When the Hammond-Harwood House was designed for Matthias Hammond in 1774, Annapolis was in its Golden Age. There were 14 major houses either already built or underway for the politically active leaders of the Revolution: John Brice, Charles Carroll of Carrollton, William Paca, John Ridout, and Upton Scott. Hammond, a wealthy 25-year-old tobacco planter and delegate to the Maryland General Assembly, had a handsome inheritance and a keen business sense to purchase four acres in Annapolis to build his own “town house.”

Hammond hired the joiner, carpenter, and architect William Buckland to design his city home. Buckland had been indentured to George Mason since his arrival in Virginia in 1755 to complete Mason’s plantation home, Gunston Hall. Buckland left Mason with high recommendations and bought a farm in Virginia, set up a workshop, and worked on other estates, including Mount Airy, the Tayloe family plantation.

Buckland moved to Annapolis most likely at the urging of Tayloe’s son-in-law Edward Lloyd. Lloyd, a wealthy merchant and planter, had purchased a half-finished brick house in Annapolis begun by Samuel Chase, now known as the Chase-Lloyd House. Buckland agreed to complete its construction and devise the impressive interior that showcased his skill inspired by the designs of the 16th-century Italian architect Andrea Palladio (1508-1580).

Palladio was an Italian Renaissance architect who was influenced by Greek and Roman architecture and is considered to be, even today, one of the most influential figures in the history of architecture. His treatise, *I quattro libri dell’architettura (The Four Books of Architecture)*, was first printed in Italian in 1570, followed by several reprints and a full English version published in London by Giacomo Leoni in 1715-1720.

In Buckland’s design for Hammond’s city house, he adapted the plans of the Villa Pisani at Montagnana from Palladio’s *Four Books*. The five-part plan house, composed of a central block with wings on each side and connected by a passage, was well-suited to the tastes and climates of the southern colonies. By 1760, the manor houses of the Chesapeake and Tidewater plantation owners were primarily of the five-part Palladian plan—essentially a Palladian country villa.

Although Buckland is thought to have designed many interiors in Virginia and Maryland, including Tulip Hill, Whitehall, and Ringgold House, little documentation exists. The Hammond-Harwood House is the only known commission for a full building design and attests to Buckland’s knowledge of English Palladianism and the current fashion in decoration.
William Buckland, the son of Francis Buckland, a farmer, and his wife, Mary Dunsdown Buckland, was born on August 14, 1734, in Oxford, England. At age 13, Buckland began an apprenticeship paid by the University School of Oxford with his uncle James Buckland, a London member of the Worshipful Company of Joiners and owner of a bookshop on Paternoster Row that specialized in architecture books.

In 1755 Buckland completed his apprenticeship and was offered an indenture that same year in the American colonies by Thomson Mason, brother of George Mason. George Mason was building a new house, Gunston Hall, in Fairfax County, Virginia, and he needed someone to complete the building and its interior details. On November 8, 1759, Mason marked the conclusion of Buckland’s service by praising him as “a complete Master of the Carpenter’s & Joiner’s Business …”

About 1758 Buckland married Mary Moore and they had two sons and two daughters. Buckland moved to Richmond County in 1761 where he purchased a farm and established a workshop based on the English guild system, as he had been trained. There, he employed a number of white servants and workmen, as well as Oxford, an enslaved craftsman who came with the farm, along with his wife Sue and their two children. Oxford was listed as Buckland’s most valued asset and he remained with Buckland when they arrived in Annapolis in 1771.

Buckland moved his family to Annapolis in September 1772 and they settled in a modest house on Bloomsbury Square. Surviving documents describe his house mortgage, along with two lots on Bloomsbury Square and his five “Negro slaves.”

Few records of Buckland projects exist. The papers of Landon Carter of Sabine Hall and John Tayloe III at Mount Airy include information on Buckland’s work for them and some records referring to the interior of Chase-Lloyd House have been found. Buckland began work on the Hammond-Harwood House in April 1774, but few of the names and numbers of laborers have been recorded. It appears Buckland was involved with several projects on Maryland’s Eastern and Western Shores, with the last account of his whereabouts found on November 16, 1774.

By December 1774, Buckland had died, most likely on the Eastern Shore. Buckland died without a will, so Mary Buckland, his widow, his apprentice John Randall, and Denton Jacques were named executors. The shop was immediately dismantled, and objects were sold along with some household furnishings, five slaves brought from Virginia, and five other enslaved laborers, likely to relieve the burden of maintaining everyone.

Mary Buckland and her children remained in Bloomsbury Square until the house was sold at auction to Daniel Wells in 1775.
George Mason was a wealthy planter, slave holder, politician, Founding Father, and delegate to the U.S. Constitutional Convention of 1787. He was born in Fairfax County, Virginia, most likely at his father’s plantation on Dogue’s Neck (later named Mason’s Neck) in 1725. After his father’s death in 1735, Mason inherited thousands of acres of land in Maryland and Virginia, as well as parts of western Maryland. In 1750, Mason married Ann Eilbeck, and they raised nine children who survived to adulthood. To accommodate his growing family, Mason began construction of Gunston Hall in 1754.

The shell of Gunston Hall was probably complete by the time George Mason’s brother Thomson Mason hired English joiner and carpenter William Buckland. Thomson was in London studying law at the Inner Temple of the Inns of Court, a professional association for training and practice for which all barristers were required to be members. Buckland signed an indenture agreement with George Mason on August 4, 1755. Buckland reinterpreted common architectural motifs to design the intricate carvings for which Gunston Hall is famous. Buckland left Gunston Hall in November 1759 upon the completion of his indenture with George Mason.

Mason was widowed in 1773 and he withdrew from public life to attend to family affairs, real estate holdings, local politics, and his health. Though he was one of the largest slaveholders in Virginia, he remained an active voice opposing slavery and promoting the Bill of Rights. Mason died on his estate at Gunston Hall in 1792.
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