

The Troubled Life  
of Richard Castle,  
Ireland's Pre-Eminent  
Early Eighteenth-  
Century Architect



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By

Barbara Freitag

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## INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that he was a foreigner and in his own words “destitute of any other recommendation”, within a short space of time after his arrival in the country *Richard Castle* (aka David Ricardo) became the most celebrated architect in early eighteenth-century Ireland. His output was varied and large. His name is associated with the earliest inland canal construction in the British Isles, with the first music hall and the first lying-in hospital in the country. The *Irish Architectural Archive* lists seventy-three work entries for him, amongst which are such prestigious buildings as Leinster House in Dublin (now the seat of the Irish Parliament), Russborough House (Co. Wicklow), Powerscourt House (Co. Wicklow), the Rotunda Hospital (Dublin), to name but a few. And yet until now he has not been treated in a monograph, nor have there been critical studies of any length in regard to his architectural achievements. His personal background has remained in the dark. Very little is known for certain about him before his arrival in the country—about his date and place of birth, his education, training, previous work experience, where he came from and what brought him to Ireland. And because he seems to have kept himself to himself, not very much has come to light about him after he settled in Ireland either. Not surprisingly, then, the lack of secure information has given rise to all kinds of conjecture and mistaken assumptions down the years.

This study explores his personal and professional background. Without pretensions to being a complete biography or monograph, it has been an attempt to throw light on *Castle's* life by probing more deeply into his socio-historical background and ancestry. To collect and combine verifiable information was one of its goals; to reflect on this information against the backdrop of the prevailing social and economic conditions another. The general aim, therefore, was to search for and amalgamate all the relevant materials that had a bearing on *Castle's* life and to contextualize these findings. Extensive research of archival material mainly preserved in Amsterdam, Dresden, Dublin, London, Marburg and Belfast forms the basis of this investigation. *Castle's* Dutch and Sephardic ancestors, his father's position at the Polish court, the military career of his siblings in the Polish and Saxon armies, his wife's Huguenot family, and his kinship with English economist David Ricardo are investigated. The results of this research break new ground in our understanding of *Castle* in a variety of ways. First of all,



this study rectifies numerous assertions frequently made about him, his family and his wife. This is an important advancement in itself, not only because the personal data of a man of his stature deserves to be preserved as accurately as possible, but also because it puts an end to fruitless speculation and unproductive lines of enquiry regarding his life. Furthermore, it provides a definitive answer to questions repeatedly raised, such as whether he was Jewish or a Huguenot, why he deemed it necessary to adopt a false name and what his pseudonym is based on.

Whereas the investigation into *Castle's* personal background is based on archival research, the enquiry into his architectural achievements is grounded mainly in secondary literature. *Castle* is situated within the wider framework of Irish architecture, highlighting his importance in the history of the early eighteenth century. A brief introduction to the socio-political landscape and the architecture of his time provides the context for *Castle's* achievements. His arrival, together with that of the other outstanding architect, Lovett Pearce, coincided with a most significant period of Irish architecture. These two collaborative architects, the study argues, were the initial moving force behind that great period of Irish architecture in the classical fashion of neo-Palladian design. Between them they designed some of Ireland's most celebrated domestic and public buildings. But owing to a lack of documentary evidence it has often been difficult to link definitely either name with a number of edifices, a fact which is further exacerbated by the stylistic similarities of the two men. Concentrating on *Castle's* works, two objects are contemplated in some detail: his engineering projects and Neale's Music Hall on Fishamble Street, partly because neither of them have been given much consideration up to now, but more importantly because a new angle on both is provided here. As regards his other architectural achievements, the study confines itself to an enquiry into the recognition which his buildings have received over time. His importance relative to Pearce is examined in light of this recognition. The enquiry reveals that in contemporaneous literature *Castle* was greatly admired and his work celebrated, at times enthusiastically. He was not only better known, but also viewed more favourably than Pearce, whose name remained unfamiliar to the general public. But over the course of the last century, a noticeable shift in opinion has occurred. Having been recognized as an extraordinary architect of European stature, Pearce has emerged from scrutiny as a brilliant designer. Architectural historians, in particular, now tend to see him as the greater of the two architects, arguing, however, that in order to do their enormous contribution to Irish architecture justice, a careful investigation of both *Castle's* and Pearce's work is needed. To this end, their individual contributions to buildings need to be disentangled and

a systematic examination of all their attributable work carried out before an evaluation of their achievements can be made.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Belfast:	PRONI - <i>Public Record Office Northern Ireland</i>
Dublin:	IAA - <i>Irish Architectural Archive</i>
Dublin:	NAI - <i>National Archives of Ireland</i>
Dublin:	NLI - <i>National Library of Ireland</i>
Dublin:	RD - <i>Registry of Deeds</i>
Dublin:	RIA - <i>Royal Irish Academy</i>
Dublin:	TCD - <i>Trinity College Dublin</i>
Marburg:	HStAM - <i>Hessisches Staatsarchiv</i>



# CHAPTER 1

## RICHARD CASTLE'S ARRIVAL IN IRELAND

When *Castle* arrived in Ireland in the late 1720s, the whole country was under British rule. Following the Williamite victory in 1691, Ireland had been integrated into Britain's political and economic spheres and the Irish parliament possessed only limited scope for initiating bills. A wave of land-confiscation followed and the founding of new plantations resulted in over eighty-five per cent of Irish land being owned by Protestants.<sup>1</sup> Increasingly, leading landowners, following the traditions of Britain, were eager to buttress their status by building impressive houses as befitting their estates and fortunes. The impulse to imitate English styles was strong of course, so when the wealthier Anglo-Irish began to build their houses, they generally adopted the lines of those with which they were familiar—those of England. Unsurprisingly, then, they tended to seek out British rather than Irish architects and consequently the influences on Irish country house architecture almost exclusively came from Britain to Ireland. Although the centre of their cultural world was London, the Anglo-Irish did not slavishly copy English models: building in Ireland only broadly followed the architectural fashions of England. Typically, their country houses were smaller and less grandiose in design than those in England and some adaptations were made to suit the Irish climate, taste and pocket. As the beauty of the location and the good prospect from the house became very important aspects, great emphasis was placed on the features surrounding the house. Truly wild landscape, of which Ireland has plenty, would have been considered somewhat coarse.<sup>2</sup> Country houses were the centrepiece of a planned setting, usually based within an estate that consisted of stables, outbuildings, follies and formal gardens. Flowers, vegetables and fruit trees were grown in a walled garden somewhere out of sight. Parks and gardens tended to be of axial design which embodied architectural ideas of form: straight avenues and uniform ornamental planting. Thus, natural landscapes

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<sup>1</sup> Wall. M. 1967. The age of the Penal Laws (1691-178), in T.W. Moody & F.X. Martin (eds) *The course of Irish History*. Cork: 217.

