

## CAPUT I – MARCUS VITRUVIUS POLLIO

Romae ex lateribus inveni, marmoream vestitam relinquo  
I found Rome built of bricks; I leave her clothed in marble

The opening quote is from **Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus**, his little book **de vita Caesarum**. The quote is attributed to **Augustus**

The quote has an oblique utility, it presents this paper's theme **Marcus Vitruvius Pollio**, who wrote a ten-book treatise titled: **de Architectura, libri decem**, known as **The Ten Books on Architecture**

Vitruvius, as he is known; wrote his work with a sense of urgency. Several concurrent events propelled his earnestness. He was nearing his 70<sup>th</sup> year. Events following **idus Martiae**, the **Ides of March**, the assassination of **Gaius Julius Caesar** had had their effect on Rome. Prior to the assassination Caesar had expressed his opinion to rebuild Rome. Vitruvius from his architect's eye; Rome is in poor physical condition. Vitruvius sought to instill in **Gaius Octavius**, Caesar's nephew, the same visionary passion

**Gaius Octavius** survives the turmoil post-Ides of March. He refers to himself as **princeps Civitatis**, the **First Citizen**. Shortly thereafter, the Senate, bestows on him the honorific of **Augustus**, the **August One**. The moment is *now...*

Vitruvius will never see Rome's built grandeur. Two years later he publishes **ideo notities parum est adsecuta. sed tamen his voluminibus editis, ut spero, etiam posteris ero notus**. **For this reason, I have pursued not sufficient celebrity. But however, these volumes having been published, that I hope, I will be known**

**de Architectura** contains impressive technical information that is orientated practically. In **Liber Primus**, Vitruvius writes about what it takes to build a town. **Liber Secundus** cites various building materials and best-methods in usage, such as; brick, sand, concrete, stone, and timber. **Liber Quintus** discusses planning public buildings to serve the state. The private home dwelling is featured in **Liber Sextus**, with interior decoration following in **Liber Septimus**. And **Liber Octavus** discusses an assured water supply for townhouse and country villa

Vitruvius is more than an architect. He is a polymath. In **Liber Tertius** he discusses the architecture of sacred temples, drawing on Greacen knowledge and experience. He is also an engineer. **Liber Nonus** talks of sundials and water clocks. Machines and moving heavy objects are featured in **Liber Decimus** (exploiting to the fullest his earlier sojourn in Greece) **machina est continens e materia coniunctio maximus ad onerum motus habens virtutes. ea movetur ex arte circulorum rutundationibus, quam Graeci cyclicem cinesin appellant. est autem unum genus scansorium, quod Graece acrobaticon dicitur; alterum spirabile, quod apud eos pneumaticon appellatur; tertium tractorium, id autem Graeci baru ison vocitant. A machine is a continuous material system having special fitness for the moving of weights. It is moved by appropriate revolutions of circles, which by the Greeks called cyclice cinesis. The first kind of machine is of ladders (in Greek acrobaticon); the second is moved by the wind (in Greek pneumaticon); the third is by traction (in Greek baru ison or equilibrium)**

Vitruvian flattering words open **Liber Primus**

### VITRUVII DE ARCHITECTURA LIBER PRIMUS

Cum divina tua mens et numen, imperator Caesar,<sup>1</sup> imperio potiretur orbis terrarum <sup>2</sup> invictaque virtute cunctis hostibus stratis triumpho victoriaque tua cives gloriarentur et gentes omnes subactae tuum spectarent nutum populusque Romanus et senatus liberatus timore amplissimis tuis cogitationibus consiliisque gubernaretur, non audebam, tantis occupationibus, de architectura scripta et magnis cogitationibus explicata edere, metuens, ne non apto tempore interpellans subirem tui animi offensionem

Cum vero adtenderem te non solum de vita communi omnium curam publicaeque rei constitutionem habere sed etiam de opportunitate publicorum aedificiorum, ut civitas per te non solum provinciis esset aucta, verum etiam ut maiestas imperii publicorum aedificiorum egregias haberet auctoritates, non putavi praetermittendum, <sup>3</sup> quin primo quoque tempore de his rebus ea tibi ederem, ideo quod primum parenti tuo de eo fueram notus et eius virtutis studiosus. Cum autem concilium caelestium in sedibus immortalitatis eum dedicavisset et imperium parentis in tuam potestatem transtulisset, idem studium meum in eius memoria permanens in te contulit favorem

**Footontes:** 1 Initially refers to Gaius Caesar, after 38 BCE, Gaius is replaced by Imperator, after 27 BCE, Augustus  
2 Refers to the Battle of Actium, 31 BCE; defeat of Anthony and Cleopatra leading to  
3 praetermittendus, -a, -um. 1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> decl. part. *which is to be permitted*