



Homes in Pompeii, before Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD, were not only beautiful in their own right, they also included beautiful gardens.

This image depicts a reconstruction of the House of the Vettii. The villa is named for its possible owners, two brothers named Aulus Vettius Conviva and Aulus Vettius Restitutus. (We know their names from their signet rings which were found during the home's excavation.)

Dr. Joanne Berry tells us [more about the home and its gardens](#):

The house is named for its possible owners, the Vettii brothers, whose signet-rings were discovered during the excavations; they are thought to have been freedmen and may have been wine-merchants. The ornate and formal garden would have been glimpsed through the front door of the house, allowing passers-by a glimpse of the wealth and taste of its owners.

The garden was full of marble and bronze statues, 12 of them fountain-heads that spouted water into a series of basins. The garden is enclosed on four sides by an elaborately decorated portico, onto which open a series of rooms that were probably used for entertaining guests.

The excavation of this house heralded a new approach to the archaeological record of Pompeii. The statuary, and some of the household artefacts, that were uncovered were restored to their original contexts within the house, rather than removed to the museum in Naples. The idea was that modern visitors to the town could see what the house would have looked like before it was destroyed by the eruption of AD 79.

The House of the Vettii—[located](#) near Pompeii's Vesuvius Gate—was remarkably preserved by the Vesuvian ashfall. After its excavation, the home has helped archeologists and historians to discover important information (and develop theories) about the town of Pompeii (and the status of its people):

- After the earthquake in 62 AD damaged Pompeii, some of the town's long-established wealthy families left to live elsewhere. Suetonius tells us about that fact in his *Life of Nero*. Thereafter, wealthy freedmen, like the Vettiis, moved into Pompeii and built (or rebuilt) impressive homes.
- A new wealthy class of merchants, once enslaved but now freed, were thus becoming upwardly mobile. The Vettiis, [members of that group](#), had advanced to the point where they could afford to own one of Pompeii's most-impressive homes.
- Scholars theorize that with the rise of Pompeii's wealthy freedmen, the town's moral standards declined. Some of the home frescoes and sculptures, created after the 62 AD earthquake, depict decorations one would normally not see inside a home.
- Scholars have also theorized the Vettiis may have been wine merchants, with enough wealth to effectively purchase the status of freeborn aristocrats.
- Scientists have [uncovered evidence](#) that vineyards were [part of the Pompeii landscape](#) in 79 AD. Pliny the Elder [describes how vineyards were grown](#), and cared-for, by first-century Italians. One of the wall frescoes in

the House of Vettii - depicting Cupids collecting grapes and pouring wine - employs one of the six methods which Pliny describes (i.e., growing vines with the help of trees).

- The Vettii home also reveals how the people of Pompeii may have run their businesses. While some parts of the house are private, other areas are large and open. Historians theorize that the home's owners conducted some of their business affairs in their house.

These were interesting, and changing, times for the people of Pompeii. Then, on the 24th of August in 79 AD, their whole world was in great peril.

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Media Stream



House of the Vettii - Cupids Pouring Wine

Image online, courtesy Art for All, a German-language website.

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