<sup>2</sup> Guinness, D. and W. Ryan. 1971. *Irish houses and castles*. London: 18.

were tailored to the requirements of the created settings. Many landowners are known to have expended vast sums on landscaping their demesnes.<sup>3</sup> It was not until the nineteenth century that the more relaxed, informal English parks and gardens came to be appreciated.

Previously, before *Castle's* arrival there had been hardly any purely domestic architecture in Ireland. Throughout the seventeenth century, many Irish landowners were still living in so-called tower houses, which had been erected from the fifteenth century onwards, but the last known specimen of which was built as late as 1682.<sup>4</sup> Originally used as defended residences by the Anglo-Normans and their descendants, and later by many Gaelic families, these tower houses had small windows, very sparse furniture and offered little comfort. Some of the larger ones were of the expanded tower-house-with-flankers type.<sup>5</sup> With the decline in the building of tower houses more comfortable buildings were being erected, showing fewer signs of their defensibility. Towards the end of the seventeenth century a new type of quadratic, compact double-pile country house emerged, essentially consisting of two storeys, featuring tall, hipped roofs and overhanging eaves. This type of tall-roofed country house continued to be built well into the first decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup> While they began, before the end of the first quarter, to develop a liking for classical art and gradually welcoming classically inspired motifs, eighteenth-century estate owners largely remained conservative in their outlook and preferred to have their houses built in an architectural style they were familiar with,<sup>7</sup> and thus country house architecture was, by and large, reserved and repetitive. The classical villa style based on the three principal orders—Doric, Ionic and Corinthian—remained the ideal favoured by most of them. Quoting William King, who, in 1716, considered the practice of architecture in Ireland discouraging and saw “little hope of a valuable Architect either finding employment or Subsistence”, McParland points out that the country had of course no counterpart to Jones, Wren, Vanbrugh or Hawksmoor. Consequently, it remained dull in architectural terms.<sup>8</sup> As regards public architecture, up

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<sup>3</sup> Loeber, R. and L. Hurley. 2012. The architecture of Irish country houses, 1691-1739, in R. Gillespie and R.F. Foster (eds) *Irish provincial cultures in the long eighteenth century*. Dublin: 219.

<sup>4</sup> Loeber, R. 1979. Early Classicism in Ireland: Architecture before the Georgian era. *Architectural History* 22: 50.

<sup>5</sup> Craig, M. 1976. *Classic Irish houses of the middle size*. London: 5.

<sup>6</sup> Loeber and Hurley, *The architecture*: 202, 208.

<sup>7</sup> Craig, *Classic Irish houses*: 59.

<sup>8</sup> McParland, E. 2001. *Public architecture in Ireland 1680-1760*. New Haven: 177, 183.

to the end of the seventeenth century public buildings had been the responsibility of the Surveyor General, who was answerable to the King's government. One of the surveyors during that time was William Robinson (1644-1712), who was involved in the construction of forts, fortifications, bridges, numerous minor domestic, ecclesiastical, and military projects across the country, as well as in the design of Marsh's Library and the Royal Hospital in Dublin.<sup>9</sup> Another was architect and experienced military engineer Thomas Burgh (1670-1730), a Co. Kildare landowner and the only resident architect of note in the country. He was responsible for the design of a number of important buildings in Dublin, including the Custom House, Trinity College library and the Royal (later Collins) Barracks. He also worked out detailed proposals on possible improvements to Dublin harbour.<sup>10</sup> Though the chief monumental structures were designed in a cosmopolitan dialect new to Ireland, these two architects were, in the opinion of McParland, very cautious innovators whose buildings had hardly any architectural aspirations; their work, though good, was not of a quality comparable with the best of their leading contemporaries abroad.<sup>11</sup>

But turning to the mid-eighteenth century, we realize that a remarkable shift had occurred within a short space of time; both domestic and public architecture now showed a high level of sophistication. Classical neo-Palladian architecture had been adopted as the standard and the country could now boast attractive houses, parks and gardens, and also an infrastructure of roads, canals, drainage systems and harbours. In particular, Georgian Dublin had emerged: imposing buildings for government, commerce, entertainment and education had been designed and impressive new streets laid out.<sup>12</sup> The turnaround was the result of numerous initiatives taken by some enlightened members of the ruling élite, who were not only involved in cultural activities and had a keen interest in promoting classical architecture, but who had also successfully introduced reforms to improve construction and infrastructure in the country. The higher clergy had contributed to this new era, too, by having new churches and palaces built, which enhanced their towns and also reflected the infiltration of classicism into areas far away from Dublin.<sup>13</sup> Another contributory factor was the

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<sup>9</sup> Gibney, J. 2009. Robinson, Sir William. Dublin: RIA *Dictionary of Irish Biography*.

<sup>10</sup> Geoghegan, P.M. 2009. Burgh, Thomas. Dublin: RIA *Dictionary of Irish Biography*.

<sup>11</sup> McParland, E. 2009. Pearce, Sir Edward Lovett. Dublin: RIA *Dictionary of Irish Biography*; and *Public Architecture*: 185.

<sup>12</sup> McParland, *Public architecture*: 5.

<sup>13</sup> McParland, *Public Architecture*: 11-12.

availability of books on architecture and foreign travel, in particular the “grand tour”.

