

***The Architectural History  
of  
Randolph-Macon Woman's College***

***A Senior Paper by***

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The students of Randolph-Macon Women's College live and attend school on a campus that has a lengthy history. In 1966, Main Hall became a Virginia Historic Landmark, and was put on the National Register of Historic Place in 1979. The institution itself has existed for over one hundred years and has participated in the evolution of many social and historical movements. One very tangible and consistent aspect of the school, however, is the physical environment in which it operates. The site and the buildings that have been erected on the campus create a sense of place that personifies the character and ambitions of the college and its students.

Though the college has expanded physically since its original construction, and the appearance of the campus has changed over the years, the aesthetics of the place have remained consistent through careful planning. As it has grown from a simple one-building "seminary" into a complex of academic and residential structures, it has responded to the practical needs and the aesthetic tastes of the community around it.

Founded in 1891, Randolph-Macon was brought to life in the midst of a period of prosperity in Lynchburg that resulted in an extensive building boom. Land companies invested their resources to support the establishment of facilities that would become the basis for economic and cultural life in the city. One of these facilities was Randolph-

Macon Woman's College, which together with Lynchburg College, received credit as "two of the most enduring legacies attributed to the boom." <sup>i</sup>

Built on what were the outskirts of the city of Lynchburg, the college was situated along a road known as Rivermont Avenue that abandoned the strict grid plan of the city and wound through the rolling topography of the land. The land company that had its interests invested in this area was known as The Rivermont Company and its members envisioned the establishment of "Lynchburg Woman's College", which is what Randolph-Macon was called on plans throughout 1891.

William Waugh Smith, the man responsible for the actual establishment of the college, served as the president of Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia during the planning of its sister institution. He experienced opposition to the idea of admitting women to the student body there and subsequently gained approval from the Virginia Conference of the Methodist Church to found a school connected to their Randolph-Macon consortium of prep schools and institutions of higher learning. November 13, 1890 marked the date of the first meeting of the Randolph-Macon Woman's College Board of Trustees. They considered proposals of land grants from the West Lynchburg Company and the aforementioned Rivermont Company. In the beginning, the trustees asked for twenty acres of land and \$100,000 for the construction of buildings. In return, they promised to raise another \$100,000 for an endowment fund and guaranteed to open the college by 1893. The Rivermont Company agreed to this, in order to realize their own vision of a Lynchburg women's college, and they granted Smith and the trustees a gift of a 19.8-acre site fronting Rivermont Avenue between the current Norfolk Avenue and North Princeton Circle.<sup>ii</sup>

Once the site and funds had been secured for the school it was up to Smith to see to the construction of the facilities that would house his college. He began by appointing to the project William M. Poindexter, an architect from Washington DC, and hired contractor John P. Pettyjohn to work with him. Since the heritage of women's colleges mattered to Smith when he created Randolph-Macon, he made sure to draw influence from some of the most renowned women's institutions in the country and integrate what he learned from them into his plan for Randolph-Macon. He and Poindexter took a tour of other colleges including Goucher, Bryn Mawr, Vassar, Smith, and Wellesley. With those models to draw on, Poindexter developed a plan for Randolph-Macon within three months. The design for Randolph-Macon owes little allegiance to the actual architectural style of those schools; only the philosophies and physical organization of them offered any motivation to the plans for Randolph-Macon.

The drawings for the new college appeared in the *Lynchburg Daily Virginian* newspaper on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1891, with the assertion that "[i]t will be architecturally the handsomest college building in Virginia and worthy of its character as the leading institution of its class in the south." <sup>iii</sup> Renderings for the building were also published on a double page spread in the August 29, 1891 edition of *American Architect and Building News*. (Randolph Macon Woman's College was the second Lynchburg building to be so honored, the first being St. Paul's church).

In 1901, Hilda Forsberg of Lynchburg remembered the initial stages of planning that went into Randolph Macon and the indomitable driving force behind: William Waugh Smith.

"I well remember the time when Randolph-Macon was only a series of blueprints, in a roll with an elastic band

around it, and Dr. William Waugh Smith brought them to our home, to talk them over with my father, Col. Augustus Forsberg, who was an architect and Lynchburg City Engineer for 25 years. He was also a member of the City School Board, and as a friend of Dr. Smith's was asked to look over the blueprints in a professional as well as friendly manner. I recall a cold, rainy afternoon when Dr. Smith sent word that he would take 'supper' with us that night and have the talk afterward. He was much more interested in the plans than he was in the good supper prepared for him and could hardly wait until the dessert was over before he began pushing back plates, cups, and saucers that he might have ample space to lay down the blueprints of Main Hall upon the dining table."<sup>iv</sup>

The construction of the college proceeded apace through the next few years, but when the target date for completion of the project rolled around in September of 1893, it became obvious that the deadline would pass unmet. Money troubles forced Smith and the Board of Trustees to postpone the completion of the building; however they remained determined to see the start of Randolph-Macon's first academic year. Despite the setbacks the college opened to its 36 enrolled students and 12 professors on September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1893. They moved into a Main Hall less than half-finished, the whole of front campus still bare dirt. Students had to walk from the streetcar platform on Rivermont Avenue up to Main Hall on stepping-stones and a plank boardwalk, so as not to step in the red mud that covered the entire approach up to the building. Only the first two floors of the structure would accommodate residents at the start. Mrs. Sharp, the wife of Randolph-Macon's first professor of ancient languages, recorded an interesting impression of her first night at the school, just before the students arrived:

"The first meal in the college dining room was served at a kitchen table and diners had to sit on detachable hat boxes from the bureaus, since chairs had yet to be brought out. The lighting system was not yet in working order either – two small kerosene lamps were used. The

building was less than half the present size of Main, but even so, the halls were long for the beams of one or two little coal oil lamps."<sup>v</sup>

