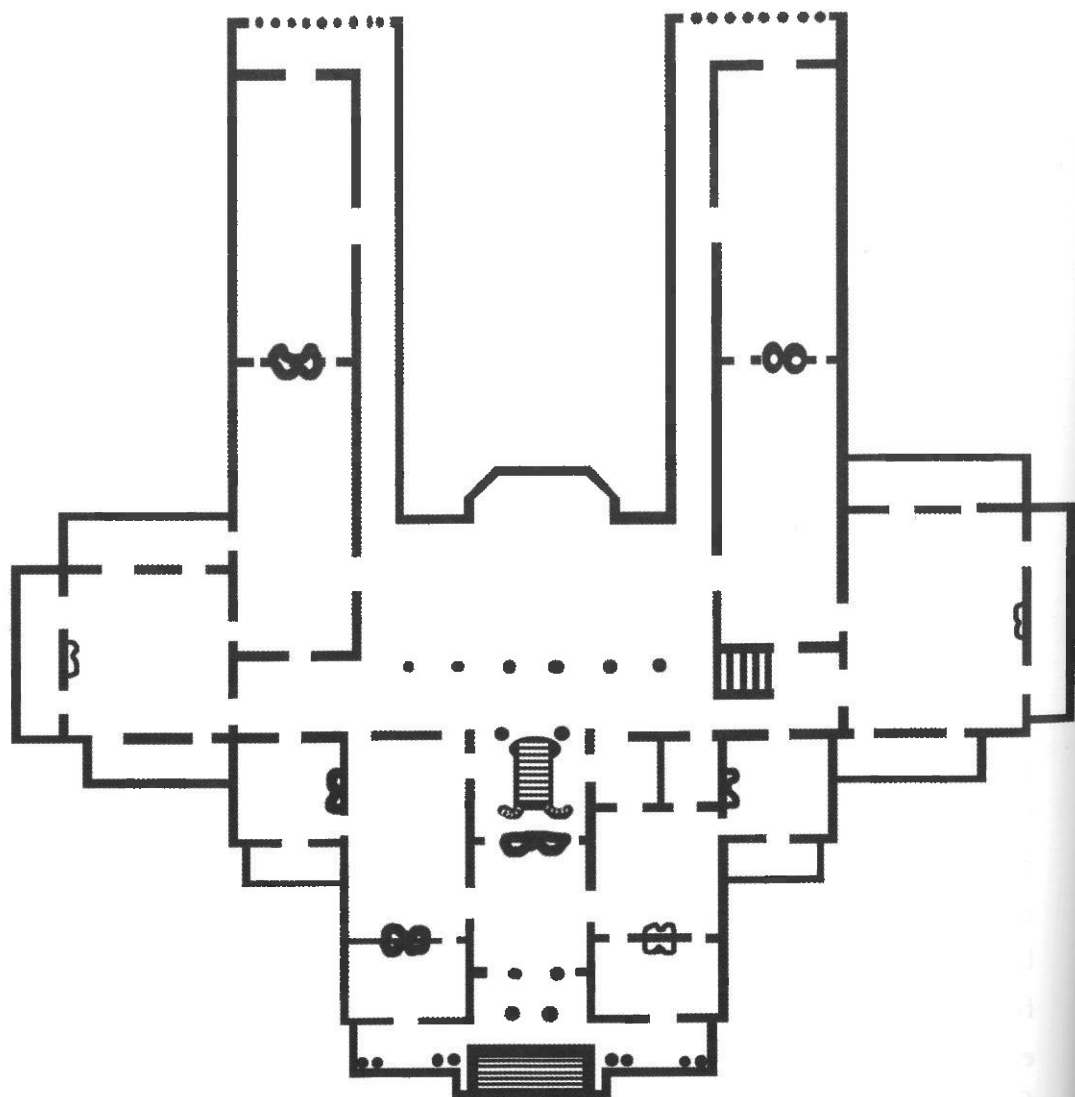
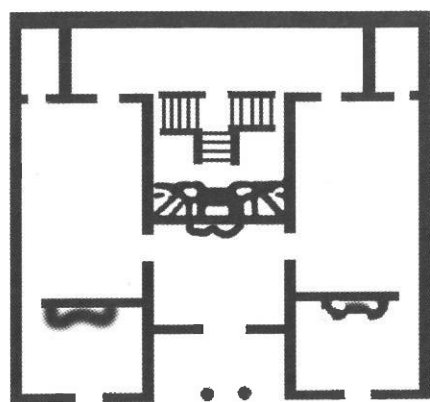


With the completion of Belmont in 1860, the Acklens possessed a most livable house. One unifying element to the floor plan became the first floor gallery. (Belmont Mansion Association)



were attached a formal dining room, a billiard room, and up to four guest bedrooms, but never in such a way to limit airflow, only enhance it. Placement of these additions qualify the importance of the rear gallery for life at Belmont. From this space the majority of first floor rooms could be accessed. Serving as a passage to parlors, study, and entertaining areas, this multi-purpose space would have been one of the most heavily utilized in Belmont. Single story wings to the rear served as extensions to the principle gallery, offering cooling shade to a number of rooms within.

The French refer to rooms that are aligned in sequence with a view from one room to another as an enfilade. Belmont does not perfectly fit this description but the builder's intent was the same. All rooms on both the first and second floors connect to at least one primary space with views into others. There are no dead end spaces to be found anywhere in the house. All rooms either provide access to another room, the exterior, or access to a cast iron balcony overlooking the grounds.

With the addition of the Grand Salon in 1859-1860, the final development of Belmont's plan was in place. This concluding addition enhanced the original concept without hampering it. Heiman created a functional entertainment space reminiscent of baronial halls in Europe if only by sheer size alone. As the room with the greatest ceiling height and a wall of windows facing north, the Grand Salon

served as an extension of the original rear gallery. Bedroom additions at each end of the gallery featured large French doors, allowing for cross breezes to flow through the house into the now enclosed gallery. From the first and second floor galleries, rose two stylish staircases, acting as a chimney for the transfer of hot air into and out of the new cupola.

With few exceptions, such as service and dish pantries off the library, the plan of Belmont is like an open book with one side reflecting the other. This adherence to an "old-fashioned," what some would refer to as a Georgian plan, did not in the least detract from the livability of the structure for "modern" times. Lacking a central hall, a deliberate deletion from the plan, forced the joining of all interior spaces together, opening the rooms to light and air, necessary elements for health as the nineteenth century was slowly beginning to recognize.

The comfort accorded by such a plan for a family in residence, aided by a large retinue of servants, is undeniable. With the advent of mechanical systems artificially controlling interior environments, we have lost an appreciation of homes such as Belmont, built in a time when architecture and nature could be joined in a palatable partnership. The Acklens in their time understood and made use of information we no longer choose to acknowledge.