It is Edward McParland’s firmly held belief that, thanks to working at the periphery, eighteenth-century architects in Ireland had greater freedom to design buildings than their counterparts in England, where the principles of neo-Palladian architecture had been laid down and from where the vast majority of architects came. Initially promoted by Inigo Jones, neo-Palladianism was later led by the third Earl of Burlington, who became the leading light, as both a practising architect and patron, and who aimed to establish the style as the British “national” taste.<sup>14</sup> So physical distance from the centre permitted more imaginative approaches to design in Ireland, where architects and their patrons did not constantly have to look over their shoulder for fear of the criticisms of Lord Burlington and his London circle and of “being run out of town for using unfashionable sources”.<sup>15</sup> In England, deviating from the new style had unpleasant consequences, as is borne out in a letter that John Molesworth wrote to the Italian architect Alessandro Galilei, designer of the first Palladian villa in Ireland, where he observes,

here [in England] the reigning taste is Palladio’s style of building and a man is an heretic that should talk of Michel Angelo or any other modern architect. You must diligently copy all the noted fabricks of Palladio for those drafts would introduce you here, and without them you may despair of success.<sup>16</sup>

The architectural boom in Ireland coincided with the arrival of two outstanding architects: Edward Lovett Pearce (c. 1699-1733) and *Richard Castle*. They were the initial moving force behind that great period of house construction and public building between c. 1725 and 1750. Pearce had set the trend in designing country houses, but, Loeber argues, *Castle* became “co-responsible for the initial heyday of country house construction in Ireland”.<sup>17</sup> Even more emphatic about the part *Castle* played in this development is David Griffin, who maintains that *Castle* designed almost

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<sup>14</sup> Mulvin, L. and R. Loeber. 2015. Architectural styles and discourse, in R. Loeber *et al.* (eds) *Art and Architecture of Ireland 4: Architecture 1600-200*. Dublin: 99.

<sup>15</sup> McParland, E. 1991/1992. Eclecticism: The Provincial’s Advantage. *Irish Arts Review Yearbook*: 212.

<sup>16</sup> Echlin, A. and W. Kelley. 2016. A “Shaftsburian Agenda”? Lord Burlington, Lord Shaftsbury and the intellectual origins of English Palladianism. *Architectural History* 59: 221.

<sup>17</sup> Loeber, R. 2015. Protagonists, in R. Loeber, H. Campbell, L. Hurley, J. Montague, E. Rowley (eds) *Art and architecture of Ireland 4: Architecture 1600-2000*. Dublin: 11.



every major Irish country house built before his death in 1751.<sup>18</sup> In any case, the names of these two architects are connected not only with the introduction of Irish architecture in the classical fashion, but also with the promotion of unprecedented refinement in neo-Palladian design. Between them they designed some of Ireland's most celebrated domestic and public buildings in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Yet despite their extraordinary achievements very little is known about the personal circumstances of these two architects, particularly in regard to their early years—neither their place nor date of birth has yet been established. Nor can their final resting places be identified. More importantly, virtually nothing is known about where or with whom they trained. When they arrived in Ireland, both were an unknown quantity in regard to their architectural achievements, although Pearce had begun to make a name for himself in England. Problems also arise regarding the attribution and identification of their works. Because documentary support is often lacking and with no contemporary drawings available, it has proved difficult to definitely ascribe several of their buildings to one or the other. A further contributory factor to the problem is that many of their buildings have disappeared or been modified beyond recognition over time, so that we cannot rely in every instance on material evidence. Some of the commissioning landowners are also to blame. Their wealth and position allowed them to indulge in architecture as a hobby and consequently it was by no means unusual for them to pose as architects, and wishing to see their own name linked with the design of their mansions they kept secret the name of the professional architect whom they had engaged.

Pearce was the first of these two architects to arrive in Ireland. Like his father (General Edward Pearce) and his uncle (General Thomas Pearce), he started his career in the army. His English family was well-connected with properties in both England and Ireland. Thanks to his kinship and complex connections with leading Anglo-Irish families on both sides of the Irish Sea, his background can be said to be both Irish and English. Cultivating these links on a personal as well as on a professional level, Pearce was able to establish his career as an architect. His most important family relationship, however, was his cousinship with John Vanbrugh (1664-1726)—their fathers were first cousins.<sup>19</sup> Although details of his education are scant, it has emerged that Pearce went on the grand tour of France and Italy in 1723/24, where he made drawings and added plenty of notes to Palladio's *I*

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<sup>18</sup> Griffin, D.J. n.d. Eighteenth century architecture, in T. Kennedy (ed.) *Dublin Handbook*. Dublin: 7.

<sup>19</sup> Craig, M. 1996. The Quest for Sir Edward Lovett Pearce. *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* 12: 29.

*quattro libri dell'architettura*. Entirely captivated by the villas of Andrea Palladio, he spent the rest of his life promoting Palladian architecture,<sup>20</sup> without, however, adhering strictly to the fashionable artistic tropes of Burlington's neo-Palladianism in contemporary England.<sup>21</sup> According to McParland, the copious notes Pearce made during his grand tour, show him to be an "uncommonly sensitive, learned and discriminating" architectural critic and scholar and would suggest that when he went on his tour he did so as someone already informed architecturally. The question is where he had acquired this ability to make critical judgments. Was he perhaps trained by and gained his discerning knowledge from his cousin Vanbrugh?<sup>22</sup> Although this seems a reasonable supposition, so far, no records have been found to confirm it. There are some indications, though. Two days after Vanbrugh's death, Pearce had been granted military leave to go to London, where he closed Vanbrugh's office, probably took possession of his cousin's drawings,<sup>23</sup> and also continued his work at Ashley Park in Surrey, for which he kept "Arthur".<sup>24</sup> Arthur, as Maurice Craig discovered, was clerk or assistant to both Vanbrugh and later Pearce.<sup>25</sup> Presumably, it was in Vanbrugh's office that Pearce not only came across Arthur, but also met *Castle*, who, as has been variously suggested, was employed by Vanbrugh as his draughtsman.<sup>26</sup> Intriguingly, as early as 1769 the author of an article in the *Freeman's Journal* observed a close resemblance between *Castle's* and Vanbrugh's work, commenting, that "in several of his Works his skill strongly resembles Sr. John Vanbrugh's".<sup>27</sup> Thus it would appear that when Pearce wound up Vanbrugh's office, he "inherited" *Castle* as part of the

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<sup>20</sup> Sheridan, P. 2014. Sir Edward Lovett Pearce 1699-1733: the Palladian architect and his buildings. *Dublin Historical Record* 67, 2: 19.

