

About Face: The Coming of Ayres Hall at the University of  
Tennessee

A Thesis Presented for the  
Master of Architecture  
Degree  
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*Our Alma Mater, Tennessee!  
Let thy bright star our beacon be.  
Oh may thy glories never fade,  
Nor harm thy sacred walls invade.*

Second verse of the song "Tennessee," by F.M. Darnall, sung at the centennial celebration of the University, June 3, 1907. Source: "Centennial Celebration of the Founding of the University of Tennessee, June 1 to 4, 1907," *The University of Tennessee Record* 10, no. 7 (October 1907): 6.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In July of 1919, the University of Tennessee demolished its 91-year-old main building (called Old College) to make way for a new one in the same location (later named Ayres Hall). Through review of primary and secondary sources, this thesis investigates the motivations for Old College's demolition and notes the institutional, cultural, and socioeconomic parameters informing Ayres Hall's architectural genesis. Given the academic and aesthetic future the University's administration anticipated, Old College as a main building was considered obsolete and architecturally incompatible, and it sat on a piece of land too prominent to tolerate either. Ayres Hall and Morgan Hall (designed in tandem) were fashioned in such a manner that their exteriors would project the institution's good stewardship and academic relevancy; be somewhat congruent with the Hill's extant buildings; and together come in under a budget of \$800,000.

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## INTRODUCTION

On a brisk, November morning in 1919, a young coed named Blanche Bingham descended into a construction site wearing a union badge and carrying a trowel. Elected to the honor by her onlooking peers, Ms. Bingham proceeded to lay the inaugural brick on the foundation of the University of Tennessee's new main building (which would be named Ayres Hall two years later). This was no ordinary brick, however. Rather, it had been culled from the wreckage of the University's previous, architectural centerpiece – Old College – as had the wood and iron of her special trowel. Why Old College's relics figured so prominently in the ceremony stemmed from the fact that Old College had just recently occupied the same ground that Ayres Hall shortly would.<sup>1</sup>

For a piece of Old College to be transfused to Ayres Hall,<sup>2</sup> obviously Old College meant something – to the student body, at a minimum.<sup>3</sup> And yet, it had just been obliterated by the institution. Forty-seven years later, famed filmmaker and 1910 alumnus Clarence Brown underscored the disconnect when he facetiously grilled University administrators (who by then had nothing to do with

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<sup>1</sup> "First Brick Laid in New Building," *Orange and White*, December 4, 1919.

<sup>2</sup> There was, at one point, talk of utilizing a stone door frame from Old College in Ayres Hall as well, though it apparently never came to pass. The contrast of styles would doubtlessly have been off-putting. See "To Keep 'Old College' Door," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 28, 1919.

<sup>3</sup> The brick-laying ceremony appeared to be a rather unofficial affair. No mention was made in the *Orange and White* article of administrators or dignitaries being on hand, and the event was not covered in the *Knoxville Sentinel*. There was a much more official affair thereafter with the cornerstone laying ceremony – an event attended by prominent people and documented in the papers. One can only surmise that the brick-laying ceremony was not something the administration wholeheartedly supported.

the demolition) about why they had razed Old College.<sup>4</sup> Compounding the intrigue is the knowledge that this was not just any old building, but rather the oldest on the campus, and purportedly the oldest of its kind west of the Appalachians (though this is debatable). Old College constituted the iconic image of the institution for 91 of its [then] 123 years, serving as the University's most important and indelible edifice – that is, until suddenly it was not.

What replaced Old College has, in time, become equally as precious to the campus – to the point that Old College is utterly forgotten. Named for University President Brown Ayres in 1921 (two years after his sudden death curtailed his

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Brakebill, interview by author, Knoxville, TN, May 1, 2013. In September 1967, University of Tennessee President Dr. Andrew Holt, University Vice President Dr. Edward Boling, future University Vice President Charles Brakebill, and U.S. Senator Herbert Walters entertained Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Brown at a Century Plaza Hotel suite in Los Angeles, on the occasion of the Tennessee vs. UCLA football game. Mr. Brakebill recounted that, of their invitations to anyone in the area “who had even *walked* across Tennessee,” only the famed filmmaker and 1910 University alumnus responded affirmatively to the event.

Beforehand, it was suggested to Holt that, as host, he should ready some cocktails to offer the Browns, seeing as “everyone in the movies seemed to have a drink in one hand and a cigarette in the other,” Brakebill recalled. Holt, a teetotaler, was not keen on the notion, but he relented. When Brakebill – who personally procured some bourbon, scotch, and gin bottles – offered a libation to the Browns, Mr. Brown replied that he had not had a drink since his arrival in Los Angeles, and he was not about to start that evening.

“That was strike one,” said Brakebill, who was eyeing a significant donation from the Browns.

After a sit-down dinner, the Tennessee contingent showcased a slideshow of current views of the Knoxville campus, and they decided to start with an image of Ayres Hall, since Clarence Brown had once dated President Ayres’ daughter, Elizabeth. At the sight of Ayres Hall, and with the remembrance of what it replaced, Brown facetiously demanded of his hosts: “Why in the *hell* did you tear down Old College?” Forty-seven years later, he was still displeased with the University.

“That was strike two,” said Brakebill.

Strike three apparently came when the Tennessee contingent asked for a half-million-dollar donation from the Browns, which Mr. Brown said he would take under advisement before taking leave of the party. It was not all for naught, however. The Browns eventually subsidized the construction of the University theater that today bears Clarence Brown’s name, via a series of gifts that eventually totaled an unprecedented \$12 million – then the largest gift to any of the University’s programs.

incumbency), Ayres Hall has now existed slightly longer atop “the Hill” than Old College did (in fact, it will celebrate its centenary in 2021).<sup>5</sup> So many buildings compatible with its materials and styling have arisen around Ayres Hall that this visible patrimony perpetuates the common misconception that Ayres Hall is an early University building. It can be surprising for some to learn that the main building of this more than 200 year-old institution is a 20<sup>th</sup> century structure.

Regardless, Ayres Hall is widely cherished, especially in recent years. There is hardly a piece of University propaganda – be it in still or moving images – that does not feature Ayres Hall’s elevation in total or abstract. As evidence of Ayres Hall’s value to the institution, the University devoted 23 million dollars from 2008 to 2010 to preserve, restore, and in some cases complete both the building’s interior and exterior<sup>6</sup>. Under the University’s initiative in 2012, Ayres Hall was added to the U.S. Department of the Interior’s National Register of Historic Places.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps most indicative of its appeal, however, is the fact that Ayres Hall is currently viewed by the Knoxville campus as a stylistic template for forthcoming building exteriors.<sup>8</sup>

Given its esteem, it seems unconscionable for Ayres Hall – or for that matter any main building on any American campus – to face creative destruction, and yet

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<sup>5</sup> “Campus of U.T. is State of Tennessee,” *Maryville Times*, May 16, 1921

<sup>6</sup> Aaron Osborne, “UT’s Ayres Hall now ‘greenest’ building on campus,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, July 6, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Somewhat controversially, Ayres Hall was added to the National Register *after* its renovation and not before.

