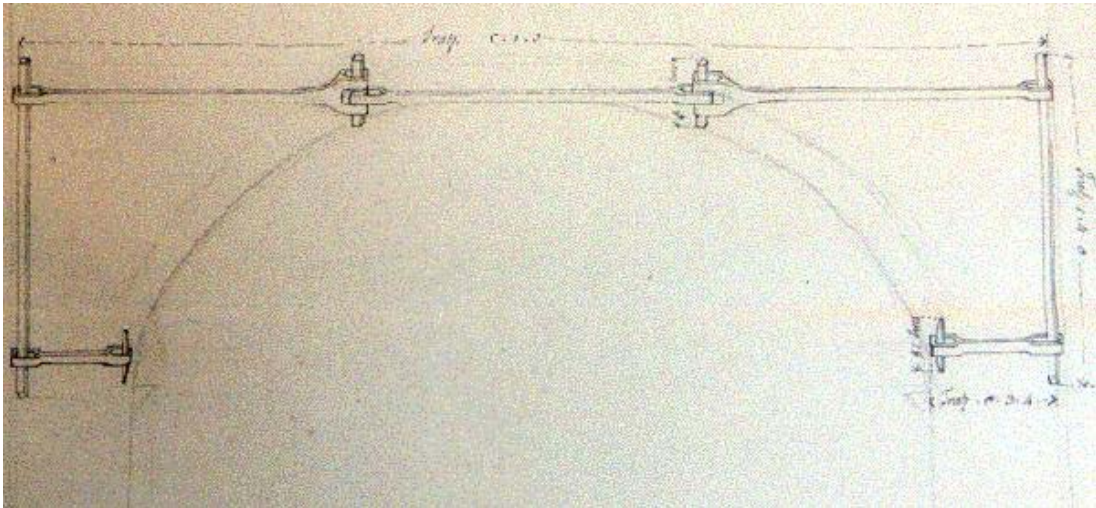


Alfieri's stables in venaria reale palace: problems of conservation and restoration

by Stefano Faletti

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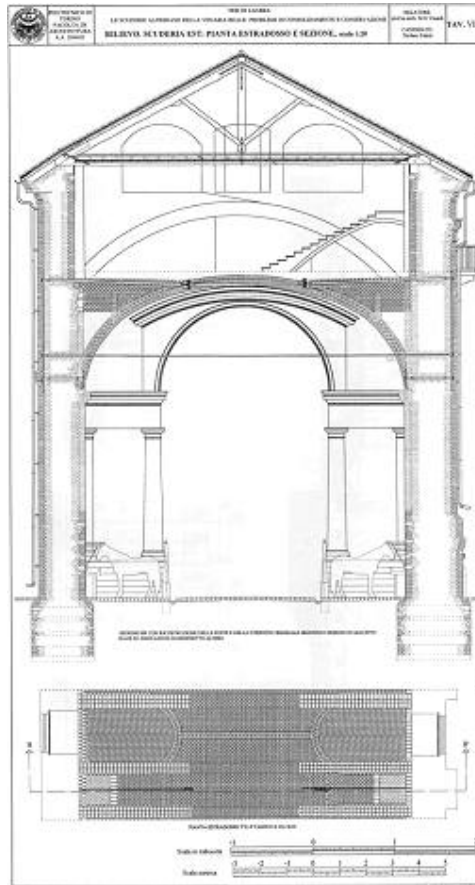
The choice of the theme for this thesis, “Alfieri’s stables in Venaria Reale Palace” was due both to the historical and architectural importance of the complex, which was built over three centuries by the most important Piedmontese architects, and to the possibility I had to follow the foundation of the Maintenance and Restoration Centre, which is housed in the Palace.

And the fact to follow the restoration has given me the chance to analyse Benedetto Alfieri’s works.

The intervention in Venaria of the architect coming from the city of Asti must be divided, as Amedeo Bellini pointed out in his studies, in three major building phases:

- the modernization and finishing works of the pre-existing buildings;
- the building of the connection between the eastern pavilion and the Saint Hubert’s Church;
- the definition of the zone with the equestrian complexes.

The attention in my thesis is focused on the so called “New Sleeve”, undoubtedly the fabric which has come to us with minor transformations, although, because of the carelessness, it is very ruined today.



The phase of the architectural survey is completed by the study of archive sources, in particular by the reading of the “*Particulars of the fabric contracts*” and the “*Parties for the fabrics*” which are collected in the Turin State Archive.

The “Instructions” of the “yard chief” Giacinto Baijs on behalf of the designer, Duke Benedetto Alfieri, have emerged from these documents: they report indications for the building of limes, marmorini and brick types, and a lot of annotations which have made it possible to better understand how a yard was managed in the 18th century.

Visiting the monument has been fundamental to me for the analysis of the various construction phases and of all those plant variations chosen during the construction itself or made in the following years by the Military Administration.

