

Colonial Architecture at the William Green Plantation: The Meaning of Flemish Brick Bond

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William Green Plantation

The William Green Farmhouse is located on the property of The College of New Jersey, in Ewing, New Jersey. William Green I constructed the first section of the farmhouse in the early 18th century. He was a prominent judge in Trenton, and well-respected in the community. His original construction of the house utilized Flemish bond, indicating his status and a certain amount of wealth. The later additions to the house were completed with English bond, creating a noticeable variation in style from the original south side of the house.

Implications of Flemish Brick Bond

- The 1720s section of the farmhouse exhibits the Flemish bond style, while the 1780s section utilized English bond
- Why did the Green family choose to use English bond in later constructions, rather than continuing the Flemish pattern of the original construction?



Figure 1: The south side of the William Green Farmhouse on TCNJ campus, exhibiting the Flemish brick bond pattern with black glazed headers.

History of the Flemish Brick Style

The earliest evidence of Flemish bond comes from late medieval buildings around northern and central Europe. It spread to England in the early 17th century and became very popular for public buildings. American colonies began utilizing the style by the mid 17th century. Throughout the 18th century, imported bricks were falling out of fashion in favor of colonial bricks.

Results: Relationship between Flemish Bond and Wealth

The physicality of Flemish bond requires that a significant more amount of bricks be used in order to complete a construction in this style. By the early 18th century, bricks were becoming a more common building implement and the regional production of brick throughout the colonies was rapidly increasing. While brick was more expensive to use for a private home than wood, the cost difference between Flemish bond and English bond would not have been enough to create a major barrier for those who wanted to use Flemish bond.

Architectural Notes on Flemish Bond

- Flemish bond is structurally more unstable than English or Stretcher bond.
- The foundations of buildings that used Flemish bond were often completed with several rows of English bond to strengthen the structure.

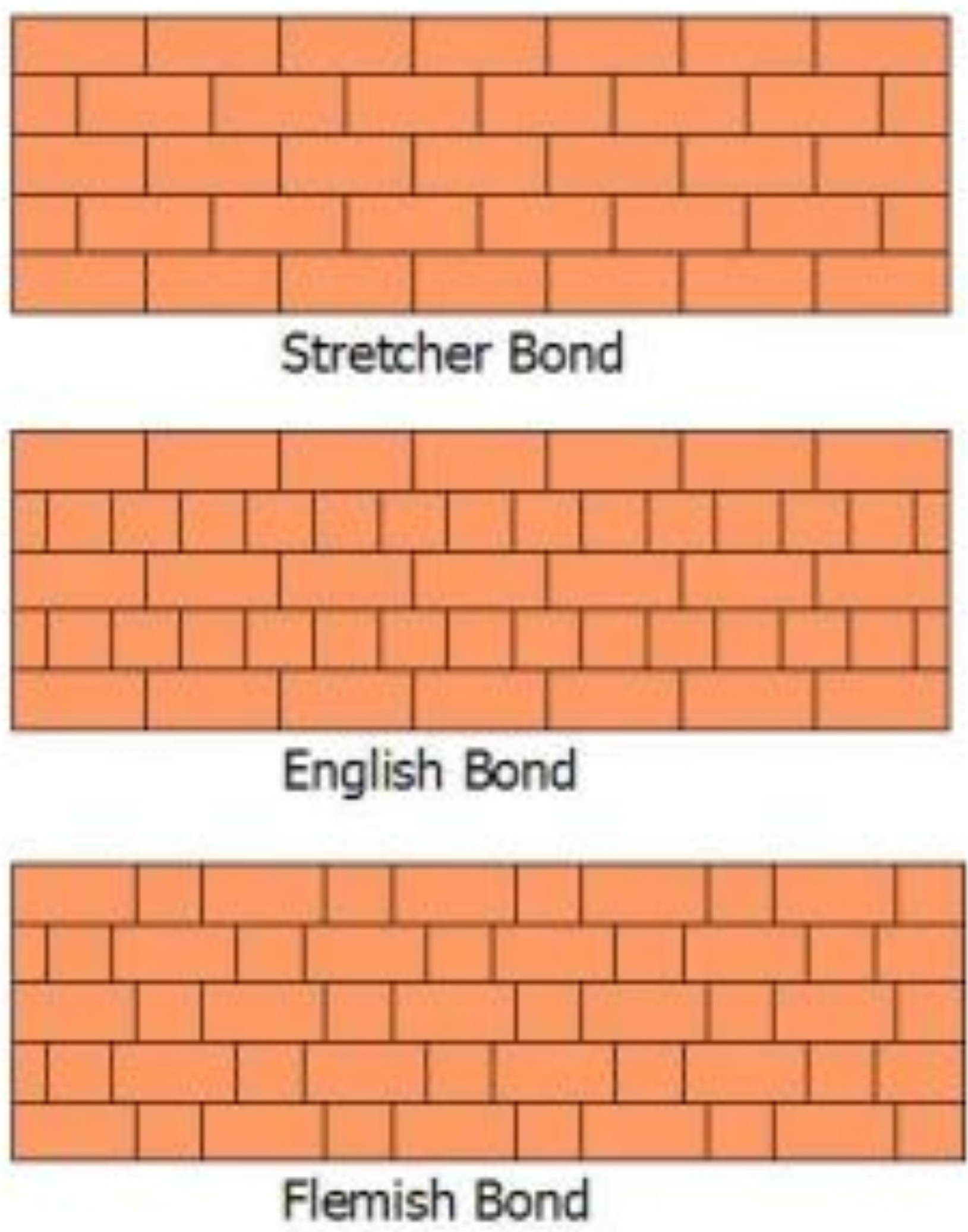


Figure 2: Flemish bond follows the pattern of alternating headers and stretchers within each row. This pattern was utilized on the original construction on the south side of the house.

Conclusion

- There does not appear to be a strong economic reasoning behind the shift between styles.
- The shift was influenced by personal preference or a cultural trend toward more modern patterning in the mid-1700s.

References

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