<sup>8</sup> University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Long Range Master Plan, September 8, 2011, 3-7.

the same iconoclasm befell its predecessor nearly a century ago. So, why was Old College demolished when its immediate successor is virtually untouchable today, and why was Ayres Hall's exterior designed the way it was?

The answers to these questions first require a sweeping survey of the University's history, beginning before Tennessee was even a state. As the first chapter relates, from its inception as a Presbyterian seminary, through its secular transformations into Blount College and East Tennessee College, the institution wallowed in financial troubles. Yet in 1822 its luck improved slightly – enough to soon purchase what would eventually become known as “the Hill” and to erect on top of it a 10-room, brick building with a cupola (what would ultimately be called “Old College”). Unfortunately that building, and the manner in which it was funded, attracted considerable criticism from populists and the uneducated, as did the institution's classical curriculum (which was labeled aloof and impractical).

With the enrollment and title of a “University,” its finances, its curriculum, and its physical plant became intertwined as it desperately chased funding from federal and state legislatures. After winning the state's Land-Grant patronage under the federal Morrill Act, the University focused more on agricultural and mechanical studies to comply with the act's curricular stipulations (which no doubt pleased the University's utilitarian critics). With that came increased enrollments, mounting debt in spite of the Morrill funds, and a growing yet overcrowded hodgepodge of a campus. During the presidency of Dr. Brown Ayres, however, the state legislature

at last appropriated recurring aid as well as a singular, unprecedented \$800,000 for building construction. At last, liberal arts could resurge, and the campus could be reimagined comprehensively.

Chapter Two describes the difficulty of revolutionizing the campus. Under the design of Chicago architect Grant C. Miller and at the urging of Dr. Ayres, the University commissioned a new main building on the site of Old College, which would either have to be demolished, moved, or augmented. The University favored demolition but still offered alumni the opportunity to relocate it. In a turn of events from almost a century earlier, many in the public rose to defend Old College (citing its historical, commemorative, and age values), but not enough of them donated the sum necessary to attempt moving it. Old College was demolished in July 1919.

Chapter Three analyzes this demolition episode using the rhetoric of two letters to the editor of the *Knoxville News Sentinel*; it also explores the dismissed option to augment Old College to reveal motivations for demolishing or relocating Old College. Furthermore, this chapter delves into the subsequent fundraising for Shields-Watkins Field to highlight the relatively tepid response Old College's preservation elicited from the community.

The fourth chapter describes the Board of Trustees' peculiar choice of Elizabethan Revival as a standard architectural style for Ayres Hall, citing its compatibility (with the existing campus building stock) and its affordability.

Elizabethan was historically a hybrid of Gothicism and classicism – the most common campus architectural styles at the time – and its selection was likely calculated, not only for the sake of continuity and cost, but also for the architect's and the institution's expediency. What is especially interesting about this fusion of styles at the University of Tennessee is the degree to which Miller, Fullenwider, and Dowling carried it through to their master planning of the campus. Such indicates the importance to the institution of subduing one style with the other.

Finally, the fifth chapter delves into why the institution might have wanted a more gothic building than a classical building, but still not a resolutely gothic building. Knoxville at the time – more than its hinterlands – was the center of a robust commercial economy, one that likely exacerbated a disparity of wealth and feelings of exploitation amongst the working class (many of them rural in-migrants). This was the same population historically skeptical of the University. Beaux-Arts Classicism carried connotations of monopoly capitalism, and Collegiate Gothic could be deemed elitist, so neither of these ostentatious styles outright would have held useful associations for an institution shedding a popular polytechnic focus, seeking broad financial support in a politically divided state, and operating out a region traditionally suspicious of higher education.

## CHAPTER ONE BUILDING THE UNIVERSITY

What would eventually become the University of Tennessee began as Reverend Samuel Carrick's domiciliary seminary in the Southwest Territory's capital of Knoxville. Established in 1792, the seminary – like most Presbyterian schools of the time – emphasized the classics alongside theology. Two years later, the Territory granted Carrick's seminary a new, secular charter as Blount College, though no public funds attended the upgrade and the curriculum remained unstintingly classical. Operating expenses continued to be shouldered by the tuition of the college's relatively privileged and sometimes unqualified enrollment.<sup>9</sup>

Tuition, however, was not enough to carry the institution over the next two decades, and insolvency persisted through well-intentioned but unrealistic public funding schemes. One such scheme was the Compact of 1806, a compromise between Tennessee (a State since 1796) and North Carolina regarding contested land warrants. A section of the Compact allocated considerable acreage for public schools, and ultimately Blount College gained 50,000 acres of former Cherokee-reservation lands.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately for the college, much of these lands were already occupied by white squatters who often refused to buy their claims at the going rate or even at all, forcing the college (which by 1807 was officially known

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<sup>9</sup> James Riley Montgomery, Stanley J. Folmsbee, and Lee Seifert Greene, *To Foster Knowledge: A History of the University of Tennessee, 1774-1970* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1984).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-20. At \$2.00 an acre, this should have generated \$100,000 for the college, but instead, the college only sold \$8,350 of unclaimed land from this grant by 1820.

as “East Tennessee College”) into the unpromising and politically unsavory role as collector. Another ill-fated fundraising scheme was a lottery held in 1810, which two years later netted just \$450 of the expected \$8,250.<sup>11</sup> Ex-President Thomas Jefferson was asked by the college’s lottery trustees to act as a ticket salesman, to which he declined but seminally offered his unsolicited [and ultimately unheeded] advice on the college’s physical planning: that it be the “academical village” he would go on to realize at the University of Virginia.<sup>12</sup>

In light of its dire finances, and due to the failures of these fundraisers and the death of President Carrick, the college was forced to close in 1809, and remained so for approximately eleven more years. With an encouraging enrollment and cost-saving consolidation with Hampden-Sidney Academy, it reopened in 1820.<sup>13</sup> Its fortunes improved ever so slightly from there. In 1822, land warrants for 20,000 Tennessee acres previously claimed by the University of North Carolina (since Tennessee had once been a part of North Carolina) were transferred to East Tennessee College at an eventual gain of \$19,000. Also, in 1823 Tennessee’s legislature took up the matter of the disappointing revenues from the Compact of 1806 lands, mandating an installment plan for the squatters and vesting

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>12</sup> Milton M. Klein, *Volunteer Moments: Vignettes of the History of the University of Tennessee, 1794-1994* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee, 1994), 53.

<sup>13</sup> Hampden-Sidney Academy was a local, secondary school – not to be confused with Hampden-Sydney College of Virginia.