<sup>21</sup> McParland, Eclecticism: 212-13.

<sup>22</sup> McParland, *Public architecture*: 179-81.

<sup>23</sup> Vanbrugh's drawings, together with some of Pearce's, later found their way to Elton Hall and are now contained in an album at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London: E.2123. See McParland, *Public Architecture*: 177, 185. However, how exactly Pearce came into possession of Vanbrugh's drawings is unclear. The album which now also includes drawings by various other hands, including *Richard Castle*, was assembled in the twentieth century.

<sup>24</sup> McParland, *Public architecture*: 185.

<sup>25</sup> Craig, *The quest*: 28.

<sup>26</sup> Casey, C. 2018. Art and architecture in the long eighteenth century, in J. Kelly (ed.) *The Cambridge history of Ireland, 1730-1880*, 3 section 16. Cambridge: 421; Hayes, M. 2015. *Anglo-Irish architectural exchange in the early eighteenth century: patrons, practitioners and pieds-à-terre*. Dublin: TCD PhD thesis: 75-77.

<sup>27</sup> *Freeman's Journal* 6, 38. 7-10 January 1769: 150.

operation.<sup>28</sup> Not the greatest at drawing himself, Pearce would naturally have been impressed by his skills and very likely have persuaded *Castle* to team up with him. The two men must have struck up a very good working relationship immediately because their first collaboration appears to be a proposed (unexecuted) plan for a royal palace or lodge for Queen Caroline at Richmond in Surrey. A set of designs by Pearce, but thought to be in *Castle's* hand and believed to have been made about 1727/8, are preserved in the Elton Hall album.<sup>29</sup> The assumption that Pearce's designs for the lodge were in fact drawn by *Castle* is supported by the explanatory notes headed "Explanation" which are carried alongside the text.<sup>30</sup>

Pearce's architectural involvement in Ireland began in 1725. This was when Castletown, the first classical Irish country house, a Palladian villa, was built for William Conolly, the speaker of the Irish House of Commons. The original design for the house was prepared by the aforementioned Italian architect Alessandro Galilei, who came to Ireland in 1718 for two months in order to plan the construction of a residence [un palazzo di villa] near Dublin, "which was to be the first large 'palace' to be built in Ireland since 1688".<sup>31</sup> The building was not begun until 1722, long after Galilei had returned to Florence, but in around 1724, Pearce, who was communicating with Galilei by letter, was put in charge of Castletown and spent the rest of his life overseeing its construction.<sup>32</sup> It remains unclear what exactly his role was in the design and building of it, but it is customary to attribute to him the curved colonnades and wings.<sup>33</sup>

*Castle's* background was quite dissimilar from that of Pearce. Unlike him, *Castle* had no kinsmen, family connections, or any estates in Ireland, when he arrived here in the late 1720s. Consequently, he opens his first (known) application for a commission with the words:

As I lye under the Disadvantage of being a Stranger in this Kingdom, and destitute of any other recommendation ... than what hath arisen from the

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<sup>28</sup> McParland, *Public architecture*: 199.

<sup>29</sup> Hayes, M. 2021. An Irish Palladian in England: the case of Sir Edward Lovett Pearce. *The Georgian group journal* 29: 17; Bryant, J. 2015. Queen Caroline's Richmond Lodge by William Kent: an architectural model unlocked. *The Burlington Magazine* 157, 1346: 329-30.

<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 4: 113.

<sup>31</sup> Kieven, E. 2008. An Italian architect in London: the case of Alessandro Galilei (1691-1737). *Architectural History* 51: 18.

<sup>32</sup> Sheridan, Sir Edward Lovett Pearce: 19.

<sup>33</sup> McParland, Pearce.

indulgence of those Gentlemen for whom I have conducted some considerable works since my coming...<sup>34</sup>

There is no record of *Castle* having been involved in the design or construction of any kind before he came to Ireland, nor indeed is there any evidence of his involvement with any works outside the country. And yet from his later accomplishments some infer that he must have been an experienced architect when he arrived in the country.<sup>35</sup> Considering all the factors that led to *Castle's* meteoric rise to the top of his profession, it becomes obvious that he owed much of his success to Pearce. Because of his wide-reaching influential connections Pearce had become a member of the Irish Parliament, and despite being an unknown quantity in architectural terms he was appointed as architect for the new Parliament House, which, in McParland's opinion, was "one of the finest buildings of the time in Europe".<sup>36</sup> Surveyor General Thomas Burgh, who for almost thirty years had enjoyed a monopoly of important commissions would have expected to be given this role instead of Pearce. The decision to appoint Pearce was taken on foot of his memorandum concerning the designs for the Parliament House, dated 7 March 1727-28, to the members of the Irish parliament. At the end of the memorandum, Pearce recommends his draughtsman *Richard Castle*, who had provided the drawings for the design:

I know no Body in this Town whom I could employ capable of drawing fair designs of this Nature but one Person and he indeed has done them infinite Justice, his name is Castle, he is at present employd in building a House for S.r Gustavus Hume near Enniskillen, but I hope will find more and constant Encouragement. I thought I could not do a better service than mentioning this to Gentlemen who may have occasion for such a person.<sup>37</sup>

Desmond Fitzgerald, the Knight of Glin, comments: "This recommendation by Pearce ... certainly had its effect for over the next thirty years 17 MPs, 8 Peers, 2 Peeresses, 5 Bishops and 2 Archbishops made use of his or his clerk and pupil John Ensor's services."<sup>38</sup> Other events also moved in

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<sup>34</sup> Fig. 4-1. The handwritten pages in the *Essay* are not numbered whereas the drawings are.

<sup>35</sup> McParland, *Public architecture*: 191; McCutcheon, W.A. 1965. *The canals of the North of Ireland*. London: 155.

<sup>36</sup> McParland, *Public architecture*: 177.

<sup>37</sup> Dublin: NLI, MS D 20,209.