The college prospectus in 1893 stated that "the college buildings situated in a spacious lawn of twenty acres, occupy a commanding elevation with picturesque surroundings."<sup>vi</sup> Though the rise of land which Randolph-Macon's Main Hall sat on was indeed the highest piece of ground in the area and looked out at the Blue Ridge Mountains, its immediate surroundings had a less than picturesque aspect. It took nearly the entire first decade of the college's existence to fill in the landscape around it, by sowing grass and planting trees – maples along the drive up to Main Hall, and dogwoods on the front eastern slope. In 1899 the magnolias in front of Main and the famous wisteria gracing the porch were added, but even then, one student described the interior of the building as 'cold and bare'.<sup>vii</sup>

Whether that impression derived from uninviting furnishings or the general lack of completion to the structure itself we do not know. However, the second looms as a large possibility; nearly a year passed before the completion of the interior of the chapel (now incorporated into the student center). Even then the accomplishments only marked the completion of the central block of the structure, the third floor of the building left untouched and uninhabited to that date. When the 1893-94 academic session ended, this project's rapid completion nearly doubled the number of boarding students that the College could accommodate – a good thing, for in the second year of operation Randolph-Macon enrolled over 125 students, 80 of whom required housing.

Randolph-Macon's third academic year, 1895-96, saw the extension of the building from the center through to the east wing, which housed the first real library.

Originally, the college library had consisted of a single bookcase in the parlor, and the collections that each professor kept in their respective classrooms. Soon the library had grown to hold 500 volumes, requiring more space. The new east wing could house 20,000 volumes on its main floor, and a gallery in the space above that now contains student rooms could hold additional shelving for the ever-expanding collection.<sup>viii</sup>

The addition of this new wing brought the frontage of the building to 354 feet.<sup>ix</sup> A report from the Executive Committee at the annual Trustee's meeting on June 6, 1897 recorded that

"[t]he north front wing of the building, which includes a beautiful library-room, the gift of Mr. Geo. M. Jones of Lynchburg, was completed last September in time for the opening of the session and added greatly to the appearance of the building. In the new wing, in addition to the library are classrooms, dormitories, and excellent Physical Science and Biological rooms."<sup>x</sup>

Only in 1899 did the Building and Endowment Committee receive permission to continue with the additions that it would take to finish the building according to Poindexter's original plans. With that authority, the north front was endowed with a new west wing set in a mirror location to that of the east wing. In plan, Main Hall formed a symmetrical E-shape and fulfilled the original intent of the architect and planners. This was done by fall of 1899, in time for the start of the academic session, and an official dedication of the building occurred on February 15th of 1900.

Throughout planning, construction and the early years of operation, Main Hall had been intended as a "seminary." Despite the religious connotations of the word, it was a common name for women's educational institutions throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>

centuries. It denoted a liberal arts curriculum; one that often aimed its students towards careers in the educational field. Most importantly however, "seminary" as an architectural term described the building that housed the school and the organizational structure to which the school accommodated itself. In fact, so many women's schools followed this tradition that the convention became known as the seminary model.

In a prototypical seminary, only a single building housed the entire operation of the institution. Other outbuildings on Randolph-Macon's campus, like a laundry and a small green building known as the College Park Post Office, were located on Randolph-Macon's campus, but aside from these minor auxiliary functions the integral activities of the school took place inside Main Hall. In fact, even faculty lived inside the main building until 1903 when the Patillo House was constructed behind Moore Hall and the Lipscomb Library to house Dr. N. A. Patillo and his family, as well as other faculty on the second floor. (This same building housed the bookstore until recently and currently acts as the Prime Time lounge.)

The seminary model upheld the values of home-life, through close supervision and delicate treatment of females. The original plans for women's schools, from the prestigious Mt. Holyoke down to smaller institutions like Randolph-Macon and Sweet Briar, reveal an encompassing similarity, the embodiment of the seminary model. It usually consisted of a certain setting, a plot of high ground or hill surrounded by trees. On this, a two-to-four story structure would be built. The entrance to the grounds would typically consist of a circular drive and the architecture would have a focal point such as a tall belfry or cupola, often the most imposing structure in the vicinity of the school.

The seminary model concerned itself most, however, with the actual structures on the site. In theory, one building would contain all the major facilities of the school and negate the need for anything other than outlying laundry and kitchen facilities, service sheds, etc. Inside the seminary building, the first floor would typically contain classrooms, parlors, and residential quarters for the college president and his family. At Randolph-Macon the west wing served this purpose for a time, housing Dr. and Mrs. Smith, a number of faculty members and their families, and 30 students.

In a typical seminary, the president's quarters resembled a large apartment equipped with its own parlor, dining room, bedrooms, and so on, much like a house within the larger seminary building. This practice adapted a French boarding school custom, wherein the president's personal residence became the school, unsurprising, for women's colleges tended to look pointedly towards French models for their residential needs, just as they looked to the English for academic influences. Examples can be witnessed in the forms of Vassar, designed in a French Second Empire style, and drawing on ideas from the Tuileries in Paris and Charity Hospital, another of the architect's French influenced designs. Wellesley and other schools affected Second Empire roofs and other French decorative elements as well. French education and custom was a symbol of high class and culture to Americans, particularly Southerners, because they saw it as an origin and breeding ground for great art and literature, those things which denote rich culture. With Europe so far away, many parents sent their daughters to American schools to be groomed in a continental manner, so it is not unusual then that even the physical arrangement of the seminary should take on the overtones of French influence.

In the United States, the president of a college was seen as a very important figure within the institution whose status befitted the privilege of having a private home within their workplace. In fact, not much later, women's college presidents were furnished with their own houses off campus more appropriate to their status. At Randolph-Macon the early president's home was located on Rivermont Avenue just adjacent to the east end of campus, and now lies further down the avenue to the west in a building constructed in the 1930's. But early on, when propriety dictated the importance of the administration being close at hand, the president's quarters formed a vital element of the seminary building itself.

A student and faculty dining room usually occupied the basement of the seminary, while upper floors would contain the bedrooms of students and single female faculty members. Early observers describe these dormitory style rooms in a typical women's seminary as spartan. An account by Maria Florilla Flint Hamblen, a teacher at a rural Warrenton, North Carolina prep school, recalls the room she shared with the school's art teacher.

