



The second circle on the grounds contained the largest of the five summerhouses, or gazebos, adorning the grounds. The central gazebo (facing page) dates to around 1853. It closely resembled a similar iron work structure (above) in an 1858 Philadelphia ironworks catalog. (1970 photo, HABS, Library of Congress and No. 703, Wood & Perot catalog, 1858)

The central gazebo, dating to around 1853, was a combination of cast and wrought iron. An 1870 catalog of the Janes, Beebe & Co. of New York indicates its style, which matched illustration No. 4; it remained popular through the Reconstruction era. The gardens were restored and improved following the Civil War and yet another pair of gazebos was installed around 1867, but they were not of local manufacture. The centers for cast iron production, particularly in the area of

garden furnishings, were New York, New Orleans, and Philadelphia. Acklen had strong ties to both New York and New Orleans, but she would also have been able to mail order gazebos such as No. 703 in the 1858 catalog of the Philadelphia Ornamental Ironworks aka Wood & Perot.¹⁹

The “parlorization” of the garden as a means of displaying affluence and taste was not a practice confined to the south nor the antebellum era. There were ear-

lier precedents. General John Eager Howard, an honored Revolutionary War soldier and politician born into a family of Maryland planter elites, built Belvedere between 1786 and 1794 as a suburban home where he furnished the lavish grounds with classical statuary and garden seats for comfort and contemplation of both art and nature. By 1798, Belvedere was one of an estimated seventy plus private pleasure gardens in and around Baltimore, which established a precedent for later country seats.²⁰ Like Belmont, Howard’s Belvedere sat on an eminence that afforded a commanding view of the surrounding landscape. A French visitor to Baltimore remarked on “a hill owned

by Colonel Howard that dominates the town to the north. The mansion & its dependencies occupy the forward part while a park embellishes the rear. The elevated situation, the mass of trees, an appearance that evokes despite itself European ideas.”²¹ Augustus Weidenbach painted an estate portrait of Belvedere around 1858. The artist composed a view that draws our attention to the classical statuary, urns, and wrought iron garden seats, while encouraging us to associate with the ambient experiences of the man, walking stick in hand, who strolls along the curved pathway, or the little girl picking flowers, or the young boy playing in the garden.