East Tennessee College with the power to foreclose upon them. This did little to expedite payment, however, and much to foment resentment towards the college.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, with their new endowment, East Tennessee College moved to upgrade their environs. Since leaving Carrick's residence sometime after 1795, the college had operated from a two-story, clapboard building at the present-day southeast corner of Gay and Clinch Streets (what is today the site of the Tennessee Theatre). The trustees predicted larger classes and, like many peer institutions, desired a natural, remote campus; so in 1826 they paid \$600 for 40 acres encompassing Barbara Hill, just west of the city.<sup>15</sup> In the words of the trustees, the location was practically ideal:

...the shape of the Hill, the commanding view from it and to it in every direction, the excellence of the water, its distance from the town, being near and yet secluded, its position between the river and main western road, from each of which it would be in full view for a considerable distance, to give publicity and to facilitate intercourse, together with its unquestionable healthfulness, render it a scite [sic] as eligible, almost, as the imagination can conceive.<sup>16</sup>

To crown the pinnacle of Barbara Hill, the trustees commissioned of John Mason a two-story, Adam-styled masonry building topped by "an observatory and a belfry" – what would eventually become known as "Central College" and later "Old College" (figs. 1 & 2). It was their intent to have it be of the best materials

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<sup>14</sup> Montgomery, Folmsbee, and Greene.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Venable Turner, *Campus: An American Planning Tradition* (New York: Architectural History Foundation / MIT Press, 1984). Montgomery, Folmsbee, and Greene, *To Foster Knowledge*, 24.

<sup>16</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees of East Tennessee College, October 18, 1826, as cited in Montgomery, Folmsbee, and Greene, *To Foster Knowledge*, 24. According to the University of Tennessee's Special Collections Archivist, this volume of the Board of Trustees' Minutes is lost.



Figure 1. Undated photograph of the south façade of Old College (at center), well after the 1841 construction of West and East Colleges to the left and right, respectively. In this image, Old College still has its cupola.  
Source: University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0018, Box 8, Folder 31), Knoxville, TN.



Figure 2. Undated, later photograph of the north façade of Old College, with West College off to the right. Note the presence of ivy, the elliptical fanlight transom over the doorway, and the Serlian window above the transom (the latter two being indications of the Adam or Federal Style). Also note the absence of the cupola.  
Source: University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0018, Box 12, Folder 27), Knoxville, TN.

and workmanship that the country can afford,"<sup>17</sup> the better to compete with regional schools.<sup>18</sup> Completed in 1828, the 10-room, 6,500 square-foot building cost \$13,000, which given its situational prominence, made it a lightning rod for those demagogues who decried its apparent extravagance and its exclusive benefit.<sup>19</sup> For instance, Thomas Arnold, candidate for Congress in 1827, disdained the new building as a gross misuse of grifted land revenues:

We have a law that if one man loans money to another, and charges him six per cent. [sic] interest per annum, it shall be deemed and held to be usury, and the money lender subject to all the pains and penalties thereof. But these College Trustees, who are using your money to build lighthouses of the sky on them, for the sons of a few great men to go up and star-gaze; they have a law passed for their special benefit, which authorizes these gentlemen, when your lands have been sold, because you had not the money to pay your installments, and when perhaps you have sold your last cow to get the money, to charge you ten per centum [sic], instead of six.<sup>20</sup>

Later, Dr. John Gunn, campaigning for the state legislature in 1829, hyperbolically assailed this building as an ivory tower:

Behold that great rotunda – that monument of folly, the College. That building for the rich man's son – that building which closes its doors against the poor man's child; for let him give the best character he can, according to the present state of things, he can not enter this temple of aristocracy. Why do they forget that the south-of-the-river people paid drop by drop of sweat, to erect this tomb of extravagance – this wild goose scheme – this fanciful –

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<sup>17</sup> James King, William C. Mynatt, and Pryor Lea, "Notice to Mechanics," *Knoxville Enquirer*, November 22, 1826.

<sup>18</sup> "East Tennessee College," *Knoxville Register*, October 22, 1828.

<sup>19</sup> James King, William C. Mynatt, and Pryor Lea, "Notice to Mechanics," *Knoxville Enquirer*, November 22, 1826; "East Tennessee College," *Knoxville Register*, October 22, 1828. Moses White, *Early History of the University of Tennessee: Address before the Alumni Association* (Knoxville, TN: Whig and Chronicle Printing Co.'s Steam Job Office, 1879). Old College's footprint measured 65 feet wide by 50 feet deep.

<sup>20</sup> White, *Early History of the University of Tennessee*, 1879, 26-27.

this melancholy building, raising its proud front on an isolated hill, until you become exhausted to reach the summit.<sup>21</sup>

It was just this sort of vituperative distrust of institutions (as rigged against the commoner) that propelled Tennessean Andrew Jackson to the Presidency in 1828, and it was a populist prejudice – a curse of the Compact of 1806 – that the college would have to contend with for some time. In 1833, and again in 1834, the college sought replacements for presidents who resigned in despair over the dearth of popular goodwill and financial support. With the advent of Joseph Estabrook as its president, the institution bowed to Jacksonian Democracy and the Industrial Revolution by augmenting its heavily Greco-Roman curriculum with more vocational courses like engineering, mathematics, modern languages, and sciences. The college's decrescendo of classical subjects continued well into the 1850s, as the institution acquired the title of "East Tennessee University" and its enrollments swelled, but this did little to encourage private or governmental patronage.<sup>22</sup>

In June of 1861, Tennessee seceded from the Union, and six months later the University was commandeered by the Confederacy, forcing it to close. Old College, its two flanking dormitories (East and West Colleges, ca. 1841), and several other structures were converted for use as military hospitals, among other things. By September 1863, College Hill (as Barbara Hill was now being called)

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<sup>21</sup> White, 27. Gunn also asserted that the College overpaid on brick for the new building by as much as 160%, and that the steeple alone cost a fifth of the total price.

<sup>22</sup> Montgomery, Folmsbee, & Greene.

fell into Union hands after the Confederates fled, with its buildings being taken for a hospital and battery complex during the nearby Battle of Fort Sanders. Federal troops named their collegiate citadel “Fort Byington” after a fallen commander and, during their roughly 21-month occupation, sustained onslaught but managed to inflict far more damage to the premises themselves. Indeed, the landscape was decimated in the aftermath of the Knoxville Campaign (fig. 3) and the remaining buildings left unusable, so not surprisingly, the University sought recompense from the United States Government. In the meantime, the University reopened at Knoxville’s Deaf and Dumb Asylum from 1866 to 1867, while repairs were made.<sup>23</sup>

Reparations eventually came from Washington, but no doubt the most consequential aid the University received during Reconstruction attended its designation as the State’s Land-Grant institution. The Morrill Land-Grant College Act, signed in 1862, granted to each state 30,000 acres of territory per Congressional member, in support of agricultural and mechanical studies at a collegiate institution of the state’s choice.<sup>24</sup> Largely because of East Tennessee’s traditional sympathy for the Union, and because post-war, statewide politics were artificially dominated by Republicans, East Tennessee University won the prize. This was consequential for the University not only for the monetary implications (a \$369,000 principal, all told), but for the curricular stipulations; the provisions of

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<sup>23</sup> Digby Gordon Seymour, *Divided Loyalties: Fort Sanders and the Civil War in East Tennessee*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Knoxville, TN: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1982), 154, 257-59; Montgomery, Folmsbee, and Greene; White, 47.

<sup>24</sup> Since Tennessee had withdrawn from the United States by 1862, it was not eligible at the time.

