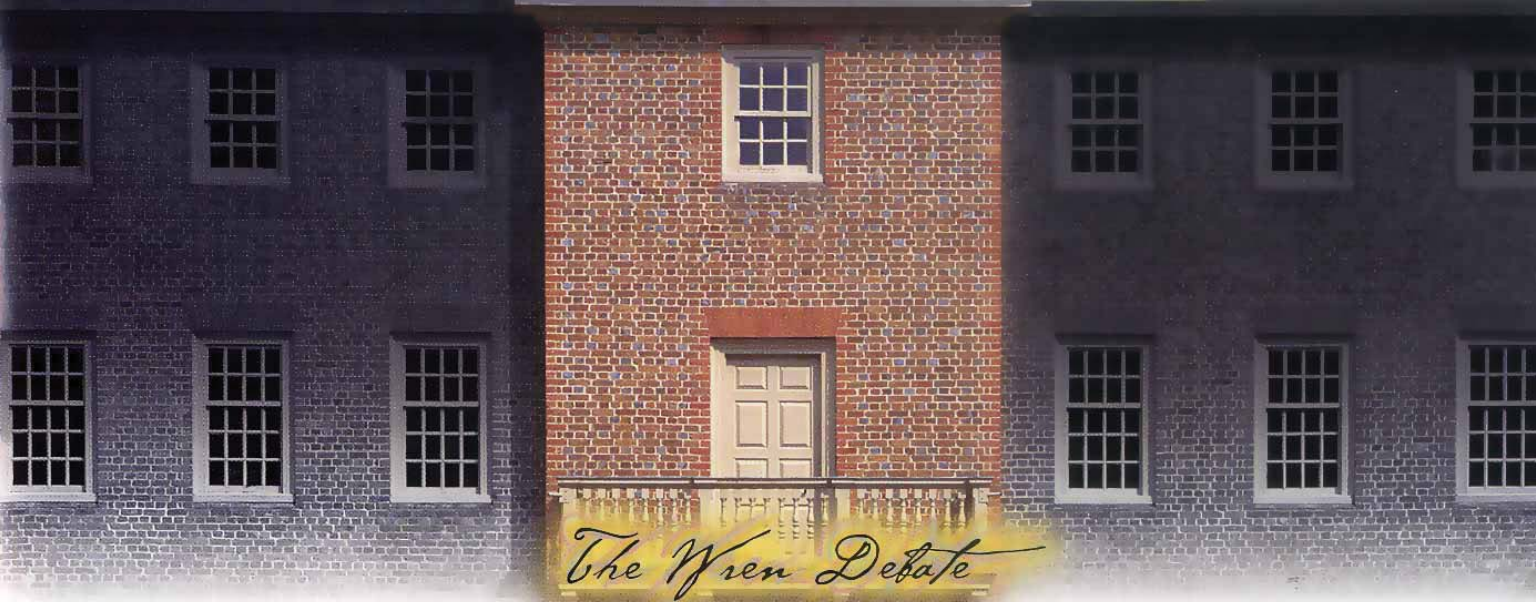


Kings, Queens, Fires, Wars and Drunken Soldiers

Construction on the building began in 1695, during the reign of its patrons, King William III and Queen Mary II, and was completed in 1699. The first fire occurred in 1705, and the first renovation lasted until 1859, when the building burned yet again.

The architects of the second renovation, Henry Exall and Eben Faxon, retained the surviving walls, but changed the building's style from classical Baroque to Italianate, complete with towers. Their work lasted only three years before the third fire was ignited by drunken Union soldiers during the Civil War. Reconstruction would await the end of the conflict.


In 1867 architect Alfred L. Rives tore down the Italianate towers, and added a three-bay, pedimented porch, a design that remained unchanged until 1928, when the Boston firm of Perry, Shaw and Hepburn restored the building to its 1715-1859 appearance, this time adding a steel-cage infrastructure.



Although known for two centuries simply as “the College,” the building was attributed to Wren as early as 1724, in Hugh Jones’ *The Present State of Virginia*. The name “Wren Building” was officially adopted in 1931.