<sup>38</sup> Fitzgerald, D. Knight of Glin. 1964. Richard Castle, architect, his biography and works, a synopsis. *Quarterly Bulletin of the Georgian Society* 7, 1: 33. A word of

*Castle's* favour. McParland points out that not only the recommendation to this milieu, but also Pearce's death in 1733, was of immense significance for *Castle's* career.<sup>39</sup>

Rather than Pearce, some credit Ulster-Scotsman Sir Gustavus Hume with bringing *Castle* to Ireland because *Castle* received his first (Irish) commission from him. Hume commissioned *Castle* to design his mansion at Castle Hume, Co. Fermanagh,<sup>40</sup> in about 1727/8.<sup>41</sup> But Alistair Rowan may well be right in thinking that from the start Hume also intended *Castle* to get involved with the Newry Canal.<sup>42</sup> Being much concerned with the improvement of inland transportation, Hume, together with his friends Henry Brooke and Owen Wynne, had been appointed commissioner to the newly established Board of Inland Navigation for Ireland in 1729. The remit of the Board was

to make several Rivers ... navigable and passable for Boats and other Vessels of Burthen ... and thereby Creating and Maintaining an Inland Communication and Commerce in ... several Counties in this Kingdom.<sup>43</sup>

Hume, who came from one of the most influential landowning families in Co. Fermanagh lived largely in London, but he also spent time in Ireland, where he became a member of Parliament. Anxious to develop the economic potential of local businesses in Ulster, he encouraged the draining of bogs and the improvement of transport systems. One of his main concerns was the promotion of the burgeoning linen industry,<sup>44</sup> which was centred in Lisburn. *Castle* married a lady from Lisburn and, since we now know (as

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caution is probably in order here. Fitzgerald very definitely and liberally attributes buildings to *Castle*, which others are reluctant to do.

<sup>39</sup> McParland, *Public architecture*: 14.

<sup>40</sup> Curran on the other hand believes that Hume met *Castle* in Germany in 1727 from where he brought him over directly to Dublin. Curran, C.P. 1945. *The Rotunda Hospital, its architects and craftsmen*. Dublin: 5.

<sup>41</sup> Gilbert maintains that *Castle* lived in Suffolk Street in Dublin as early as 1720; Gilbert, J.T. 1859. *A History of the City of Dublin* 3: 314.

<sup>42</sup> Rowan, A. 1979. *The buildings of Ireland. North West Ulster: the counties of Londonderry, Donegal, Fermanagh and Tyrone*. Harmondsworth: 44.

<sup>43</sup> *The Journals of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland* 6. 1796. Dublin. Pearce was also appointed commissioner to the House of Commons, though his task concerned the repairing of the road leading from Dublin to Kilcullen Bridge in Co. Kildare.

<sup>44</sup> Hayes, M. 2017. Sir Gustavus Hume (1677-1713): Courtly connections and architectural connoisseurship in the early eighteenth century. *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies* 19: 41.

will be shown below) that she and her family, who were involved in the linen industry, lived in Lisburn, it is reasonable to assume that *Castle* met his wife through Hume, at whose castle he was staying when he first came to Ireland. Hume and Pearce would certainly have known each other. In London they would have met at the Royal court and in Dublin they would have worked together as members of Parliament in the Irish House of Commons, in which Hume represented Co. Fermanagh from 1713 to 1731 and in which Pearce took the seat for Ratoath in Co. Meath in 1727. In addition, there existed mutual links through Pearce's patrons, the Creightons of Crum, Co. Fermanagh, who were intermarried with the Humes.<sup>45</sup>

Whether it was ultimately Pearce or Hume, or perhaps a combined effort by these two gentlemen to persuade *Castle* to come to Ireland, cannot be established with certainty. Both had their reasons for wanting him. However, we can confidently maintain that as a result of his acquaintance with them, *Castle* was able to launch his successful career as an architect in the country.

That *Richard Castle* was the pseudonym used by David Ricardo was made public in 1911,<sup>46</sup> but so far, no record of his birth has come to light to prove this, nor has anyone been able to establish with absolute certainty where he originated from. The general consensus is that he was born in or around 1690, and while some think that he was of French, Italian or Anglo-German extraction, others believe that he came from the Netherlands. The majority of writers, however, confidently place his origin in Germany. As early as 1793, the *Anthologia Hibernica* stated that he was born in the German town of Kassel (Hesse) without expanding further upon this apparent assertion of fact.<sup>47</sup> In his capacity as an officer in a regiment of engineers, he is then thought to have widely travelled in Europe studying fortifications and canals in England, France and the Low Countries.<sup>48</sup> By

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<sup>45</sup> Hayes, *Anglo-Irish architectural*: 151.

<sup>46</sup> Sadleir, T.U. 1911. Richard Castle, Architect. *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 1,3 (sixth ser.): 241.

<sup>47</sup> Anon. 1793. History of the Fine Arts in Ireland—Richard Castles. *Anthologia Hibernica: Or Monthly Collection of Science, Belles-lettres, and History* 2 (July-Dec.): 242-3.

<sup>48</sup> Craig asserted, "like nearly all the Irish architects of the time, he was an officer of Engineers", Craig, M. 1980. *Dublin 1660-1860*. Dublin: 129. Many others, like Anne Crookshank, simply stated that he was trained as a "military engineer" without providing any evidence underpinning the statement. See Crookshank, A. 1986. The visual arts 1603-1740, in Moody, T.W. and W.E. Vaughan (eds) *A new History of Ireland IV. Eighteenth-century Ireland 1691-1800*. Oxford: 534.

1725 he is said to have studied waterworks and architecture in England. These are the general suppositions in regard to *Castle's* life prior to his arrival in Ireland. Though credible, they are nevertheless based predominantly on informed guesswork and not on secure data. After a careful examination of all the statements made in regard to his early years, the findings presented in this study endorse some and amplify information contained in them. Numerous suppositions were found not to be in accordance with fact and were rectified, wherever possible, while others were rejected as clearly untenable.

## CHAPTER 2

### SYNOPSIS OF HIS LIFE

*Castle's* parents married in Amsterdam in December of 1691, when his mother was aged seventeen. From this we may safely deduce that *Castle* was not born before 1692. We can also discount the notion that he was born in Italy or France, and Germany can also almost certainly be ruled out as his country of birth. It is virtually certain that *Castle* started life in Amsterdam at some time in the late seventeenth century, as will be elaborated on below. The anonymous writer of the *Anthologia Hibernica* article, who asserted that *Castle* was born in Kassel, failed to reveal the basis for this assumption. Much speculation has been expended on it, and those taking the statement at face value have reasoned that *Castle* named himself after his home town. As a corollary of this idea, it is frequently argued that initially he called himself Cassel or Cassels but later anglicized his name to *Castle*.

