



stained walls of the Browning era were incorporated into Belmont during the Acklen construction period.



Surviving architectural evidence suggests Leven Browning built a neo-Palladian villa. Examples of the style are the early form of Monticello, the Semple house in Williamsburg Virginia, the Sally Billy house and the Williams-Reid-Macon house in Halifax, North Carolina, all of which exhibit a form representative of Browning's home. The similarities between the first Belmont and these examples are primarily a two story central pavilion, flanked by one story wings raised upon a high pedestal or foundation.

Most striking in similarity to the Acklens' home is a house in rural Alabama, outside of Tuscumbia, surprisingly also known as Belle Mont. Constructed for a transplanted Virginian, Alexander Mitchell, from 1828–1832, this restored example of neo-Palladian style offers a plan similar to the u-shaped plan of the 1853 Belmont.³ This style, first popular in America prior to the Revolution, arrived with settlers from over the mountains coming to the “old southwest” of Tennessee and Alabama. Palladian houses, an easy form to build in brick or frame,

were designed to capture breezes in either its original region, the Veneto of Italy, or high upon a Tennessee hill.

One indication of a simpler plan for Browning's villa came to light during plaster restoration on the second floor of the existing mansion in the 1990s. With the removal of failing plaster in what is now Adelia Acklen's bedroom, a line of joist pockets were revealed at waist height. This discovery documents the Browning house supported wings (today's central parlor and library), exhibiting a shed roof rather than the typical gable end as found in such houses. The angle of these roofs ran from the one story eave line upward, until making contact with the side walls of the two story central section.

Further plaster repairs in the library and central parlor, where yet more failing plaster was removed, indicate a brutal fire. Smoke stains survive on what would have been the east and west one-story walls of the wings. A westerly wind blew the fire across and through the house, burning out windows on the western elevation. Exterior smoke stains remain to this day beneath Acklen-period stucco. Fire lapped through window embrasures in masonry walls, documenting the west wall was much more involved than the east.

Browning's smaller, more compact, classical villa became history, literally lost

Belmont incorporates an earlier brick house that burned in the 1840s. Architectural evidence suggests it was a neo-Palladian villa, similar to the 1828-1833 Belle Mont near Tuscumbia, Alabama, which was built in a u-shaped plan. (Belle Mont, HABS, Library of Congress, and floorplan, from *Architecture of the Old South: Mississippi and Alabama*.)