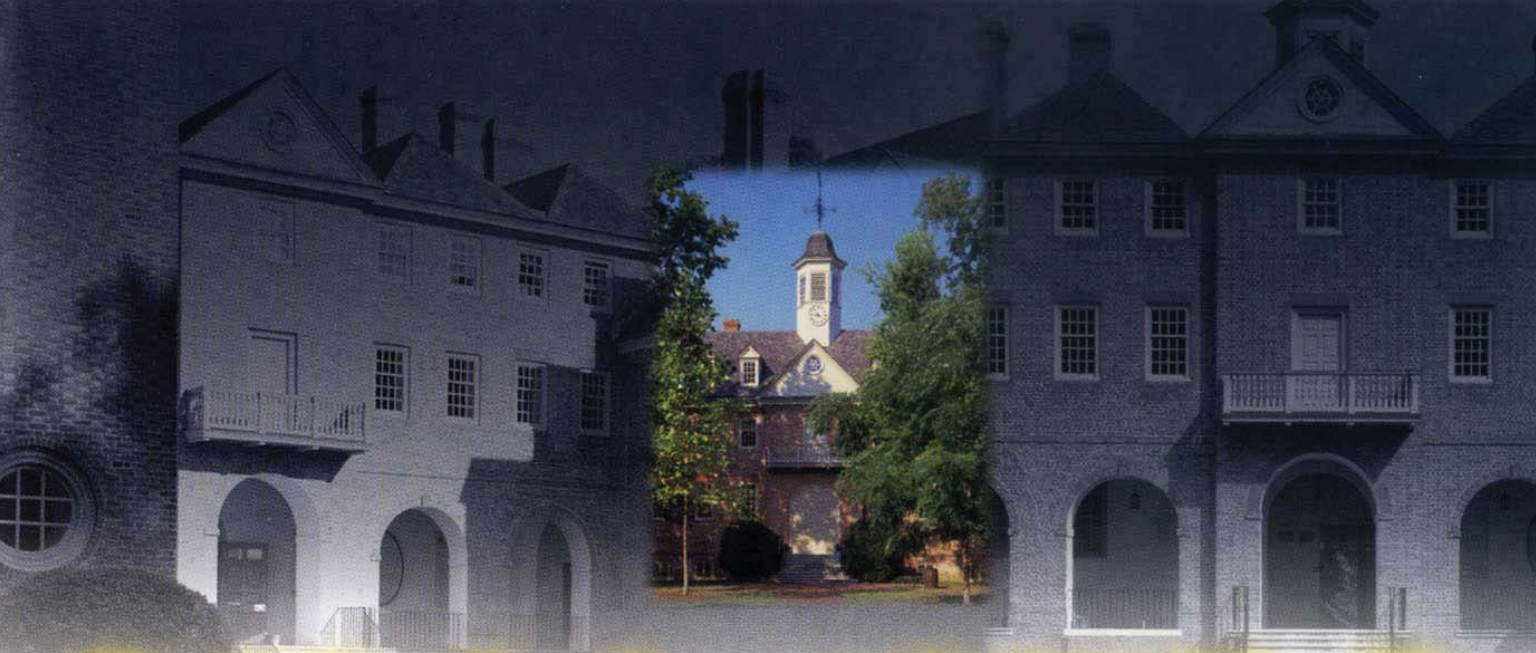
While there’s no conclusive evidence of Wren’s involvement in the design, it is highly likely that the design came from England, as there were few qualified architects in the colonies at the time. There is also considerable evidence that the design originated in the King’s Office of Public Works, where Wren had ultimate design responsibility.

Additionally, at the time of construction, the college was in financial need, and it is quite natural that Wren, who was working on Kensington Palace for the monarchs, would have been asked by them to volunteer a design.

A photograph of a brick archway. The arch is constructed from red bricks and is set against a wall of blue and grey bricks. A black lantern hangs from the center of the arch. Below the arch is a balcony with a black metal railing. The background is a bright, overexposed sky.

Designed as a series of three perfect cubes, the building's sense of proportion also points to Wren, and to the school of Inigo Jones, to which Wren belonged.