When we first learn about him, it is under the pseudonym of *Richard Castle*. It is generally accepted that he used the pseudonym from at least 1725, when it appeared as the name of a subscriber to Colen Campbell's third volume of *Vitruvius Britannicus*, with the word "gent" added.<sup>49</sup> This appears to be the only instance where his name occurs in London; we search in vain for it elsewhere in that city. *Castle* does not seem to have participated in any of the cultural clubs or art institutions which were then popular gathering places for young aspiring artists, architects, architectural draughtsmen and designers who, combining cultural, political and professional purposes, were keen on meeting influential patrons. There is no trace of his name among the members of such fashionable institutions as St Luke's, the Rose and Crown Club, the Academy in Great Queen Street or in the First and Second St Martin's Lane Academy.<sup>50</sup> For the first substantiated evidence of his assumed name we need to wait until his arrival in Ireland.

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<sup>49</sup> Below his name we also find a Mr. Richard Castell without the addition of "gent".

<sup>50</sup> See Bignamini, I. 1988. George Vertue, art historian and art institutions in London, 1689-1768: A study of clubs and academies. *The Volume of the Walpole Society* 54: 1-148.



Know all men by these Presents that I  
 Richard Castle of Dublin in the County of Dublin and Kingdom of  
 Ireland, K. W. M. Notarialis, Qualitatus, Ordained & Authorized & Appointed  
 and Impowered like as by these Presents do hereby, Revoicate, Constitute, give  
 Author, Assign and Impower my Well beloved Brother Capt. Joh. Samuel  
 Castle of Richardi in Saxony my True and Lawfull Attorney and in  
 my Name and to and for my use and behoofe to ask demand Receive  
 Take up and recover in Law or in Court of money and all Manner of  
 Legacies of What Nature or Kind Whatsoever Left and bequeathed to  
 me by my Mother Rachel, Elizabetha Bon Burgo Late of Richards  
 aforesaid, and upon Receipt of them or any of them or part or parts  
 such proper Discharge and discharge Acquittance and Acquittances  
 to give for the same as my said Attorney or any other Attorney or  
 Attorneys by him Impowered shall think fit, And in case any  
 Person or Persons in whose Custody or Detention the said Legacies or  
 part of them are shall refuse or Neglect to pay or deliver the same  
 unto my said Attorney I do hereby further Authorize and Impower  
 my said Attorney or any other Attorney or Attorneys by him Impowered  
 to see Arrest Imprison and Imprison the Person or Persons refusing  
 to pay or Deliver the said Legacies Required to me by my said Attorney  
 and out of Prison to Release them as my said Attorney shall Proper  
 I do also Authorize and Impower my said Attorney for my use in my  
 Name to buy out any sum or sums of money he shall receive and make  
 such Purchase or Purchases as he shall think fitt for his Name and  
 Sell Bargain or Transfer any other Legacies Bequested me by my  
 Mother and to some other Person such Lord or Duke, Bishp or other  
 Writing for the Selling & Transferring them, And my power extending to  
 my said Attorney or any other Attorney or Attorneys him Impowered my  
 sole and absolute Authority to do, execute, perform & accomplish all and  
 every Reasonable Act and all things and things as my said Attorney or  
 Attorneys by him Impowered shall reasonably see or do in it, I do hereby  
 make that the same shall be in as full & absolute Authority as if they self  
 were Personally Present Acted and done the same being & appearing  
 with power or Authority Whatsoever, M. Williams Witness  
 herewith put my Hand to the said Certificate the 10th Day of February, Anno  
 Domini one thousand seven hundred and twenty nine 1729

Richard Castle

John Samuel Castle  
 Accountant of the Payment  
 Joh. Samuel  
 Joh. Martin  
 = AN. Bull No. 2114

Fig. 2-1 Power of Attorney granted by Richard Castle to his brother Joh. Samuel von Richardi (10/02/1729). Courtesy of Stadtarchiv Dresden, 2.4.3 Gerichtsbücher no. 679

In 1729, he used *Richard Castle* as his name in a letter sent from Dublin, in which he authorized his brother to act for him (giving him power of

attorney)<sup>51</sup>, and in 1730 he again signed a legal document thus.<sup>52</sup> There is also the signature under his *Essay* of c. 1733, which reads *Richard Castle* (or *Rich. Castle*). In addition, the printed version of his name under his *Essay* of 1735 is Mr. *Richard Castle*. All the bills submitted to the bursar of Trinity College in the 1730s and 1740s are signed *Richd. Castle*. Other contemporary documents, such as those of the Dublin Corporation and many legal papers, all spelled his name exactly the same. In the register of the French Church of June 1733, he is recorded as *Richard Castel*, while in the register of St Michan's Church of the same year he is referred to as *Richard Castle*. He used *Richardo Castello* in the Latin document that was deposited in the foundation stone of Leinster House. His friend and colleague Edward Lovett Pearce referred to him as *Castle*, and in contemporary newspapers, too, he is named either *Castle* or *Castles*. It is important to point out that he never spelled his name with a double s and that he never omitted the -t anywhere. Thus, nowhere does he himself or any of his close acquaintances use the form Cassel/s, as is frequently maintained.

In documents signed by him in Ireland in which he names his siblings and his mother, he added "*Castle(s)*" to their names. For example, he referred to his brothers as Daniel and Benjamin de Richardi, otherwise called Daniel/Benjamin *Castles* de Richardi of Saxony in Germany. Furthermore, his brother Joh. Samuel added "*à Richardi Castel*" to his own name. However, more importantly, the addition of *Castel/Castles* to his brothers' and his mother's names occurs *solely* in legal correspondence concerning the sale of family property in Saxony, but *not* in any other German documents. In other words, the addition of *Castle* to the Richardi surname of his mother and brothers was only and specifically used to help in legitimizing inheritance matters in which *Castle* was involved. It is also noteworthy that all his forebears as well as relatives in Holland and England ended their family name with an "o", as does his own father Joseph throughout his life, whereas his brothers in Germany ended it with an "i" and embellished the name by adding an aristocratic-sounding "von" to it. The change from "o" to "i" would have had something to do with the fact that "Richardi" blended in better in their adopted homeland region, where several Richardis are recorded in documents going back to the fifteenth century.<sup>53</sup> The "i" ending, plus *Castle's* assumed name, prompted Angus

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<sup>51</sup> From now on abbreviated to *poa*.