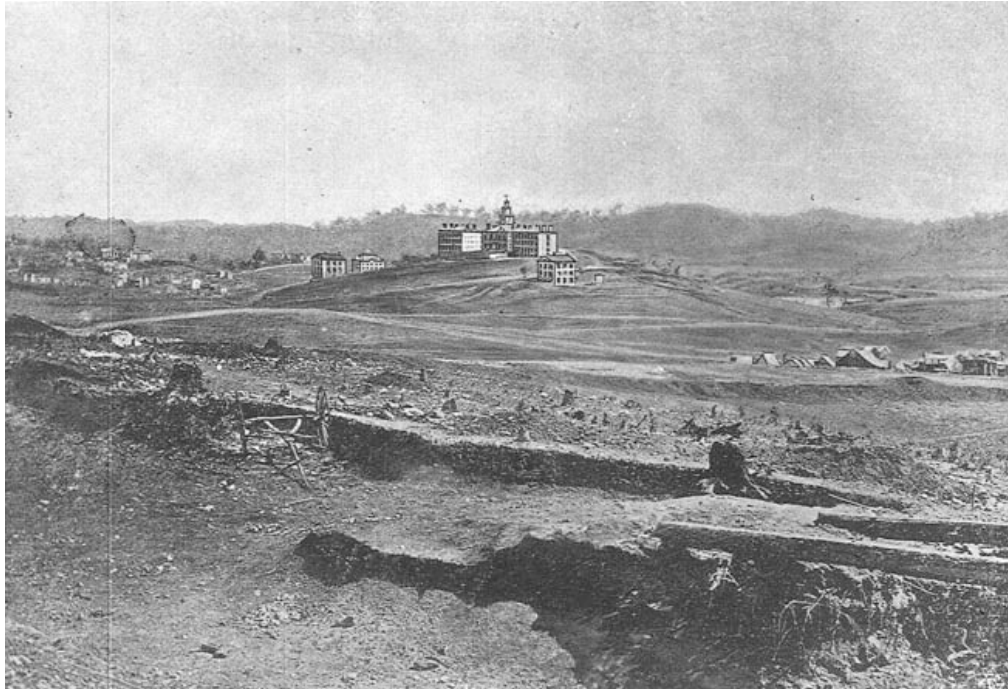


Figure 3. Photograph (with inked outlines) of College Hill from Fort Sanders, ca. 1863. Source: University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0018, Box 6, Folder 19), Knoxville, TN.

the Morrill Act dictated that at each beneficiary institution the primary focus should be agriculture and mechanical arts (with scientific, classical, and military studies secondary). East Tennessee University, despite its prior concessions to its critics, was still a predominantly classical institution.<sup>25</sup>

To qualify for Morrill funding, the University set about altering its curricular structure, among other things. At first, agriculture and mechanical arts were merely welcomed as an addition to an otherwise unchanged University (i.e. to not be its leading object), but after considerable criticism and the threat of Morrill Act noncompliance, the University superficially reorganized itself into three divisions:

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<sup>25</sup> Montgomery, Folmsbee, and Greene.

Agriculture and Organic Arts; Mechanic Arts, Mining, and Engineering; and Languages and Fine Arts. This was merely for appearances, however, as the University, headed by President and ardent classicist Thomas Humes, had no intention of sacrificing what it believed to be the *sine qua non* of higher education, to the production of “fair farm hands” or “good journeyman mechanics.” Such stoicism eventually cost Humes his job in 1883.<sup>26</sup>

In the four-year presidential vacuum, the Trustees of the University – formally recognized as the “University of Tennessee” since 1879 – introduced more courses in agriculture and the mechanical arts and made some of them mandatory – all in deference to a popular notion that, if the University desired public support, it should devote itself to a practical education befitting the modest majority of its constituency. Ironically, this came even as the State had never devoted monies from its treasury to the University, and would not for years. Regardless, the Trustees elected the German-educated Virginian Dr. Charles Dabney their next president in 1887, not least of which for his expressed views on the need for Land-Grant colleges to elevate polytechnic studies with literary ones. Through aggressive faculty reorganization, Dabney’s revised curriculum made classical and liberal arts studies minor elements of a predominantly agricultural and

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<sup>26</sup> Stanley J. Folmsbee, *East Tennessee University 1840-1879: Predecessor of the University of Tennessee* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1959), 111.

mechanical-arts institution, reflecting his belief that learned men in these disciplines were necessary to patriotically monetize the region's natural resources.<sup>27</sup>

Enrollment practically doubled during Dabney's tenure (to 729 at the end), but physically the campus struggled to keep up. From 1887 to 1904, Estabrook Hall, Carrick Hall, Reese Hall, Science Hall, and Barbara Blount Hall all appeared on College Hill – none via either Morrill or State funds. Such a self-financed building-boom left the University quite poor. Salaries were cut, positions eliminated, and other improvements deferred at the turn of the century – all convincing Dabney that the relative lack of state support would never enable him to develop the University into a major institution. He left in 1904 to be replaced by Dr. Brown Ayres.<sup>28</sup>

Ayres inherited an insolvent University whose undergraduate departments of Agriculture, Engineering, Literary, and Education were all tellingly subsumed within the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts. A physicist by training, Ayres quickly set about reorganizing the University into coequal departments (and later colleges) such as Graduate, Liberal Arts, Engineering, Agriculture, Industrial, Medical, Dental, Law, and Pharmacy. Gone was the official bias toward agriculture and the mechanical arts; in its place were a commitment to academic breadth and a zeal to prove that the University deserved the State's perpetual support, as Ayres described in his inaugural address:

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<sup>27</sup> Montgomery, Folmsbee, and Greene; Klein.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

In its effort to adjust itself to modern demands and conditions it [the University] should take care that it does not simply become a trade school.... It must stand for scholarship and culture; but above all else it must stand for service. It must serve its students, it must serve the cause of truth in whatever form it may arise; but it must also serve its community in the development of commerce and industry; and in the amelioration of the condition of its toiling inhabitants.<sup>29</sup>

The State Legislature slowly warmed to the idea: with persuasion, \$50,000 were allocated in 1907 and 1908, and 1.75% of the state's gross tax revenue was promised to the University in 1909. Unfortunately, the proceeds from the 1909 act amounted to less than was expected, and even with a percentage increase in 1913, the University's debt ballooned. By 1915, the growth of the University put such strains on its finances that its leadership felt desperate enough to lobby the Legislature for a million dollars.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Brown Ayres, Inaugural Address, April 1905, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0001, Box 3, Folder 4), Knoxville, TN.

<sup>30</sup> James Riley Montgomery, "The University of Tennessee during the Administration of President Brown Ayres, 1904-1919" (master's thesis, University of Tennessee, 1956), 90-92; Montgomery, Folmsbee, & Greene.