"It was twenty-five square feet and heated by a small box stove in the middle of the room with a pipe that rose vertically before taking a right-angle turn to the chimney. It was furnished with a bed, a small washstand, two rocking chairs, and two split bottom chairs. The closet was merely a strip of board with nails on which to hang clothes."<sup>xi</sup>

Though the economic situation of this institution may have been more modest than that at Randolph-Macon and some of the other more prestigious women's colleges, it was common for two or more students or faculty members shared rooms. Sometimes very

large rooms had partitions to create small curtained bedroom areas for roommate pairs, as well as study and dressing areas. At Mount Holyoke in 1838,

"two students normally shared a room, 18 by 10 feet – unusually generous by the standards of the time – which included a closet of 5 or 6 feet square lit by a window from the room. A diagram of a room shared by three students shows a large space broken into by two closets. There was room for the three beds and for a table, bookshelves, four chairs, and several rugs."<sup>xii</sup>

Some seminaries contained only classrooms; students and staff boarded at hotels and houses in town. The burgeoning use of plumbing in schools like these around 1860, however, made residential capability a greater possibility. (Prior to the advent of indoor plumbing, privies would have been located outside and to the rear of the seminary and students would have carried water from the basement.) With better utilities, however, seminaries increasingly became residences as well as schools. Female faculty and students made the school their home, while male faculty would typically board in town, and married teachers would occupy small cottages on school grounds or in the vicinity.

This was the structure of a typical female seminary in the late 1800's. The theory behind it: that young women would be living and learning in a closely supervised environment, somewhat like a home, where propriety could be enforced and guidance provided with ease. The members of faculty who lived with them in the seminary were expected to furnish students "with the atmosphere of a Christian home".<sup>xiii</sup> That is, polite and proper behavior, respect for others, and the morals and ethics encouraged by a good home life and pious upbringing. With that emphasis on integrity and good conduct, students would learn graceful living as well as academics.

Mary Lyon, prominent in the development of Mt. Holyoke, developed the seminary model as an architectural plan as well as a disciplinary concept. She "linked to a large congregate building the mother-daughter bond, recreated in the relationship between teacher and student. As students imitated their revered teachers, under a strict disciplinary regime monitored in a single building, they became rational, disciplined women oriented to the world."<sup>xiv</sup> The seminary building became interpreted as a womb, nurturing young women inside its walls until ready to go out into the world appropriately trained to their particular position therein.

As Mount Holyoke is considered by many to be the prototypical women's college seminary, it is perhaps pertinent to explore the specifics of its architecture in order to understand the resulting plans of other female institutions like Randolph-Macon. Mary Lyon had an active role in not only organizing the philosophy of the seminary, but also in its physical construction, resulting in a building that reflected her ideals and served her purposes.

Built in 1838 for the sum of \$15,000, the original Mount Holyoke seminary building was described as "plain, though very neat"<sup>xv</sup>, a concept of simplicity around which Mary Lyon built her life and the lives of her students. It was a four-story structure of red brick in a Georgian style. Its simple rectangular form could have destined it for any number of uses, however a shallow two-story white porch adorning its façade marked it as a dwelling house. This concept of an educational institution with the architectural attributes of a home embodied another of Mary Lyon's philosophies, wherein residence life and scholarship mattered equally in creating well-rounded young women.

The porch was not the only element symbolic of a residence, however, for inside the plan emulated that of a house "magnified to fit a household of one hundred women, adding the rooms necessary for the running of a school."<sup>xvi</sup> A central entrance gave access to public spaces on the lower floors while a stairway provided the separation necessary to the more private residential quarters upstairs, though the second floor also contained recitation rooms and science laboratories.

The seminary also used the asylum as its model. The asylum, too, looked to the dwelling for influence, but enforced a much stricter sense of order than considered necessary for an educational institution. "In asylum rhetoric 'family government' meant the strict ordering of hierarchical relationships. Similar to the asylum, the seminary building contained appropriate symbols of authority and rank."<sup>xvii</sup> Clear separation of students and teachers enforced this concept of hierarchy in the separation of faculty rooms from student rooms and even in the arrangement of tables in the basement dining room of Mount Holyoke seminary. Mary Lyon and her administrative staff sat at the head table, her faculty at tables below her, and students gathered at the remaining tables.

Randolph-Macon demonstrated this idea of authority through its architecture, where "the effect of dominance came primarily from the mass and complexity of the structure, which suggested the hierarchy, protectiveness, and centralized authority of the asylum."<sup>xviii</sup> Entering through Randolph-Macon's spacious porch and into Main Hall lobby, one can easily see the interior layout so like that described at Mount Holyoke and other typical seminaries. The first floor has its wide "Grand Corridor" leading to public spaces and administrative areas, and the two central staircases ascending to student rooms above. Outside, the eclectic Queen Anne style is welcoming, but the mass and

complexity of red brick construction and soaring turrets create an imposing presence. The seemingly conflicting influences of domestic and institutional organization of space set Randolph-Macon among the ranks of other female seminaries that drew on the same traditions.

The imposing and eclectic design of Main Hall's structure made it the architectural centerpiece of campus, even after smaller structures began to grow up around it. Main's central belfry is flanked by smaller identical round-topped turrets, identical east and west wings ending in pavilions and a second set of distinctively different turrets over the end porches. Thus, the structure is provided with balance but not exact symmetry.

"The varied shapes of the belfry and turrets, together with the steeply pitched slate roof, gabled dormer windows, and tall, slender chimneys, gave the roof line a decidedly late-Victorian silhouette. This impression of height, dominance, and hierarchy was softened by other details, especially the deep one story porches at the front entrance and at each end of the building, and the polygonal turrets and bay windows that punctuate the façade."<sup>xix</sup>

Architecturally, Main Hall is a building of five-part composition constructed entirely of hard-pressed red brick. It has a three story central pavilion, where a tall gable terminates in a tower supporting a framed belfry. The massing of the building is a Palladian conceit, as is the correct arch, entablature, and keystone evident in the belfry, such as one might see in the façade of the Church of San Giorgio Maggoire in Venice and many other Palladian inspired structures. However, those are the only Palladian elements of the building; the rest is purely of the Queen Anne style.