<sup>52</sup> All documents mentioned here will be dealt with below in some detail.

<sup>53</sup> An autograph book in Dresden contains the signature of "Daniel von Richardi" (*Castle's* brother) and below his signature we find an "August von Richardy". For other 'von Richardis' see Archivdatenbank, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin ([www.gsta.spk-berlin](http://www.gsta.spk-berlin)), among others there is a Hans Richardi,

Fowler to suggest that *Castle's* real name was Ricardo Castelli, and that he came from a family of that name which originated in Italy. The Castellis were a dynasty of stuccodores from the Tessin area on the border of Italy and Switzerland. Like many other families, they brought their craft skills northwards to seek commissions. One of *Castle's* brothers, Fowler maintains, was a royal theatre painter in Dresden.<sup>54</sup>

It would appear that David Ricardo (aka *Richard Castle*) later modified his name, in line with his brothers' change of name, to Richardi, however preferring "de" to "von". In 1729, in German documents connected with the sale of his parents' house, he is twice referred to as "David de Richardi, königlich wohlbestalter Lieutenant in Engelland" (David de Richardi, Royal Lieutenant in England),<sup>55</sup> although at that stage he was already operating under the name of *Richard Castle* in Ireland. Thus in 1729 he was known under two different names in Saxony and England/Ireland. Interestingly, his pseudonym remained unfamiliar in his German homeland. From a Saxon document written some seventy years after his death, it transpires that nothing was known of him other than that he was the first of the Richardi brothers to die and that he passed away in Ireland.<sup>56</sup>

While nowadays he tends to be mainly referred to as *Richard Castle*, the "Cassel" version has proved to be remarkably tenacious, mainly because many still subscribe to the idea that he was born in the German town of Kassel and that he had adopted and anglicized the name of his home town. As it would serve no purpose to list all such sources, a brief selection in chronological order is given below.<sup>57</sup> A natural corollary of the presumption that *Castle* came from Kassel is that du Ry must have been his teacher. Elaborating on this line of reasoning, some writers go further, claiming that *Castle* and du Ry were related, and one researcher even alleges that *Castle's* father "was a noted architect in Cassel" who had changed his name from du

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Bishop of Posen, a Joh. Richardi "Domherr zu Breslau, kaiserl. Hofnotar" in the fifteenth century and later we find a mayor of Köslin (1809 and 1816) of that name.

<sup>54</sup> Dixon, H. 2003. Well worth a visit. Knockbreda parish church and its architect, in T. Reeves-Smyth and R. Oram (eds) *Avenues to the Past*. Belfast: 314.

<sup>55</sup> Dresden: Stadtarchiv, Bestand Gerichtsbücher, Bestandssign. 2.4.3; Akten-Nr. 679, not paginated.

<sup>56</sup> Dresden: Hauptstaatsarchiv, Landesregierung 10079, Loc. M725/70, fol. 5.

<sup>57</sup> Cassel (Wilson, 1786); Cassels, or Castell (Warburton *et al.*, 1818); Cassels (Redgrave, 1878); Cassels (Mahaffy, 1909); Castle (also known as Cassel, Castel, Cassels or Castles) (Sadleir, 1911); Cassels (or Castle?) (*Ir. Times*, 1940); Cassells (Curran, 1945); Cassels (Craig, 1980); Cassels (anglicised spelling: Castle) (Delany, 1986); Cassel (Georgian Soc. Record II); Cassells (Fitzgerald, 2005); Cassells (V. Costello, 2007); Castle (Cassels), (*Art and Architecture of Ireland*, 2014); Cassel, Cassels or Castle (*Oxf. Dict. of Nat. Biography*, 2018).

Ry.<sup>58</sup> The du Rys, French builders and architects, are well documented and can trace their family back to the early 1600s, and there is not even the slightest indication that the Ricardos, or *Castle* for that matter, were in any way related to them.<sup>59</sup> When the Huguenot du Ry was called to Kassel in 1685 he had already successfully worked for ten years as a military engineer in Maastricht (in the Netherlands), where he gathered much experience in connection with water works. In Kassel, du Ry carried the title “Ingénieur et architecte de Son Altesse Serenissime le Landgrave de Hesse”. His main task was the (technical) supervision of new building projects. In 1689 he is listed as the engineer of the cascading waterfall at Weissenstein (today Wilhelmshöhe). It is of course understandable and indeed tempting to think of *Castle* as his pupil because this would go a long way to explaining his later involvement with the construction of the Newry Canal and his plans for the improvement of Dublin’s water supply system. However, not only is this highly unlikely, but there is also not a single record to substantiate the supposition.<sup>60</sup>

A far more plausible assumption is that, like his brothers (about whom more in the following chapter), *Castle* joined Augustus’ army in Saxony or Poland,<sup>61</sup> where he received his fundamental education and training in an engineering corps. Founded in 1702 and originally a branch of the artillery, the Saxon engineers became a separate unit under Graf von Wackerbarth (1662-1734) in 1712, thus forming the first independent royal engineering corps in Germany.<sup>62</sup> It was a relatively small unit—not a regiment<sup>63</sup>—consisting of altogether twenty-five officers, stationed in Dresden.<sup>64</sup> In 1717

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<sup>58</sup> Costello, V. 2007. Researching Huguenot Settlers in Ireland. *The BYU Family Historian* 6 (Fall): 110.

<sup>59</sup> Gerland, O. 1892. Die Geschichte der Familie Du Ry. *Die französische Colonie, 1892-1896*, 12: 187.

<sup>60</sup> Records of students at the Collegium Cardinium Kassel do not go back that far and in the literature on du Ry there is no mention of a Ricardo.

<sup>61</sup> Augustus II the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland (1670-1733). *Castle*’s brother Benjamin claimed that he was a captain in the army of the Earl of Hesse-Cassel. He may or may not have switched from the Saxon to the Hessian army.