## CHAPTER TWO SUPPLANTING OLD COLLEGE

### A Need and an Opportunity

In March of 1917, Tennessee State Senate Bill 728 was signed into law by Governor Thomas C. Rye, approving an unprecedented \$1 million bond issue for the University's benefit as well as a permanent, annual share of statewide property taxes.<sup>31</sup> The proceeds from the bond issue – with the exception of \$200,000 – were stipulated explicitly "...for the erection of such additional buildings and improvements as the Board of Trustees of the University shall decide to be necessary for its proper development."<sup>32</sup>

It was a momentous and long-fought victory for the University. Bereft of significant state funding for nearly its entire existence, and the least publicly endowed of its southern peers, the University displayed its dereliction through its overcrowded and Civil-War-torn buildings.<sup>33</sup> Amid burgeoning enrollments, as early as 1914 the University had made desperate appeals to legislators for appropriations that would enable a "satisfactory plant" in compliance with Morrill

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<sup>31</sup> This chapter began as the author's final submission to the University of Tennessee course "ARCH 580: Thesis Prep" in December 2012.

<sup>32</sup> "Senate Bill 728," *Orange and White*, April 7, 1917.

<sup>33</sup> The Legislative Committee of the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, *The University of Tennessee: Why It Needs and Should Have Special Aid from the General Assembly at This Time* (December 29, 1914); Henry Nelson Snyder, *An Educational Odyssey* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1947), 158.

Act dictates.<sup>34</sup> A University-sponsored propagandist pamphlet (presumably distributed to legislators in 1914) exhorted:

The continual and rapid growth of student attendance at the University and the steady increase in its various forms of service to the state have made imperative the immediate provision of more space for the actual instruction of classes. The number of students in attendance has increased so greatly during the past few years that the University has reached a point where there is absolutely no room for expansion in its present very plain buildings. There is not a single extra class room [sic] that can be used for sections that will become absolutely necessary to accommodate the increasing number of students. The attendance has nearly trebled in the past ten years, and the attendance at Knoxville has increased more than two hundred during the past two years. The present class rooms [sic] are small and inadequate to accommodate the large groups that must be handled already. There is every prospect that the growth will continue....<sup>35</sup>

Ergo, growth of the University's enrollment was far outpacing its ability to accommodate that enrollment, and what amounted to cumulatively negligible aid from the State prior to 1917 ignored the substantial debt the University undertook to mitigate the problem. In a letter to the Chairman of the State Senate's Ways and Means Committee just a month prior to the million-dollar bond issue, Dean of the College of Agriculture Harcourt A. Morgan enumerated the University's capital expenditures as prompted by "the necessity to give room for the increasing number

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<sup>34</sup> The Legislative Committee of the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, *The University of Tennessee: Why It Needs and Should Have Special Aid from the General Assembly at This Time* (December 29, 1914), 3, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0015, Box 35, Folder 31), Knoxville, TN.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

of students since 1898"; nearly \$100,000 had been borrowed to enable incremental renovations, additions, and new buildings since 1898.<sup>36</sup>

What is interesting is how the University as early as 1914 envisioned a sweeping, proactive solution to their space shortages – beyond the stopgap measures of the past and well in advance of the necessary funding to execute such a solution. The same pamphlet urged,

We should now plan for the erection of a great academic hall, or group of halls, on the top of "the Hill" at Knoxville, a superb location. With the modest appropriation asked for [\$100,000 at this time] we can construct one wing of the great structure. This will temporarily relieve the present congested condition and the completion of the building can be carried forward better.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Interruption of War**

Not even a month after the million dollar bond issue, however, the United States officially entered the first World War, and immediately the area's thoughts – including those pertaining to the University's physical plant – were held captive to the war effort. Indirectly, the conflict either limited what *could* be built (on account of rationing or price-inflation) or dictated what *should* be built (preferably something pertinent to the war effort). President Brown Ayres accordingly

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<sup>36</sup> "Senate Bill 728," *Orange and White*, April 7, 1917; Harcourt A. Morgan to Honorable J. Parks Worley (Chairman, Ways & Means Committee, Senate Chamber, Nashville, Tennessee), February 7, 1917, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0001, Box 3, Folder 1), Knoxville, TN.

<sup>37</sup> The Legislative Committee of the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, *The University of Tennessee: Why It Needs and Should Have Special Aid from the General Assembly at This Time* (December 29, 1914), 8, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0015, Box 35, Folder 31), Knoxville, TN.

announced in July of 1918 that, of the funds earmarked for facilities under the million-dollar bond issue, the first of those would most likely go towards building an armory/gymnasium at Wait Field instead of academic buildings on the Hill.

Ayres even personally lobbied the War Industries Board in Washington and Tennessee's National Council of Defense for permission to erect such facilities for their Student Army Training Corps (SATC) – the growth of which, by September of 1918, had prompted the University to build temporary barracks for 200 men.<sup>38</sup>

The martial emphasis at UT was luckily short-lived: the Armistice with Germany was signed in November of 1918, the SATC was demobilized the following month, and as a result the University was once again free to pursue a civilian building program (though perhaps presciently, the Board of Trustees had previously approved "designs" submitted by a "Chicago firm of architects" for a "central administration building" (fig. 4) and an armory/gymnasium (fig. 5), pending clearance by the War Industries Board).<sup>39</sup> By mid-December, the Board of Trustees shelved the plans for an armory/gymnasium and instead approved the preparation of plans for an agricultural building (what would eventually become

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<sup>38</sup> "Trustees Make Future Plans," *Orange and White*, October 6, 1917; "U.T. Board May Confer July 23," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 12, 1918; "New Building at U.T.," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 24, 1918; "Ask Permit for Armory," *Knoxville Sentinel*, August 2, 1918; "700 Can Eat at Jefferson Hall," *Knoxville Sentinel*, September 25, 1918; "Three New Buildings at U.T. May Cost More Than \$800,000," *Knoxville Sentinel*, May 23, 1919.

<sup>39</sup> "Demobilize U.T. S.A.T.C. Today," *Knoxville Sentinel*, December 5, 1918; "U.T. Trustees to Plan Buildings," *Knoxville Sentinel*, December 16, 1918.

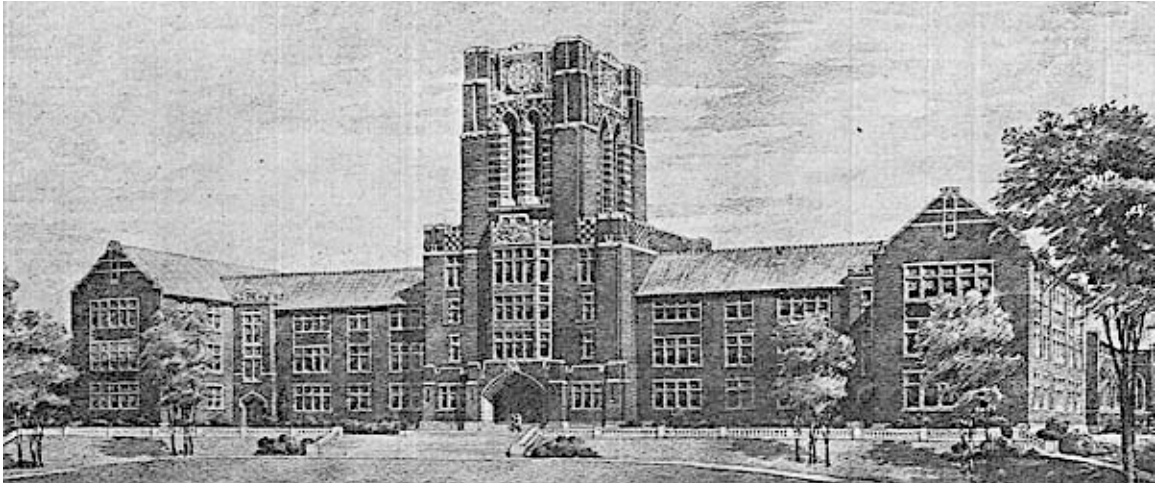


Figure 4. Rendering of the north facade of the “Proposed Main Hall” (later Ayres Hall) by Miller, Fullenwider, & Dowling. Source: *The 1919 Volunteer: A Year Book* (Knoxville, TN: The Students of the University of Tennessee, 1919), 20. This image was erroneously labeled as the “New Administration Building” in the *Volunteer*.