Wren's involvement is still subject to debate. What is not debatable is the profound impact the building has had on American urban design and collegiate architecture.



Education, Republican Government & Other Glorious Ideas

Williamsburg's city plan reflects the Enlightenment ideals of England's Glorious Revolution. The Governor's Palace is set well back from the town's primary axis, Duke of Gloucester Street, while the College and Capitol Building reside prominently at either terminus. This symbolizes the new elevation of

education and republican government over King and state religion, and is a significant departure from the European town axis of palace and church.

These progressive ideals eventually influenced Pierre L'Enfant's plan for Washington, DC. The U.S. Capitol Building dominates the main

twin vistas of the Mall and Pennsylvania Avenue, symbolizing the power of the legislature in the new American republic. The executive mansion, as at Williamsburg, occupies a secondary position.

The College also created a uniquely American campus architectural tradition. Its

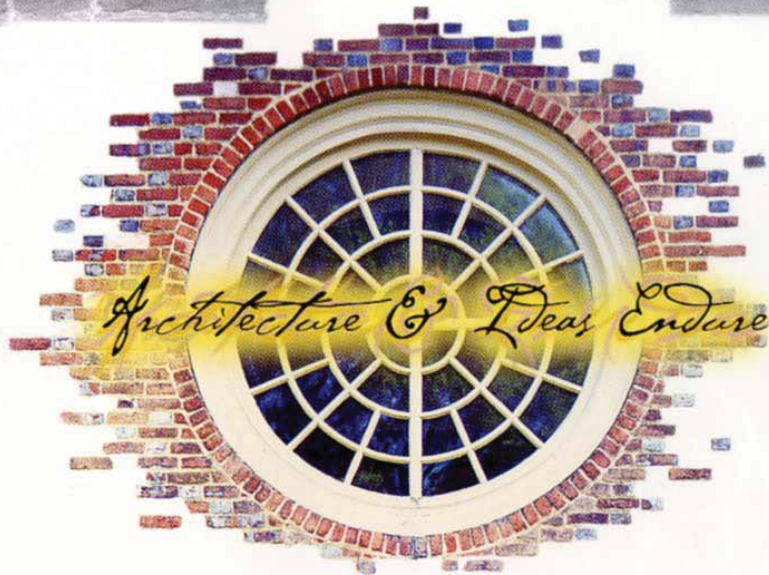


classical Baroque style can be found at Harvard, Yale, Princeton and virtually every other college founded and constructed in pre-revolutionary America.

The College influenced campus design as well. The main building at William and Mary is flanked on the front

façade by two smaller buildings, forming a forecourt between them, a sort of “mini-mall.” The main buildings at Ohio University, the University of Wisconsin, Dartmouth College and many other campuses are directly derived from this style. Centering a campus around an “Old Main” came to be typical in America.

Jefferson was influenced by his alma mater as well, and his University of Virginia is set up similarly — a single dominant building at the head of a mall-like space with flanking buildings of lesser importance. Many other colleges begun in this period followed the William and Mary/University of Virginia model.



Architecture is at its best when it moves beyond symbolism, stretches beyond its material limitations, and profoundly influences society. The Wren Building's brick walls harbored the fragile Enlightenment ideals from Europe that America made its own, setting American society and architecture on a new course.

Those walls await the arrival of the next freshman class.

A Call to Architects

CHRISTOPHER WREN

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

THOMAS JEFFERSON

LOUIS KAHN

When you choose to design in brick you are entering a long and distinguished tradition. You are joining the masters of the art, and you are inevitably measuring yourself against their achievement.

This is your chance to show your peers and the world your best work, your unique contribution to the history of brick in architecture, by entering the Brick Industry Association's 1999 Brick In Architecture Awards.

Presented in conjunction with The American Institute of Architects, this biennial program showcases the best in residential and commercial brick architecture. Winners will be formally recognized at the 1999 AIA Convention in Dallas, and their work will be published in a special awards issue of *Brick in Architecture*.

Fill out and return the enclosed entry form to receive your submission package.



"So good a design."

FRANCIS NICHOLSON
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
COLONY OF VIRGINIA
JULY 25, 1690