The Queen Anne style has its roots in the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in England, typically used on private residences, inspired by the pre-Georgian style that flourished

during the reign of Queen Anne, and characterized by classical ornamentation grafted to medieval forms in an eclectic manner. This is witnessed in the brickwork of Main Hall that is formed into decorative pilasters with capitals and stringcourses that register as friezes, all decorating a form somewhat akin to a medieval castle with its towers and turrets.

Windows in Queen Anne buildings tend to take many forms with flat tops and rounded arches, but never the pointed arch of the gothic style. Examples of the diverse window forms can be seen on Main Hall's front façade where tall, round-topped windows lie just below the belfry and a few diamond shaped windows break up the rows of standard square fenestration. They are of plate glass with occasional lead work and often have mullions set on a diagonal, rather than the usual horizontal and vertical. Bay windows are prominent in the Queen Anne style, as well as high roofs with multiple ridges. Later phases of the style include round or polygonal towers, prominent gables, large porches, and many chimneys of cut or molded bricks. All of these features occur on the exterior of Randolph-Macon's Main Hall.

At the time that Main Hall took this form as the noble seminary building on the hill, Randolph-Macon Women's College experienced great success and prosperity, very high enrollment, recognized academic programs, and support coming in from the surrounding community with great enthusiasm. Looking back, however, Randolph-Macon had diverged from its roots as a southern women's college. Though the South provided fertile ground for such institutions, women's education had not always been so popular or in such high demand and outside opinions towards female educational

institutions were low. Many women's colleges started out unassuming and offered only very basic resources. Only with time did their status rise.

After the Civil War devastated the South in the 1860's, massive reconstruction efforts were put into effect to try to reestablish the physical and social structure of the region. With this came an opportunity for the establishment of new cultural institutions as well as the replacement of the old. The determined and progressive attitudes of some Southerners prompted, among other things, the founding of a large number of female seminaries, the term for what would today be called a women's college. These seminaries became the forerunners of woman's educational institutions of today and were influenced by three main factors: "a belief in separate spheres for men and women; the influence of religious evangelism; and a need for white women to learn the classics for the sake of status."<sup>xx</sup>

The characteristically Southern notion of the 'belle' and the 'gentleman' required the gender separation of educational institutions, while creating a desire to promote the belle as a woman of high status and refined culture. These instances were served by the growth of religious devotion that created a community foundation, one unproblematic to women, which established and financed female seminaries and colleges. For this reason, many Southern women's educational institutions allied themselves with Protestant denominations, just as Randolph-Macon Woman's College joined the Methodists' group of schools.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the number of women's seminaries in the South grew and because of this, education and subsequent betterment of status became more available to middle class women as well as their upper class peers. Unlike Northern women's

colleges however, Southern institutions did not put emphasis on education for the purpose of entering an occupation. While the post-Civil War North had engendered a very industrialized way of life that promoted the introduction of women into the work force to staff factories and take minor roles in conducting business, the South remained a largely agricultural economy. Relying largely on the time honored production of raw materials such as tobacco and cotton, and with the plantation mentality still prevalent, the idea of progress was less emphasized in the South. Women continued to inhabit their traditional roles – those of homemakers and society hostesses, while their male counterparts managed trade and the development of new post-prohibition livelihoods such as textile manufacturing. The notion of a Southern patriarchy enforced the convention of keeping women in an honored, but basically useless position. Women in the North struck out from home and families to attend school and eventually teach or join the work force and thus support themselves until marriage or after being widowed. Southern women, however, sought education purely for the purpose of improving their status in society and to better attract a prosperous marriage match.

"In the South such an education was a class marker, one that more and more parents sought to bestow on their daughters... as their ability to influence the selection of marriage partners diminished by mid-century. This was, in part, an attempt to increase their daughters' value in the marriage market, as insurance against downward mobility."<sup>xxi</sup>

Well after the war and reconstruction, women's education in the South was still looked upon as having lower standards and as being a rather frivolous pursuit for young women. "Southern private colleges for women often lacked 'the students, the faculties, and the facilities of their Northern counterparts."<sup>xxii</sup> In fact, as late as 1903,

only Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg, Virginia and Goucher College offered four years of college work.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Even as late as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century some educators accepted and encouraged the non-competitive educational systems of Southern women's institutions. In a 1931 Founder's Day speech at Randolph-Macon, R.E. Blackwell noted that "one educator who had taught girls for 50 years told [Dr. Smith] that the only education Southern girls wanted was just enough to make the college boys who called one night come back the next."<sup>xxiv</sup>

This seems to contradict the fact that the earliest instance of women's collegiate education in the United States was launched at the Georgia Female College in Macon, Georgia (now known as Wesleyan College) in 1836. It followed the models of numerous western European universities, including Cambridge and Oxford, which had begun opening their doors to women, and thus paved the way for the expansion of women's institutions domestically. As a true women-only college, it even chronologically surpassed the first coeducational college in the United States. Oberlin College in Ohio opened to women as well as men in 1837 and a "Ladies Hall" was among its first buildings. The South still held precedence for its great number of female educational institutions and the early date at which they became popular, however. It thus disproved the Founders' Day speech quotation that implied that Southern women only sought an education to gain marriage status, and exhibiting the dedication that the region had to educating its young women.

In fact, the South has a long history of educating women. Although the quality of that education was often doubted, the emergence of women's institutions in the early 19<sup>th</sup>

century shows the initiative of Southern administrators, educators and the students enrolled at their schools to start on a path toward better education for women and a change in societal standards. This trait created the strong foundation on which Southern women's colleges like Randolph-Macon grew to their full potential.

Randolph-Macon Women's College was founded at a much later date than many of those early women's seminaries, and thus seemed to escape much of the staunchest controversy surrounding its status as a women's institution. Its establishment did have its challenges however, and its organization and planning still responded to the constraints placed upon the institution by the societal values of its era.