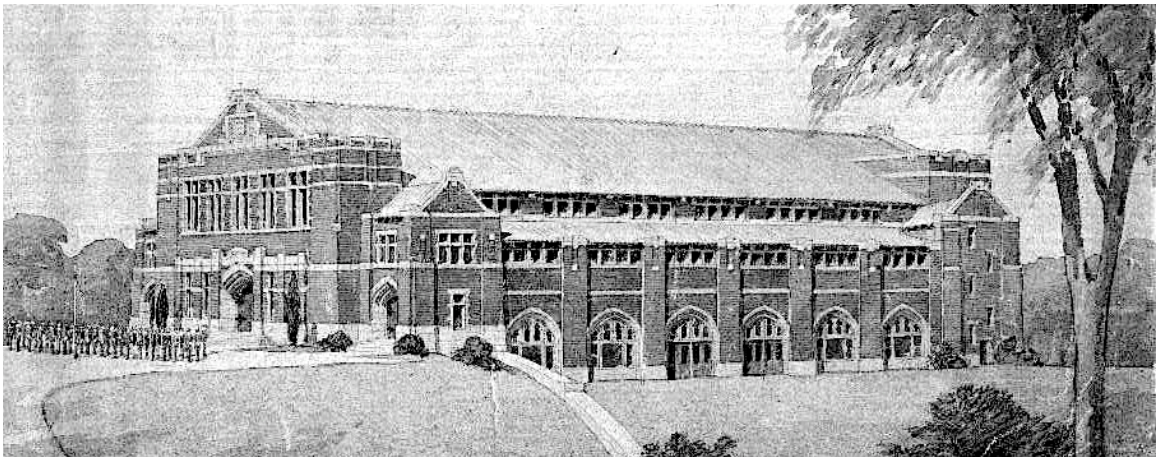


Figure 5. Rendering for the “Proposed Gymnasium” (unbuilt) by Miller, Fullenwider, & Dowling. Source: University of Tennessee Facilities Services Archives.

Morgan Hall; fig. 6) in tandem with the central administration building (otherwise known as the “main building” and later “Ayres Hall”).<sup>40</sup>



Figure 6. Rendering for the “Proposed Agricultural Hall” (later Morgan Hall) by Miller, Fullenwider, & Dowling. Source: *The 1920 Volunteer* (Knoxville, TN: The Students of the University of Tennessee, 1920), 24.

### **The Chicago Firm**

The “Chicago firm of architects” invited to submit designs in May of 1918 was that of Miller, Fullenwider, and Dowling, which was led by Illinois-native Grant Clark Miller (1870-1956).<sup>41</sup> Miller’s firm was an outgrowth of his dissolved partnership with Normand Smith Patton (1852-1915) in 1912.<sup>42</sup> Patton and Miller,

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<sup>40</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, University of Tennessee, Vol. 7, December 17, 1918, 93-95, University of Tennessee Special Collections, Knoxville, TN.

<sup>41</sup> The other marquee partners were Arthur E. Fullenwider and Edward F. Dowling.

<sup>42</sup> Van Slyck, *Free to All*.

as they were known professionally before separating, studied domestically<sup>43</sup> and made a name for themselves designing collegiate buildings and scores of Carnegie libraries – in a plethora of styles – throughout the Midwest.<sup>44</sup> Fatefully, one of the Carnegie libraries they designed together was the University of Tennessee’s library building in 1909-1911 (fig. 7).<sup>45</sup> Miller must have made quite an impression then, because a few years later the citizens of Knoxville commissioned him to design a new home for the Lawson-McGhee Library (ca. 1915; fig. 8).<sup>46</sup> That he would just a few years later receive as high-profile and consequential a commission as the University of Tennessee’s main building – over any local or in-state practitioners, and instead of any contemporary architects with nationally recognized academic specialties – was obviously a testament to his appeal.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Van Slyck, *Free to All*. Mr. Patton graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Mr. Miller from the University of Illinois.

<sup>44</sup> Van Slyck, *Free to All*; Grant C. Miller, *Grant C. Miller, Architect* (Chicago: Grant C. Miller, 19--).

<sup>45</sup> Brown Ayres to the Superintendent of Public Instruction of Tennessee for the biennial period of 1910-1911 and 1911-1912, undated, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0001, Box 3, Folder 4). In this report, President Ayres remarked of the Carnegie Library: “It has been in use for something more than a year and has proven eminently satisfactory in every way.”

<sup>46</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “Lawson McGhee Library, 217 Market Street, Knoxville, TN,” by Joseph L. Herndon and Susan McCown, Historic American Buildings Survey Report, HABS No. TN-213 (Washington, DC, 1985).

<sup>47</sup> It is not known just what that appeal was, however, since the vetting process for an architect is not described in the Board of Trustees’ Minutes or in the *Knoxville Sentinel*. That Miller’s unlikely selection for the new main building could have had something to do with the institution thinking he represented a bargain is not evident either, because he received a “customary” fee of 6% of the cost of construction (Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, July 23, 1918, 75-77), and he earned a reputation with the Carnegie Corporation for devious cost-overruns (see Van Slyck, *Free to All*). Regardless, in January of 1919, Knoxville native John F. Staub (who would later achieve broad renown as a Houston residential architect) publicly lamented the selection of Miller’s firm over prominent higher-education architectural firms like that of Ralph Adams Cram and Parker, Thomas, and Rice. Those firms, he thought, possessed better judgment regarding what to do with existing built heritage (see John Fanz Staub, letter to the editor, *Knoxville Sentinel*, January 14, 1919).



Figure 1. Undated photograph of the Carnegie Library (completed 1911; now remodeled as the Austin Peay Building), by Patton & Miller. Source: University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0018, Box 7, Folder 9), Knoxville, TN.



Figure 2. Undated photograph of the Lawson-McGhee Library, Knoxville, TN (completed 1915; demolished), by Miller, Fullenwider, and Dowling, in association with A.B. Baumann. Source: University of Tennessee Special Collections (MS.0951, Box 2, Folder 2), Knoxville, TN.

