



# Lee-Fendall House

## MUSEUM AND GARDEN

### Lee-Fendall House Architecture: At Home Activity

The Lee-Fendall House of Alexandria, Virginia was built in 1785, renovated in 1850, and used as a family residence until 1969. The home showcases several different types of popular architectural styles of the late 1700s and mid-1800s in the United States. The home also demonstrates how home technology has changed throughout the centuries.

#### A Telescope House



*A telescope*

The Lee-Fendall House was built in a telescopic design in 1785. A telescope-style home is one that has multiple sections that are joined together. These sections decrease in size and thus look similar to a telescope. The Lee-Fendall House has four sections. This architectural style was popular in eastern and southern Maryland during the eighteenth century but is rare to find in Virginia. Phillip Fendall, who built the Lee-Fendall House, grew up in Charles County, Maryland where telescopic homes were popular, and it seems he desired a home in the style that he grew up with. Typically, telescopic homes had sections built at separate times, sometimes over many generations, but the Lee-Fendall House was built all at the same time.

According to a 1796 Fire Assurance map, the largest of the four sections of the Lee-Fendall House was used as the dwelling house. This is where the Fendall family would have had their bedrooms and living rooms. The two middle sections were used for dining and cooking. The last section was marked as the “servant’s hall” and was where some of the enslaved household servants would have lived.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.leefendallhouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Lee-Fendall-Garden-Final-Report-Part-One.pdf>



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### Classical Architecture



The Lee-Fendall House was originally built in the Federal style of architecture which drew on a lot of classical Greek and Roman styles. The archway in the main hall was inspired by classical architecture with its Doric pilasters. Doric is one of the three main types of classical columns along with Ionic and Corinthian that were used by the Ancient Greeks and Romans when constructing temples and public buildings. These columns styles are particularly distinguishable by their capital, found at the top of the column. Doric columns often “have a simple, rounded capital at the top; a heavy, fluted or smooth column shaft; and no base”.<sup>2</sup> Famous examples of Doric columns used in architecture include the Parthenon in Greece and the Crypt in the U.S. Capitol building in the United States.



The Lee-Fendall House was remodeled by Louis Cazenove, a merchant, in the 1850s. During this renovation, popular Greek Revival style elements, like acanthus leaves around the front door, were added as well as the latest in home technology. The remodel added heating, gas lighting, and water to the home as well as a call bell system for summoning enslaved servants. In the backyard, a pleasure garden with walkways was added to replace the original kitchen garden and work yard.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/buildings-grounds/doric-columns>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.leefendallhouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Lee-Fendall-Garden-Final-Report-Part-One.pdf>





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### Spiral Staircase

The spiral staircase in the Lee-Fendall House is an engineering marvel as well as an architectural beauty. The freestanding staircase (meaning it is not supported from the wall) runs from the first floor to the third floor of the home and is believed to have been added during the 1850 renovation of the home by Louis Cazenove. The third floor was expanded to create additional bedrooms for children.

In 1950, John L. Lewis, a famous labor leader and the last resident owner of the home, added an elevator that ran from the first floor to the third floor in the middle of the spiral staircase. The elevator was installed for Lewis' daughter, Kathryn, who had limited mobility due to health issues.



*Left: The c.1850 spiral staircase*

*Below: The c.1950 elevator that ran in the middle of the staircase until it was removed in the 1990s.*





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### Want to learn more?

Check out a video tour of the Lee-Fendall House to explore the architecture of the home in more detail: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_4xzLucAZy0&t](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_4xzLucAZy0&t)

To learn more about some of the features highlighted in this document, go to the following times in the video:

- Telescope House - 4:01 and 13:42
- Call Bell System - 13:06 and 15:55
- Spiral Staircase - 25:53 and 28:19

### Follow-on Questions

1. In what style(s) of architecture was the Lee-Fendall House built in 1785?
2. In what style(s) of architecture was the Lee-Fendall House remodeled in 1850?
3. What style of architecture is the house that you live in?
4. Where else have you seen classical architecture included? (Hint: Think of buildings in Washington, D.C.)
5. What features of your own home do you like (e.g. architectural, functional, etc.)?