Though women's education had become increasingly popular by the 1890's, the time of Randolph-Macon's construction, it was still treated with some skepticism. As Roberta D. Cornellius states, however,

"the more picturesque objections had disappeared. In the early [18] 90's no one seemed to fear that advanced study might cause women to become somnambulists or lead mothers to desert their children for the charms of quadratic equations. Nor was college or university study any longer accompanied by social ostracism... Yet there must have been some apprehension over the score of health."<sup>xxv</sup>

An instructor at Randolph-Macon, Miss Parrish, apparently "took pride in marshaling her students before skeptics to show that their health was unimpaired"<sup>xxvi</sup> by the rigors of college life and academics.

Schools such as Randolph-Macon Woman's College had to overcome the lingering doubts of skeptics in order to establish their academic integrity and acceptance by other (male) institutions. The first Randolph-Macon catalogue issued for the opening

term of the college in 1893 contains a statement of the Founder's Purpose. It reads as follows:

"We wish to establish in Virginia, a college where our young women may obtain an education equal to that given in our best colleges for young men, and under environments in harmony with the highest ideals of womanhood; where the dignity and strength of fully developed faculties and the charm of the highest literary culture may be acquired by our daughters without loss to women's crowning glory – her gentleness and grace."<sup>xxvii</sup>

The desire for women's education equal to that for men, and the challenge of maintaining female sensibilities, competed for priority during the era of Randolph-Macon's founding. The struggle for a balance between the two became a catalyst for the careful development of women's institutions. Women's educational institutions were thus restricted to defined forms and strict organization in order to maintain the idea of propriety so important to students, their families, and the community that surrounded them.

Male institutions commonly enjoyed certain freedoms that women's institutions could not. They were typically located out in the country, away from the center of town in an effort to curb illicit activities among the male students; however, those activities were nonetheless expected and tacitly condoned. Measures were simply taken to keep them in check rather than halt them completely. On the other hand, women were expected to be well behaved and subdued. They were also expected to need a certain amount of protection and guidance. Because of this, women's institutions were typically located in or on the edge of town, with the community close at hand to influence the development of the fragile and impressionable young female students. It seems that the attitude was

that women's education could ruin a girl's prospects as easily as it could bolster them. A girl at school was gaining a valuable experience, but at the same time there was great risk of her being negatively influenced. Women's institutions walked a thin line and had to pay great heed to containing and protecting students.

The more relaxed men's school template usually resulted in a layout commonly known as the "academical village," a term coined by Thomas Jefferson to describe his design for the University of Virginia. Using the University of Virginia as an example of this type of plan, a campus would include multiple buildings, each serving a particular purpose. At the University of Virginia, a series of pavilions were linked by covered colonnades and rows of student rooms. They housed classrooms, study facilities and faculty residences, and had gardens out back. All of this was arranged around a central lawn that was graced at one end by the rotunda, housing the library. It was the focal point and dominating feature of the campus, enforcing order on the flanking structures. The result is a unified, but diverse and subdivided campus.

In this vein the residential quarters at male institutions like Harvard and Amherst were set apart from academic buildings. They experimented with the idea of housing faculty and students together to enforce good behavior much as women's colleges did, however, they were less effective due to the fact that the buildings were designed with multiple entrances leading directly to student rooms. "Unrestricted movement away from watchful eyes gave the men a realm of freedom. Even within the dormitory, many entrances and rooms grouped around stairwells diminished possible supervision."<sup>xxviii</sup>

For male scholars this plan continued to be considered more effective in creating a working academic environment, but for young women, the need for protection and

nurturing dictated the design of their schools. Women's colleges by nature were believed to necessitate a sheltered environment. As Reverend Drury Lacy said in 1845, "it is a dangerous step to send any girl from home."<sup>xxix</sup> Answering this concern became the defining notion behind the design of women's schools and engendered the plan of nearly every institution erected at the time.

As time passed, however, cultural perceptions changed and demand for women's education grew even more. The idea of sheltering delicate young women while they learned, turned to more progressive notions as women wanted educational opportunities equal to that of men. Because of this many women's colleges began moving away from the traditional seminary model and cautiously went about integrating the conventions found at male institutions. They leaned toward the "academical village" or university model over what they had.

Though Randolph-Macon's expansion was due mostly in part to a growing need for more space, it is interesting to note that other women's institutions moved away from the seminary model for very different and conflicting reasons and through the influences of different groups. Students wanted progress, more independence and responsibility for themselves, but the administration of most women's institutions was often more determined to remain traditional and sheltering. They wanted to be current, but saw progressiveness and independence in their female students as disturbing behavior.

It was noted particularly at Mt. Holyoke, that the seminary model kept 'inmates' physically in place and secure. The fact that they interacted solely with other females in a very progressive atmosphere resulted in an odd psychology.

"Women emerged from [Mt. Holyoke] with affected, unsocial, and visionary notions, which may have suited them to become missionaries, but hardly enabled them to become wives and mothers." <sup>xxx</sup>

Despite their preference for the standard seminary model, college administrators blamed the problems on close quarters and intense intellectual atmosphere the seminary model provided, and decided to depart from it. Whether that achieved its purpose or actually granted women the freedom they desired must be explored in the history of the breakdown of the seminary model.

The first women's college to break the seminary mold was Smith in 1875. It was the place where women's over-progressiveness had been most noted and so its administration took active measures to keep the perceived problem in check. They did this by developing a new housing convention that effectively made the seminary a building for academics only. The students lived in family dwelling style cottages around the campus. Smith's president wrote with confidence that after

"a careful study, our plan has been to erect central academic buildings which shall be devoted to the more distinctive intellectual work of the institution [...] at convenient distances, in grounds laid out as a private park, smaller dwelling houses... as homes for the students. Each dwelling house is organized as a private household, presided over by 'a lady of culture and refinement to direct its social and domestic life'". <sup>xxxi</sup>

At the time this was seen as very avant garde, almost radical, however it had practical purposes such as greater flexibility when expansion was necessary, it also reduced danger from fire. Its moral aspects were given the most emphasis however. It encouraged students to lead a life where academic roles were differentiated from social roles. Because the cottage system also removed students from the careful supervision of

faculty it relied more heavily on the patriarchal order of the surrounding community to provide guidance and maintain the students' femininity. Smith took a large risk, by allowing students to move into a less controlled sphere where threats to propriety were more abundant. It can be argued however, that the cottage system gave the women of Smith College a more worldly experience, with "greater comfort and less nervous excitement"<sup>xxxii</sup> and helped to diffuse the highly concentrated mentality that was causing them to become 'unsocial and visionary'.