## The Conundrum

Apparently, President Ayres had “long dreamed” of the aforementioned “great academic hall, or group of halls” crowning the Hill (and contemporaneous to the Carnegie Library design in 1909, he had asked Grant Miller to sketch a design for a new main building “for the top of our Hill”).<sup>48</sup> However, there were of course three buildings already there: East, Old, and West Colleges (fig. 9). East and West Colleges, as far as public record indicates, were never considered for anything but demolition, but the fate of Old College under President Ayres’ vision was, in the beginning, uncertain to both the University community and the University’s leadership.<sup>49</sup>

The uncertainty no doubt stemmed from Old College’s venerable status as the campus’ oldest and most prominent building, not to mention the array of options available for dealing with it, which were summarized cogently by Civil Engineering Professor and Alumni Association Executive Secretary Nathan W. Dougherty:

There are three possible solutions of the problem offered by Old College. First, it may be torn down and its place occupied by a modern structure to suit the needs of the university; second, it may be removed from its present site and its space occupied by a new building; third, it may be incorporated in the plans for the new group of buildings. The first of these is undesirable

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<sup>48</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, February 10, 1919, 105; The Legislative Committee of the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, *The University of Tennessee: Why It Needs and Should Have Special Aid from the General Assembly at This Time* (December 29, 1914), 8; Brown Ayres to Patton and Miller, December 23, 1909. University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0004, Box 23, Folder 439.1), Knoxville, TN.

<sup>49</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, June 2, 1919, 134.

if either of the other two may be accomplished satisfactorily. However, should there not be space available, or should it be impossible to incorporate Old College in a new group of buildings and still make that group what it should be, Old College should be torn down and completely removed.<sup>50</sup>



Figure 9. The Hill (supposedly ca. 1885) from north of Cumberland Avenue (in the foreground), showing (L-R) Humes Hall, South College, East College, Old College (with cupola), and West College. Source: University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0018, Box 6, Folder 19), Knoxville, TN.

In 1914, President Ayres had guaranteed that Old College would “stand for years to come unchanged,” which made sense given that it was renovated in 1910 and considered “in good condition” as late as 1919.<sup>51</sup> In September 1917, the campus newspaper *Orange and White* reported that “a large administrative

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<sup>50</sup> N.W. Dougherty, “Old College,” *Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 1 (January 1919): 14.

<sup>51</sup> *The Volunteer, 1914: A Chronicle of the Events and Happenings at the University of Tennessee as Recorded by the Senior Class* (Knoxville, TN: The Students of the University of Tennessee, 1914), 11; Harcourt A. Morgan to Honorable J. Parks Worley (Chairman, Ways & Means Committee, Senate Chamber, Nashville, Tennessee), February 7, 1917, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0001, Box 3, Folder 1), Knoxville, TN. *The 1919 Volunteer: A Year Book* (Knoxville, TN: The Students of the University of Tennessee, 1919), 21.

building” would be erected “near the top of the Hill, either where Old College now stands or near this building.” “For sentimental reasons,” they continued, “Old College shall probably remain.”<sup>52</sup> Nearly a year later, however, the fate of Old College was more certain, as the Board of Trustees implored the construction of a group of buildings to “take the place of the present buildings on the top of the Hill.”<sup>53</sup> Still, whether “taking the place” of Old College entailed its demolition rather than its transplantation had not yet been defined – that is, until January of 1919. The *Knoxville Sentinel* reported then:

When the plans for the new buildings to be erected at the University were first considered by the board of trustees and by the building committee it was thought that this historic landmark might be preserved, but it was later decided that it would have to be either razed to the ground or moved to some other spot on the campus as its presence would be detrimental to the erection of buildings of such a character as was specified in the plans and approved by the committee.

The members of the board of trustees were unanimously opposed to what they considered the sacrilege of razing the building, and expressions of regret were heard from every side. All of the board members wanted it to be preserved, built around, or saved in some way. They agreed, however, to sacrifice the building if it were [sic] found to be necessary for the usefulness of the new buildings proposed to take its place. After a talk with Grant C. Miller, a Chicago architect, it was seen to be impossible to erect a building which would fulfill the requirements of the University of Tennessee without utilizing this space. The architects were still given instructions to revise their plans in order to save it if it could be done. Their reply was that it would have to be torn down.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> “Bond Issue Sold to Tennessee Bankers,” *Orange and White*, September 29, 1917.

<sup>53</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, July 23, 1918, 75-77.

<sup>54</sup> “May Preserve Old College,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, January 11, 1919.

Predictably, uproar ensued, and University officials were obliged to reassess their decision.<sup>55</sup> President Ayres, who had supposedly been reluctant to demolish the building but had later become more emphatic that “no way of preserving the building” existed, spent part of what would be his last day in his office (he died suddenly on January 28, 1919) “seeking to devise a means whereby ‘Old College’ might be preserved as an honored memorial of the University’s past.”<sup>56</sup> This came in response to what had become “active opposition” and numerous letters to Ayres and the *Knoxville Sentinel* pleading for a reappraisal.<sup>57</sup>

### **A Glimmer of Hope**

On May 26, 1919, Grant C. Miller presented construction documents for the new main building and the agricultural building to the Board of Trustees. Once the “lowest responsible bid” from prospective contractors for the erection of these buildings came in at nearly \$12,000 over available funds, institutional expenditure for the salvation of Old College became a predictably remote possibility (as the added expense of moving Old College, considering the institution’s greater

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<sup>55</sup> Brown Ayres to Grant C. Miller, January 16, 1919, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0004, Box 33, Folder 630), Knoxville, TN. In this letter Ayres writes, “This morning Mr James Maynard and Judge Hu L. McClung of our Building Committee came to my office to talk over the idea, which is being very considerably agitated here now, of not taking down Old College or removing it from its present location.” So great was the agitation, in fact, that Judge McClung instructed Ayres to halt Miller, Fullenwider, and Dowling’s work on the main building group until further notice.

<sup>56</sup> “May Preserve Old College,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, January 11, 1919; Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, February 10, 1919, 105.

<sup>57</sup> “May Preserve Old College,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, January 11, 1919.

commitments, made the intention to demolish it that much more justified).<sup>58</sup> Still, the Board of Trustees left the door open for Old College to be transplanted, albeit (according to their minutes) in a circumspect way:

It was therefore resolved that the alumni be informed of this fact and be given the privilege of moving and remodeling the Old College building, provided that within six weeks the alumni subscribe the amount necessary, the sum to be not less than \$15,000, the building thereafter to become the property of the Board of Trustees of the University. It is further provided that the building be clear of the present location within two months from date.<sup>59</sup>

Where to move Old College had, by then, been a frequent subject of public discussion, though a decision on the matter remained the prerogative of the Board of Trustees.<sup>60</sup> Professor Dougherty wrote in the *Tennessee Alumnus* in January of that year:

There seems to be no great reason why it cannot be moved from its present site to a nearby site and be made a part of the new quadrangle. In this way it would still retain its identity and be a part of the main building scheme.<sup>61</sup>

Indeed, moving Old College just 300 feet south of its original location – somewhat completing Miller’s proposed quadrangle – became the official intention, despite Ayres’ and Miller’s objections.<sup>62</sup> That way, it was thought, Old College could cede

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<sup>58</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, May 26, 1919, 127; Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, June 2, 1919, 131.