The thesis is founded on the study of the historical evolution of the yard of Venaria Reale Palace, aiming to single out what was actually built.

Through archive sources and drawing collections from the 1st Section of Turin History Archive it was possible to detect the works and thus to compare them with the present state.

The part regarding the architectural survey, summarized by these studies, has turned out to be crucial to verify the actual carelessness of the buildings and to get a confirmation of the data found through archive research.

In the thesis I have chosen to focus the attention on the construction techniques in the Savoy yard at the end of the 18th century: knowing these methods has allowed me to better interpret the ruinousness of the buildings and to single out the maintenance choices which are suitable for Alfieri’s fabric.

The cleaning work of the extrados in the vault of the eastern stable has revealed the structure of the vault with 14 “sling” chains: the first one, located on the southern head, is different from all the others. The data found during the archive research have indeed confirmed that it is a “second hand” chain, belonging to the vault which had been left unfinished after Filippo Juvarra’s death.

Workmanship and style are the same as for the chains used in the construction of the vaults in the “Citroneria” and in the “scuderia granda”: in this “second” usage the diagonals (not foreseen in Alfieri’s project) have been cut and used again as punches. The fact that Juvarra’s project had foreseen, and partly begun, the construction of other two stables, taken up by Duke Alfieri, was confirmed after the extrados cleaning in the western stable, when the piers of the high barrel vault, begun by Juvarra, like the one in the “scuderia granda”, came to light.

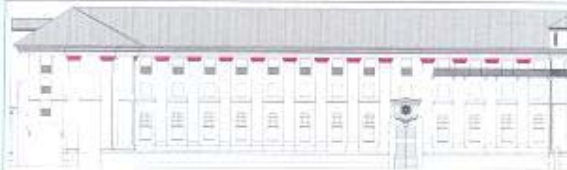
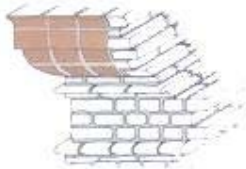

Hence Alfieri planned to lower the vault impost of the two stables, in comparison to the project of his predecessor.

The demolition of the flooring on the first floor, built by the Military administration, and two following surveys have made it possible to single out the system of canalization for collecting and expelling the horse liquids into the near brook.

The research in the Turin State Archive has made it possible to interpret Giacinto Baijs’s drawings of the “sternito” (flooring) in the eastern stable and of the wood stalls for the horses.

Here is a further piece of information I got during the research and regarding the remaking of the big room upon the eastern stable: it was in origin a fodder storing-room and its flooring was simply made of lying axes. This environment had turned into a nest for entire mouse colonies, which were eliminated when the axes were moved and little vaults were built among the fraena. It is on them that the present flooring of Iuserna stones was built.

In conclusion, elaborating this thesis has given me the possibility to analyse materials and construction techniques of a late 18th century yard in their historical and social collocation. The archive research has been fundamental and rich in information about the management of the 18th century yard.

Scuderia Est	Facciata Ovest
	
REFERIMENTI STORICI (DATAZIONE)	La scuderia est venne edificata a partire dal 1786 ad imitativo disegno di quella ovest, in modo da determinare una seconda creata verso il borgo.
PARAMENTO MURARIO	Mattone da mattona (LAT-M1, 13x26x6 cm), matrone da cornice a sovr (LAT-C3, 13x26x6 cm), tuvella in cotto con finitura a tore (LAT-T4, 20x20x3 cm), tuvella in cotto (LAT-T3, 19,5x3), Mattone da cornice a mezzo tore (LAT-C2, 13x26x6L, matrone da cornice con guscio (LAT-C1, 13,5x26x6 cm).
GIUNTO	I giunti si presentano regolari e con lavorazione a rasatura con uno spessore compreso fra 1,5-2cm.
MESSA IN OPERA	Tutti i vari elementi di laterizio sono posati di testa.
STATO DI CONSERVAZIONE	I capitelli presentati nella parte curva i resti di uno strale petziario che in parte ossidatosi ha assunto una colorazione nerstra. Vi sono lacune spondache facate e porose di sedimentazione biologica. Tutti i capitelli si presentano coperti da una leggera patina di sporcizia.
RILIEVO METRICO (SCALA 1:20)	
RILIEVO FOTOGRAFICO	

In the same time, studying various critical texts has directed my research towards the restoration solutions. The critical confrontation between the restoration theories and techniques, and the actual restoration has been very useful and educative in strengthening convictions and facing the yard experience.

While making this thesis I also had a direct experience, through surveys in situ, that pointed out the problems of a restoration yard, with all its phases, doubts and choices. Compatibility and innovation are main issues and in this specific case they have already been solved. We are grateful to all those people who have made it possible to me to be present in the yard, in particular I would like to thank architect Giorgio Fea, who has let this practical experience come true.

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