<sup>62</sup> Jentzsch, C. 2022. August Christoph von Wackerbarth als Soldat in sächsischen Diensten, in Fürstliche barocke Sommerresidenzen, Staatliche Schlösser, Burgen und Gärten in Sachsen (ed.): 54.

<sup>63</sup> According to Götz Krüger (Arbeitskreis Sächsische Militärgeschichte) it was a small subdivision of the artillery and not a “regiment” as quoted in the *Dictionary of Irish Architects 1720-1940*, s.v. Castle-Richard: [dia.ie/architects/view/347](http://dia.ie/architects/view/347).

<sup>64</sup> Hansch, Premier-Lieutenant. 1898. *Geschichte des königlich sächsischen Ingenieur- und Pionier-Korps*. Dresden: 61.

its ranks were set at one major general, one colonel, three lieutenant colonels, three majors, six captains, five engineers and five guardsmen.<sup>65</sup> In peacetime the engineering officers were involved in fortifications, construction and surveying of military and civil structures as well as cartography,<sup>66</sup> that is to say, in complex activities that demanded detailed knowledge and training. Thus, from the very start the engineering officers received systematic instruction in all these areas.<sup>67</sup> *Castle's* use of his title as “Royal Lieutenant” supports the notion that he had been appointed as an officer. A further clue that he was involved with the Saxon engineers is a (now lost) defence map (“Festungsatlas”). This Festungsatlas, which is listed in the files of the Dresden Hauptstaatsarchiv consisted of maps, diagrams and drawings that were produced by the Saxon corps of engineers. Three drawings therein, dating from 1715 and 1717, were signed by one “D. Richardi”, also calling himself “de Richardi, D”.<sup>68</sup> These drawings must have been produced and signed by either David Richardi (aka *Richard Castle*) or by his brother Daniel. However, there is little doubt that they can safely be attributed to *Castle* since we know him to have been an excellent draughtsman and there is no evidence of his brother’s competence in this field. Besides, Daniel was a high-ranking officer in the Chevaliergarde and not attached to the Saxon engineering corps. Moreover, Daniel called himself “von” Richardi, whereas *Castle* consistently used “de” Richardi. The date of the drawings is also of significance for the present enquiry. *Castle's* father (presumably with his family) left Amsterdam only around the year 1700, which means that *Castle* could not have been born in Germany: if he had, he would at most have been fourteen or fifteen years of age in 1715 and thus could not possibly have been called upon to produce drawings for a defence map. Interestingly, all three drawings contained in the map are cityscapes. Two of these showed the baroque city centre of Dresden with its royal palace: “Dresden-Altstadt between castle and bastion Venus” and “Dresden-Altstadt seen from the river Elbe between Wiesentor and Augustus’s Bridge”. The third drawing was an illustration of the city of Montreal simply captioned “Plan de Mont Royal”. The loss of these

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*: 69.

<sup>66</sup> Müller, R. 1984. *Die Armee Augusts des Starken*. Berlin: 94, 99.

<sup>67</sup> Dethloff, A. 2021. Das Wissen des kursächsischen Offiziers im 18. Jahrhundert, in O. Kahn and M. Schwarz (eds) *Militär und Gesellschaft in der frühen Neuzeit* 22. Potsdam: 33, 47.

<sup>68</sup> Dresden: Hauptstaatsarchiv, Karten und Risse 12884, Arch Nr. 11345 (Ingenieur Festungsatlas, dated 1715; Ingenieurcorps Festungsatlas, dated 1717; Plan de Mont Royal, dated 1717). A record is all that remains of the document, the atlas itself was destroyed during the Second World War.

drawings is all the more poignant in light of Melanie Hayes' comments regarding *Castle's* drawing style and the forms he later adopted in his town house designs, which according to her bear "a marked resemblance to surviving eighteenth-century architectural drawings from *Castle's* native Dresden".<sup>69</sup>

*Castle's* connection with Dresden was first highlighted by Loreto Calderón and Konrad Dechant in 2010. These two researchers discovered that *Castle* was the son of Joseph Ricardo, a Jewish merchant from Amsterdam, who, following his appointment around 1700 as director of mines to the court of Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, settled with his family in Dresden.<sup>70</sup> Some information on *Castle's* parents can be culled from archives both in Amsterdam and Dresden, with the former also holding a fair amount of material on his father's ancestors and siblings. But, leaving aside the letters in connection with the sale of his parents' house in Dresden no other record of *Castle* can be traced in either city except for the one indication that *Castle* was in all probability the draughtsperson signing off as de Richardi, D.

Sometime during the earlier part of the 1720s, *Castle* went to England while the rest of his family—his mother and his three brothers—remained in Saxony. Several indications testify to his move across the water. In the Dresden documents of 1729, mentioned above, he is referred to as "Royal Lieutenant in England". *Castle* himself provides some further proof of having lived there in both his *Essays* (c. 1733 and 1735), where he confirms that he came to Ireland from England. If his name as a subscriber of *Vitruvius Britannicus* can be accepted as proof, then he must have lived in London since at least 1725.<sup>71</sup> Hayes discovered some further slender evidence for a mid-twenties date. She found an entry in the ledgers of the Fleet Street branch of Hoare's private bank, according to which a "Mr. Castle" opened an account on 14 January 1725. Within the following nine months, she learned, three notes were lodged against this account, all of which were cashed within days.<sup>72</sup> We have no proof where *Castle* lived in London, but he may very well have stayed with his uncle—his father's

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<sup>69</sup> Hayes, *Anglo-Irish architectural*: 159.

<sup>70</sup> Calderón, L. and K. Dechant. 2010. New light on Hugh Montgomerie, Richard Castle and No. 85 St Stephen's Green, in Casey, C. (ed.) *The Eighteenth-Century Dublin town house: 174-96*. Dublin: 186-8.

<sup>71</sup> Campbell, C. 1725. *Vitruvius Britannicus: or, the British architect* III. London: 5. *Castle's* name as a subscriber does not occur in the first two volumes which were published in 1715 and 1717 respectively.

<sup>72</sup> Hayes, *Anglo-Irish architectural*, 61-2.