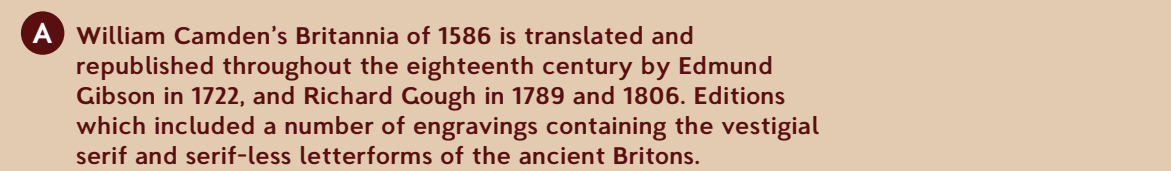




This fuelled Piranesi to uphold Rome's authority by publishing evidence for an Etruscan lineage of design and ornament, where the serifed Roman letter was preceded by an ancient serif-less Latin alphabet. On plate XLI of *Le Antichità Romane*, Piranesi's *Plan of Nero's Nymphaeum* has a distinctive pair of title blocks rendered as stone fragments, which present an inscriptional majuscule letter without serifs: ONIONIANA | NERONIONIANA. The 'E' on the second block has added serifs; clearly intentional, it symbolises the origins of Etruscan architecture, as the precedent for the Roman. It is this plate within Piranesi's published '*opera*', which receives particular and sustained attention from a leading eighteenth-century neoclassical architectural practice in London.

A young John Soane produced a grandiose double colonnade design for a parliament building as part of his RA scholarship grand tour of Italy from 1778-80. Soane's: 'DESIGN · FOR · A · BRITISH · SENATE · HOUSE ·' has previously been identified as Britain's earliest example of a deliberately serif-less letterform; one that leads to an increasing commercial use of what later becomes categorised as *Sans-serif* type. Soane's use of this letterform fully complimented his then radically pure *primitivist neoclassical* style, and as such his typography marks the birth of modernist design. His authority as a leading visionary architect and his influence over late eighteenth-century architecture was re-evaluated by the early modernists of the twentieth-century.

Soane's earliest, still extant example of serif-less letterforms: TOVJOVRS · FIDELE, is inscribed on the Langley Park South Lodges in Norfolk. But Soane deploys serif-less titling on many of his drawings from 1784 when he is able to establish his practice, and begins to promote his desire for the *sans serif*.



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3 Father Gio Nicola Forlivesi of Corneto, attempts to decipher inscriptions in the Etruscan tombs at Tarquinia within his fourteen letters of 1737-9, sent to a sceptical Anton Francesco Gori of the Etruscan Academy of Cortona.

4 Baron von Phillip Stosch acquires the 'Gemme Stosch', the Etruscan 'Five of the Seven Heroes of Thebes' gem found c.1741; and publishes in 1756 his extensive collection of prized gems, including the serif-less inscribed Scarab 'TVTE'.

6 Late 1747, Giovanni Battista Piranesi embarks upon his most ambitious project, a complete survey of the antiquities of Rome – the four volume *Le Antichità Romane*.

7 1755-6 Giovanni Battista Piranesi produces the plate. XLI *'Pianta del Ninfeo di Nero'* depicting a serif-less majuscules letterforms 'ONIONIANA' within two stone title blocks.

9 Piranesi visits the recently excavated Etruscan sites at Corneto and Chiusi c.1761. Later engraving his three Etruscan ornament plates for his 1765 *'Osservazioni...'* in support of an Etruscan origin.

11 In 1780, Francesco Piranesi completes his fathers work on Paestum, and later releases his engravings of the Sarcophagus of Scipio in *'Monumenti degli Scipioni'* in 1785, with its 'primitive' serif-less latin inscriptions.

14 In 1842, *'Hypogaei'* by James Byres is posthumously published. This series of engravings of Tarquinia from the 1750's, depicts Byres with likely Piranesi drawing the tombs. Later in 1848, George Dennis publishes *'Cities and Cemeteries of the Etruria'* volumes 1 & 2 – at the peak of *'Etruscomania'* in Britain.

[illegible]

8 Pierre Jean Mariette heavily criticises Piranesi's 'Della Magnificenza...' of 1761, in his 'Lettre' published in the 'Gazette Littéraire de l'Europe' in 1764, known as 'The Controversy' for Greek, not Etruscan origins of architecture.


10 In 1764, Winckelmann publishes *'History of Art and Antiquity'*, including a frontispiece of the Gemma Storch *'Five Heroes...'*, considered amongst the most accomplished of inscribed sculptural gems.

12 Carlo Labruzzi, perceived collaborator on Soane's 'Costello d'Acqua' 1779-80, the submission for the Palma Academy medal. From 1789 Labruzzi also produces a large series of drawings along the Apian Way, including the serif-less inscriptions at the 'Tomb of the Scipios', whilst 'cicerone' to the heiress of Stourhead – Sir Richard Colt Hoare.

2 Thomas Dempster's *'De Etruria Regali'* of 1616-9 is finally published by Thomas Coke later the Earl of Leicester, and Filippo Buonarroti in 1723-4, which in parts, uses a serif-less Etruscan metal typeface.

B Caslon's Etruscan metal type used for 'De Primigenio Etruscorum Alphabeto Dissertatio' by John Swinton published in 1745-6.

C In 1778 William Chambers, founding member of the RA, provides Soane with a 'Letter of Introduction' for his trip to Rome, "...forget not Piranesi, who you may see in my name..."



SIR W^m CHAMBERS.

I An 'unknown draughtsman' produces Soane's plan drawing of - DESIGN - FOR - A - BRITISH - SENATE - HOVSE -, with two serif-less 'tabula ansata' title blocks - for the RA Summer Exhibition of 1779.

M Sculptor Thomas Banks produces the 'Boothby Monument' from 1793, with serif-less letterforms in the manner of early Roman sepulchral inscriptions.

J Soane's Norwich · COVNTY · GAOL · distinctive serif-less letter 'G' within a 'tabula ansata' title block, drawn in 1789.

K c.1790, Soane erects the South Lodge at Langley Park in Norfolk. The earliest confirmed extant example of his serif-less inscriptional letters, inscribed one of Soane's building.

N William Caslon IV type specimen circa 1814, of *Two Line English*. The first sans serif metal typeface in Britain.

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L Soane's peer, John Flaxman RA, proposes a serif-less inscription on a proposed memorial for Lord Nelson in 1799, and later publishes his 'TVTE' Gem engraving with its serif-less Etruscan letterforms in 1829, in his *Lectures on Sculpture*.

H A young John Soane (1753-1837), embarks on his grand tour of 1778-80. Where he is greeted by Piranesi in the summer of 1778 – just prior to Piranesi's death in November.

E Portraitist, Allan Ramsay, fervently attacks Piranesi's architectural ideology within his *'Dialogue on Taste'*, first published in 1755 in *'The Investigator'*, and re-releases it again in 1762.

H A young John Soane (1753-1837), embarks on his grand tour of 1778-80. Where he is greeted by Piranesi in the summer of 1778 – just prior to Piranesi's death in November.