In 1885 the idea of a completely non-seminary women's college was first set forward with the establishment of Bryn Mawr, the first example in the United States of a women's college modeled after male-dominated universities from its earliest stages, with residential and academic functions in separate buildings. Bryn Mawr offered a unique blend of university and women's college planning and became the leader in women's college philosophy and design. Smith's cottage system was taken into strong account during the planning stages of Bryn Mawr. The founders of Bryn Mawr thought that "the design of Smith assumed adult women, who needed little formal supervision,"<sup>xxxiii</sup> and thus encouraged a more responsible and mature bearing among students. Bryn Mawr followed this and went even farther in attempting to imitate men's schools. Its Marion House gained notice for giving students greater privacy than normally found in women's colleges, and for following the guidelines of a male dormitory on a smaller scale. It had

"19 suites and large single rooms, several of unusual size...Marion had two entries, a principal one leading to the hall and drawing room, a secondary one to the dining area. Student rooms on the first floor connected these public areas, an unusual arrangement in a women's college where generally a single entrance opened onto

public areas, and private spaces remained quite separate."<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Though Bryn Mawr and Smith provided an example for other women's colleges, most institutions persisted in following the seminary model both in architecture and in philosophy. The breakdown of the seminary ideal had begun though, and more and more female institutions began leaning toward expanding beyond their seminary building in response to growing need for housing, and in search for a remedy to the disconcerting developments in psychology mentioned earlier.

Wellesley and Vassar next broke from the seminary tradition and built outlying student residences. Wellesley erected, or acquired from neighbors, four cottages under the presidency of Alice Freeman, a great advocate of the cottage system. She saw small residential quarters as "repositories of values, a feminine refuge from the challenges of contemporary life."<sup>xxxv</sup> Even after Freeman resigned her presidency to marry, the college continued to build more cottages on its grounds. Most were constructed of wood with "the informal look of summer homes along the coast. The interiors complimented their shingle-style exteriors, comfortable and filled with home-like accessories."<sup>xxxvi</sup> This novel development created a high demand from students who preferred living in the cottages to living in the original seminary housing.

Despite their popularity however, the cottages of Wellesley did not achieve the same goals as those of Smith. Though they acted as additional housing for students and provided a low stress, female-oriented environment, the fact of their isolation on a large country estate undermined any attempt to expose students to outside influences. Though an effort was made to remove residential life from academic life, students

continued to be surrounded by all female faculty and their fellow students at all times, encouraging the progressive and revolutionary thinking of the students.

Vassar was exceedingly reluctant to follow its peers in breaking its seminary system; however, its arrangements were becoming so cramped that some expansion was necessary. With a very conservative approach, the administrators decided to build cottages adjacent to the main hall. These were not intended for student use however. Instead they would provide housing for faculty, while students remained in a less crowded main hall.

In 1886 however, James Monroe Taylor came to Vassar and attempted to bring the college up to standard with its contemporaries. He realized the popularity and success of the cottage system, but met with the dilemma that housing students in separate smaller units was a more costly arrangement. Thus, Vassar never did erect student cottages on its grounds. By waiting out the evolution that other schools went through it skipped straight to the advantageous design that Smith eventually settled on, residence buildings separate from the main seminary hall, but larger than the original cottage buildings – in essence, residence halls or dormitories.

Residence halls at Vassar were designed after those at Smith. They took the form of over scaled dwelling houses styled in the regional domestic vernacular. Their interiors consisted of public rooms grouped around the single entrance, with a dining room and kitchen in one side wing and servants quarters above. Student rooms were interspersed on the lower floors, but most were located in the upper floors and were carefully laid out to avoid crowding. Each student had a private bedroom, some arranged as suites sharing a common study room.

As more and more residence halls were built at Vassar they were organized in a "quadrangle" type plan. Though they were not attached and thus did not form a true quadrangle they were laid out along four sides of a grassy square and in this way closely imitated the academical village model of male institutions. They still maintained the residential atmosphere of the cottage arrangement and the basic control of the seminary without the threat of a seminary's crucible-like tendencies to breed 'odd psychology' among its students.

Randolph-Macon began its break from the seminary model in 1903 in response to the need for more space to accommodate the quickly growing enrollment quota. Every annual report by the college's executive committee since the first year of operation had recorded a steadily growing number of applicants. In 1902, enrollment dropped slightly due to a change in acceptance policies, but the college still had to resort to renting houses off campus to accommodate students. The need for more housing was painfully obvious and so, like the other schools discussed so far, Randolph-Macon's growth away from the main seminary building started with the addition of residential quarters. Due to its much later founding date, Randolph-Macon was able to skip the cottage system step of evolution altogether and, like Vassar, went straight to adding large dormitory structures adjacent to Main Hall.

1903 became a year of great growth for Randolph-Macon. It saw the installation of an acetylene gas plant on campus, so that gas for the college no longer had to be created from gasoline and more efficient lighting utilities were available. The campus itself expanded through the purchase of more land adjacent to the campus, thus increasing the property to twice its original size, and a telescope donated by Major C.V.

Winfree was housed in a new observatory on front campus. But the biggest addition to the College came in the form of a new dormitory.

The first structure of importance unattached to Main Hall was East Hall, now called Moore Hall. It was constructed to accommodate 73 students and effectively allowed the College to house more than 300 students on campus. It was located along the same ridge that Main occupied, to the east, and was described as "well furnished for its purposes."<sup>xxxvii</sup> Its design tried to capture the same domestic feel that the original seminary had had and paid attention to the issues of control, by having one main entrance and a central stair. The first floor contained a parlor, kitchen, and dining facilities and students were housed in the 3 floors above. It was endowed with the modern conveniences of acetylene gas lighting and steam heating from a newly erected central heating plant on campus.

