BY MARK LUZIO

All Roads Lead to 'D'

I had the privilege to oversee the complete restoration of an 18th-century tavern in Rhode Island. The design for the front entry was a milestone I reached at the end of the third year into the job. We removed the 19th-century door and clapboards, and found a ghost outline of the original clapboard ends and the flashing for the top cornice. This helped define the overall dimensions of the entryway, but none of the original woodwork existed.

Search for details. We knew the entry had been built sometime after 1780, when the tavern was purchased by a master jointer from Newport, R.I. I photographed about 20 entries in the 18th-century section of Newport, and I purchased three design books that a jointer could have had access to at the time.

Of these, my go-to book on all questions of classical proportion has become *The American Vignola,* by William Ware (a Norton Press reprint is available on Amazon and used-book websites for $10 to $15). Vignola was a Renaissance architect who published one of the first books on methods for drawing correctly proportioned classical details, and it was from the Vignola that I learned it's all about the D: the diameter of the column, or in the case of this entryway, the width of the pilaster. Most of the dimensions that define the elements of any classical order derive from a multiple of D.

Doric elements. On the entryway I was restoring, the columns and entablature had to fit into an existing entry height of 110 inches. The D—the width of each Doric pilaster—is 11 inches. This meant that the height of the entablature would be 2D, or 22 inches, and the length of the pilaster 8D, or 88 inches (see illustration at left, which summarizes the Doric proportions as defined in the Vignola). It's important to note these dimensions can be slightly altered. I had to alter the pilaster height slightly to fit a 6-foot 8-inch door, but the overall proportions remain visually intact.

Flutes. I diverged from a strict Doric order on the detailing of the flutes. On a Doric column, there are no spaces between flutes; the flutes come to a point called an *arris.* Instead, I chose to leave a *fillet*—a space between the flutes—because the pilaster is made of wood, not stone, and over time, a fillet wears better.

Fillets are an Ionic invention, and according to the Vignola, an Ionic fillet is about one-fourth the width of the flute. This translates to using a ¾-inch box core router bit to make the flutes and leaving about 3/16 inch between them. The Vignola allows you to avoid the "classic" mistake of having too much space between flutes.

Following the rules in the Vignola, you can create a coherent order that nods to an ancient sense of proportion. When I was putting this entry together, I doubted some of the measurements, but once I stepped back, all the time I spent poring over the Vignola proved worth it.

Mark Luzio owns Postpattern Woodworking in Brooklyn, Conn. For a comparison of all the classical orders, see this article at JLConline.com.

Doric Proportions
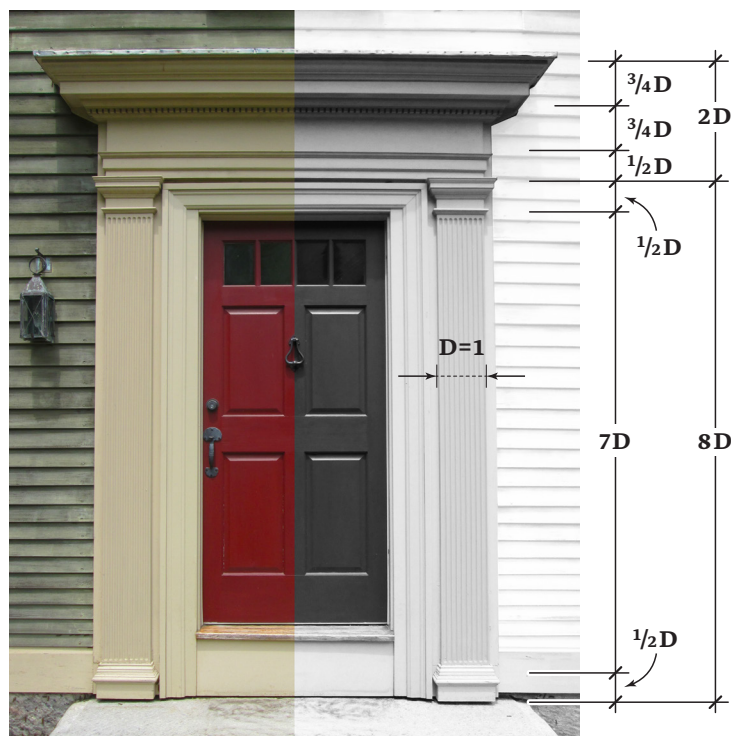
The heights of each architectural element within a specific classical order derive from D, the diameter of the column (width of the pilaster). For this Doric entry, column height should be 8D; the entablature 2D. Within the entablature (from top to bottom), the cornice is ¾D; the frieze ¾D; the architrave ½D.

Photo: Mark Luzio