

as these marbles—later identified as the work of Antwerp sculptor Jan Claudius de Cock—descended through the family, they were transitioned into a garden setting.

Symbols for the four continents closely adhered to previous representations since there were no laws in place to prevent outright copying of styles and subjects. A cornucopia and other attributes denoted the primacy and prosperity of Europe while representations of Asia tended to capture more of the Near Eastern influence. Africa wore headgear comprised of an elephant head with tusks that, according to Ripa, came from a coin of Hadrian showing elephants as indigenous to Africa where they were “used in warfare to inspire wonder and terrify opponents, specifically the Romans.”²⁶ Visual representations of America as an indigenous female emerged in 1493 alongside other illustrations in the publication of Christopher Columbus’s voyages. The version in the Belmont garden corresponds with the image of America in Ripa’s *Iconologia*. Similar marble figures of the four continents can be found at Rosedown Plantation in Francisville, Louisiana, where Martha Turnbull, a devoted gardener, was mistress. In 1851, she toured Europe for six months alongside her husband and daughter to visit

great estates and gardens. Statuary for the Rosedown gardens, including the four continents, was selected during their stay in Italy. The placement of the statues of the four continents at Belmont is yet another indication of the global worldview of the Acklens.

William Acklen’s memory of the flowering of a *Victoria Regia* at Belmont has not been corroborated, but photographic evidence proves this unique Amazonian plant was successfully cultivated in the gardens of the Tennessee Insane Asylum where Acklen’s third husband, Dr. William Archer Cheatham, served as physician and director. Therefore, it is not beyond reason to assume the *Victoria Regia* was yet another trans-Atlantic element represented on Belmont’s grounds as William Acklen recounts. This genus of the waterlily was brought from the Amazon to London by British plant hunters and presented to Queen Victoria. In addition to placing specimens in the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, the *Victoria Regia* was carefully cultivated at Chatsworth for the Duke of Devonshire under the watchful eye of his gardener Sir William Paxton. Chronicles of the first blooming of this genus in captivity in the duke’s greenhouse captured the imagination of Victorian audiences

Prized as garden ornaments, water fountains adorned the Belmont garden. A cobra-headed waterspout guarded the interior of the greenhouse. (top) (Belmont Mansion Association)

Groupings of statues personified classical concepts such as the four continents. At Belmont, marble figures of Asia, America, Africa, and Europe marked the corners of the square around a large fountain. (bottom) (Belmont Mansion Association)