Described by Mr. E.F. Sheffey, Chairman of the College's Executive committee, as "a large and imposing edifice, in beauty, architecture and harmony with the main building"<sup>xxxviii</sup>, East Hall achieved much the same feel as Main Hall through its continued use of red brick construction. Its stylistic traits however, were more along the lines of Georgian neo-classical, than Queen Anne – more restraint of ornament, with greater emphasis on the classical. The two styles meshed well though and unified the two structures. The *News* wrote that "the construction of so large a building in five months time is perhaps the record for Lynchburg building"<sup>xxxix</sup>, and credit was once again given to Messrs. J.P. Pettyjohn & Co., who had worked so diligently on Main Hall.

In the spring of 1904, the Board of Authorization granted William Waugh Smith permission to erect another new building, and with this "he saw the possibility of carrying forward plans that he had long been cherishing. New dormitories, a new science building, a new library – even a new laundry – had been taking shape in his mental vision, and now they were to appear in bricks and mortar."<sup>xl</sup> With the same fervor that possessed him throughout the construction of Main Hall, Smith was soon setting to work devising new additions to his campus.

After the completion of East Hall, three years passed before any further expansion to the campus. The year 1906 saw the addition of yet another dormitory building in a mirror location to that of East Hall. West Hall housed 71 students and, like East Hall, possessed the necessary residential facilities, such as parlors, kitchens, and dining areas, to give it the flavor of an over-scaled private home, just like the halls at Vassar. Covered passages at the second story level, known as the trolleys, connected both East and West Halls to Main Hall. They passed through two other buildings as well that were erected at the same time as West Hall. These buildings marked more progress in the expansion of the campus and were accompanied by the addition of a steam laundry and the enlargement of the chapel to twice its original capacity.

At the start of the 12<sup>th</sup> session of the College, faculty minutes from an October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1904 meeting record President Smith's announcement "that he is setting definitely to work to secure the means to erect the proposed Science Hall, to be located on the line of the arcade planned to connect East Hall with the main building and hopes to have it ready for occupation next September."<sup>xli</sup>

This project too came to fruition in 1906. Smith secured a \$20,000 donation from Andrew Carnegie and the Carnegie Foundation<sup>xlii</sup>, and in addition to West Hall, the Carnegie Science Building (now called the Psychology building) was also constructed. Carnegie sat directly between Main Hall and East Hall, connected to each by two trolleys.

The English-Art building (now known as Thoresen), between West and Main, served as yet another library for the College and along with the Carnegie Science Building showed that the expansion of the College was now more than just a matter of residential needs. The seminary was growing to such an extent that even more classroom space was needed, thus Thoresen was built through a gift from the Jones family (a large plaque bearing their daughters' names can still be seen on the main floor of Thoresen) to accommodate the library facilities. The former library in the east wing of Main Hall was converted into a 'Senior Parlor'.

Like Main Hall, the Carnegie Building, and East Hall, West Hall, the English-Art Building, and Main were also connected by trolleys, forming a five building complex. Randolph-Macon had effectively expanded into the university model by not only separating academic and residential spaces, but by concentrating specific academic pursuits in specific locations. However, the trolleys lent Randolph-Macon a degree of originality. Smith and the architects found a way to escape the limitations of the true seminary model while maintaining the feel of a unified building through the layout and articulation of Main's auxiliary buildings.

"Main Hall and its row of extensions, two buildings to each side, mixed the academic and the residential in the seminary mode, with the enclosed arcades known as

trolleys sustaining the effect of keeping everything and everyone together under one roof. "<sup>xliii</sup>

Main Hall remained the heart of the campus both physically and socially. Later, many students preferred to live in it over the other residence halls, because social events and activity took place there. The other dormitories were considered more isolated and less conducive to participation in campus life. This shows a surprising reversal of student opinion and a turn back towards the seminary model. It seems to support the idea that the seminary design was somewhat ideal, and it was perhaps advantageous that Randolph-Macon tried to maintain its close-knit atmosphere for so long via the trolley convention. In this way it found a balance – maintaining the seminary model, while appearing to adopt the academical village scheme. At any rate, the expansion had been a success, capturing the best of both the seminary and the university models. In the 1905-06 College catalogue it was stated that

"This year a Science Hall and dormitory for a hundred additional students are being added, and twenty thousand dollars have been added to the endowment. The undertaking [meaning the founding of the college] is fully past the experimental stage, and the college is already one of the eight largest 'Division A' colleges for women in the United States." <sup>xliv</sup>

Despite the great success with which the College had been expanding, however, the growth of enrollment and academic course offerings demanded yet more building additions, which would render use of trolleys impractical. In 1909, the seminary ideal was broken for good when two new buildings were constructed on campus, one residential, the other academic/recreational.

When a need for more exercise than simply promenading from East Hall to West Hall through the "Grand Corridor" from eight o'clock to ten o'clock every evening arose, the College opted to construct a gymnasium to serve the campus. The original gymnasium was on completely opposite ends of the campus from the current Physical Education and Recreation building and was located on the back ridge at the west end of campus. The College catalogue described it as a "gymnasium with modern apparatus"<sup>xlv</sup> and it enabled the students of Randolph-Macon to take on a more active lifestyle. Tennis and basketball were played a great deal, and other sports that were offered included bicycling, boating, fencing, and "track-athletics suitable to women."<sup>xlvi</sup>

The other building constructed during the year of 1909, was also at the west end of campus. Wright Hall was built to house 89 additional students and was located on the flatter area of ground at the front corner of the campus. This shows that once the main complex had been completed and still more unattached buildings were needed, they were strategically placed in the site easiest to build on, the level ground of the campus' west end. Stylistically, it was far plainer than East or West Halls, without the very neo-classical columns and pediments gracing the entrance. It was more unassuming, but still melded nicely with the overall scheme of the campus through its red brick and white detailing.

