



The popularity of billiards reached new heights in America in the mid-1800s. This rare 1850s image of the billiard room in Mentmore House, Buckinghamshire, England, provides insight into the recreational luxury such rooms provided. The house was designed by Sir Joseph Paxton for Baron Mayer de Rothschild and constructed in 1852–1854, making it contemporary to Belmont Mansion. (Roger Fenton, photographer, ca. 1858.)

confirms Acklen's kitchen building renovation occurred by the mid-1850s. Discovery of a paperhanger's signature indicates a date by which the room was in use. Paperhangers made note of their work in pencil on the east wall with the following inscription: "April 1856/by James and Benjamin Franklin/Papered this room again."²⁶ Depending upon how this scribbled note is interpreted it documents the Acklens' formal dining room, as it is designated today, was in service by the summer of 1856. Both existing flankers were expanded to the north with the addition of bedrooms, primarily utilized as guest rooms. With the completion of these additions the house became u-shaped, overlooking the city of Nashville below.

A second structure to the west balancing the kitchen building is of undetermined use at this point in time, though evidence suggests a billiard room was in place by the time of the Civil War at the latest. The popularity of billiards in America reached new heights during the 1840s, suggesting such a room was in use at Belmont even before the war. This space once again opened level with the gallery. Both buildings were of brick load bearing wall construction.

The broad open rear gallery abutting the north wall of the house became a connector between the house and the now incorporated outbuildings. Once adjoined to the gallery, these former outbuildings served primarily as rear wings

with galleries of their own, facing each other across a u-shaped courtyard. Rooms within both wings were accessed from these side galleries. This arrangement was similar to the main house, where a majority of principle rooms opened to the rear gallery. From the newly completed u-shaped gallery Belmont appeared to be primarily one huge porch, an indulgence the Acklens and their guests would have used to their full advantage.

With phase one complete by 1853, a remarkable color change was introduced to the exterior walls. Adelia Acklen's uncle chose to leave his natural brick walls exposed, devoid of any colored wash or paint. The mortar joints were then "penciled" drawing attention to individual bricks.²⁷ By the 1850s earth tones became popular, ranging in tone from deep umber to various shades of brown and a straw yellow for exterior walls. The Acklens chose a pale yellow, which survives today beneath Belmont's stucco finish. The decision to apply this color was more than a fashionable one, it became a functional necessity. By the spring of 1853, it became visually apparent exterior walls were laid of bricks from multiple years of firing. The only chance for visual continuity was the addition of a unifying color to the exterior walls.

What is most frustrating when examining Belmont's architectural history is the lack of documents to validate clues revealed by the structure. A small number of contemporary descriptions detail