Another small project was undertaken in 1911. Though it was not so monumental as the erection of a new building entirely, it did mean some important additions for the school. Built out from the north front of Main Hall, a new wing was added. It was built between the east wing and the center extension that was the chapel and was simply called the Annex, as it still is today. On the ground floor there were new quarters for the

Physics department (including the room once and sometimes still called the Hygiene Room, complete with a pressed tin ceiling). The main floor housed six recitation rooms and four offices, and the two upper floors held rooms for forty additional students. Notably, these rooms were light, airy and much coveted by students. The classrooms in this wing were considered the best in the College at the time.

At this point Randolph-Macon seemed to reach its maximum expansion for a while. The College went through a fair amount of upheaval with the death of William Waugh Smith in 1913 and the coming and going of a world war. For the next fourteen years the College seemed to operate smoothly enough out of its main complex of five buildings and its outlying residence hall and gym. In 1923 however, growth began again under the supervision of President Anderson. He particularly noted the application and enrollment records at the College and decided to concentrate on building dorms, because the College turned away as many students as it accepted due to lack of housing.

As a result, Webb Hall housed 65 additional students. With the construction of Smith Memorial Building on front campus the level western corner of the property and the ridge were full. The next logical place to build was behind Main Hall. Webb was built here, situated parallel to the length of Main. It must have been the first of the more difficult sites to build on as the ridge slopes off, requiring excavation to accommodate the lower floors of the building. Its style recalls the neo-classical with its ornate pediment-adorned entranceway and the classical dentils around the eaves.

As mentioned, Smith Memorial Building filled the vacancy at the front west corner of Randolph-Macon's property. Constructed between 1922 and 1923 for the sum of \$180,000, the senior class of 1911 originally envisioned it as a "student building".<sup>xlvii</sup>

Though a lengthy amount of time passed before their legacy to the campus was actually constructed, it reflected their original plans with great faithfulness and was bestowed with the name of the College president so influential in their lives and in the shaping of Randolph-Macon's campus. Who better to name a building after than the man who had put so many buildings there in the first place?

Smith, with its neoclassical columns and pediments, but Queen Anne details, like oval, arched, and bow windows and delicate balcony railings, housed a large auditorium with seating capacity for an audience of 1,200. It also had a banqueting room, formal drawing room, quarters and study areas for day students, and offices for alumni organization and student clubs. Thus, it served some of the more social aspects of the College's needs and was a recreational place for students. Like Main Hall it was somewhat of a community place, a center meant for gatherings and events that included the entire college community and beyond.

By the end of the 1920's, residential expansion on Randolph-Macon's campus was basically complete until a more modern period, but the growth of academic facilities continued. In 1929, the current library was built on the awkward site to the east of East Hall, directly on the edge of the campus. Even the original segment of it rested on a sloping section of land and must have presented some interesting engineering challenges. Its spacious reading room, periodicals room, and other facilities, along with offices filled the main floor, while the upper floor contained the many volumes of the College collection.

Randolph-Macon truly took on the university plan with the construction of Presser Music Building in 1930 and Martin Science Building in 1937. Presser was built

on the elevated front east corner of the campus and demonstrates an eclectic style with its round pediment entrance flanked by stairs to an upper entrance. The delicate detailing of its cupola and roof balustrade tie it back to Main Hall's Queen Anne decorative details however.

Martin Science Building rested in the indentation between Presser on Rivermont Avenue and the library on the edge of the main ridge. It has a more neo-classical presence with a dominating ionic portico with a triglyph-endowed frieze and heavy pediment. Both Martin and Presser served the specific departments that their names identify and thus enforce the university model conventions.

"Though in terms of actual distance the separation of Martin and Presser was not great, the division seemed conspicuous because the rest of the campus was so unified. In the nineteenth century these two impulses – seminary and university – represented conflicting views of women's education. The seminary tradition brought mind and body together, suggesting that for women mind could not be considered apart from body. The university tradition separated the intellectual from the physical, suggesting that mind was mind, never mind body – suggesting, in other words, that intellectuality was free of any gender considerations."<sup>xlviii</sup>

The construction of those two buildings saw the end of an era at Randolph-Macon. Though the Main Hall complex is still heavily used today, any lingering notions of the seminary model were completely obliterated from the campus and the university system took over. But aside from planning issues, they also marked the last of a stylistic trend at Randolph-Macon. After Presser and Martin were constructed, other buildings were added to back campus, but none aside from the Terrell Health Center were designed in the Queen Anne and neo-classical Georgian styles that had dominated the campus since its first days. With well-thought consideration, the more modern structures were

placed behind the original complex of buildings and the traditional appearance of the College was preserved to the viewer on Rivermont Avenue, however their presence does mark a definite shift in architectural style at Randolph-Macon. New buildings were no longer given a traditional look that would date them to the early days of the College and aside from the red brick construction no attempt was made to match them with the original buildings.

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- i Chambers, 219  
ii Chambers, 220  
iii via Chambers  
iv Cornelius, 28  
v Cornelius, 32  
vi Cornelius, 42  
vii Cornelius, 43  
viii Cornelius, 59  
ix Cornelius, 59  
x Cornelius, 59  
xi Farnham, 111  
xii Horowitz, 21  
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xiv Horowitz, 4  
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xvii Horowitz, 21  
xviii Bell, 7  
xix Bell, 7  
xx DeBra, 7  
xxi Farnham, 31  
xxii Amy Thompson McCandless, specialist on women's education in the South, via DeBra, page 8  
xxiii DeBra, 8  
xxiv Cornelius, 35  
xxv Cornelius, 34  
xxvi Cornelius, 34  
xxvii Cornelius, 31  
xxviii Horowitz, 24  
xxix Farnham, 143  
xxx Horowitz, 5  
xxxi Horowitz, 107-110  
xxxii Horowitz, 107  
xxxiii Horowitz, 107  
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xlv Cornelius, 73  
xlvi Cornelius, 73  
xlvii Cornelius, 159  
xlviii Bell, 8

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