<sup>59</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, June 2, 1919, 129-130.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> N.W. Dougherty, “Old College,” *Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 1 (January 1919): 14.

<sup>62</sup> “Old College to Be Preserved,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 13, 1919; Minutes of the board of Trustees, Vol. 7, July 21, 1919, 236; Grant C. Miller to Brown Ayres, January 10, 1919, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0004, Box 33, Folder 630), Knoxville, TN; Brown Ayres to Grant C. Miller, January 16, 1919, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0004, Box 33, Folder 630), Knoxville, TN; Harcourt Morgan to [Tennessee Governor] A.H. Roberts, n.d., University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0004, Box 33, Folder 635.3), Knoxville, TN. Miller and Ayres

its dominance to the new main building, but through its proximity and privileged placement, do so with dignity and relevancy.<sup>63</sup> Figure 10 shows how Old College's proposed, new location would have been on axis with the new main building – putting the two buildings in perpetual conversation.

What Old College was to be used for upon its relocation was slightly less clear. Hugh M. Tate, then Knox County Chancellor, thought that it would still be suitable for classes, but the institution initially disagreed.<sup>64</sup> What both Tate and the University agreed upon, however, was that the building should serve some memorial function. Tellingly, the *Knoxville Sentinel* reported the following “plan” from the University:

It will be a memorial building, around which all the old memories and traditions of the university will cling, forming a link between the progressive present and the picturesque past. Here, all the trophies, won by sons of the university on both battlefield and athletic field will be placed. Here the university Alumni association will have its headquarters, and former students, returning in after years, will find something of the old institution left to welcome them.<sup>65</sup>

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wanted Old College placed off-axis with the new main building, either where the Y.M.C.A. stood or where Reese Hall stood.

<sup>63</sup> “The University Campus,” *Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 2 (April 1919): 30-31. Ayres wrote Grant C. Miller that the Building Committee was “so full of the idea of retaining Old College as a center of everything, that I could not get at the time much attention to my idea [of moving Old College off-axis with the new main building].” See Brown Ayres to Grant C. Miller, January 16, 1919, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0004, Box 33, Folder 630), Knoxville, TN.

<sup>64</sup> “Must Save Old College Now,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 24, 1919; “Old College to Be Preserved,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 13, 1919.

<sup>65</sup> “Old College to Be Preserved,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 13, 1919. Grant C. Miller had suggested using Old College as an Alumni building as early as January 1919. See Grant C. Miller to Brown Ayres, January 10, 1919, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0004, Box 33, Folder 630), Knoxville, TN.

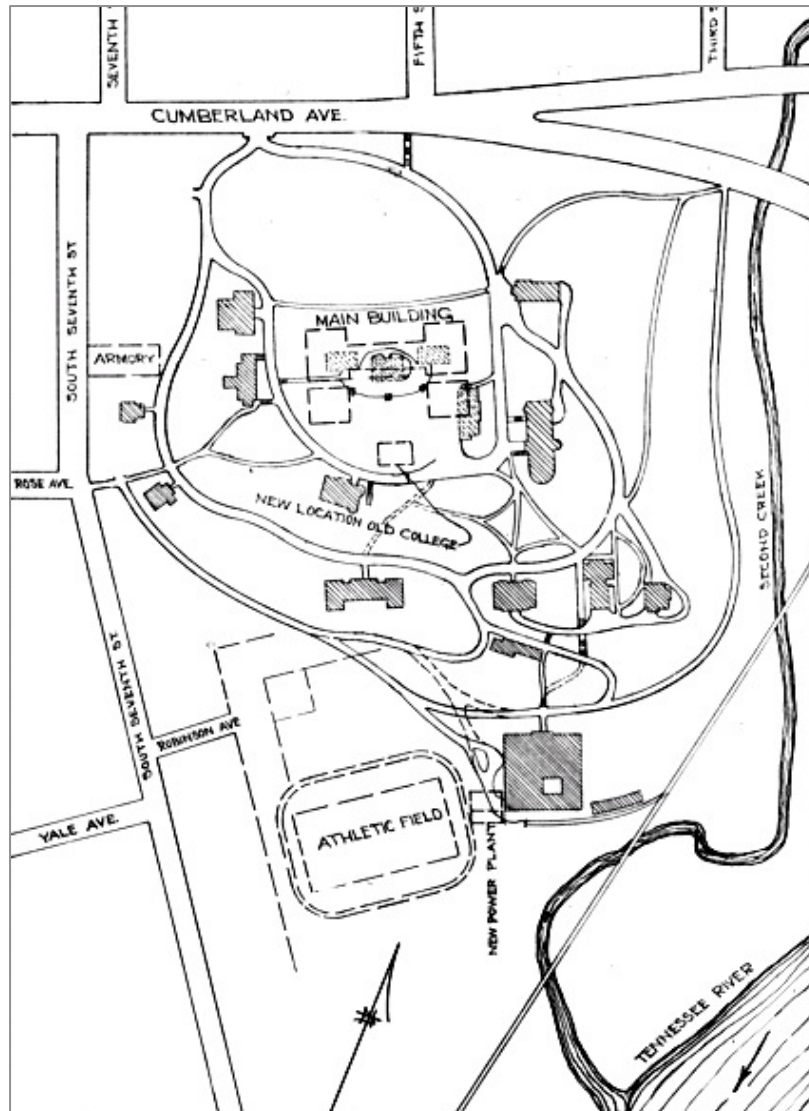


Figure 3. Campus plan (oriented roughly north) in 1919, showing proposed buildings (dashed outlines) against existing buildings (hatched). Old College's new location is called out. Source: "The University Campus," *The Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 2 (April 1919): 30.

Beyond this, Tate envisioned Old College as a sort of hall of fame and even a hallowed, pilgrimage site:

After its usefulness in that respect, it should be made a memorial hall, where trophies of various kinds may find a permanent place. Portraits of successful men who have gone out from the university should deck its walls, and future students should come here to worship as a shrine.<sup>66</sup>

### **“Raise \$15,000 or Raze College”**

Regardless of its eventual function, Old College still had to be moved first – and with private money. The Alumni Association took up the task of raising the Trustees’ \$15,000 ransom by the July 14 deadline, but not unanimously; the motion to commence fundraising only narrowly succeeded over objections that Knoxville alumni would shoulder most of the burden, and over objections that a dethroned Old College was really not worth saving. With minor mandate, the Alumni Association’s fundraising committee appealed to alumni throughout the state for funds and for their leadership soliciting in their communities, but by the deadline, only \$2,000 had been raised – all of it emanating, as some predicted, from the Knoxville area. The *Tennessee Alumnus* remarked afterwards, “The time available was short, too short indeed, for such a campaign.”<sup>67</sup>

So with their ultimatum unmet, and during the ominous demolition of East and West Colleges, the Board of Trustees met on July 21 to consider the final fate of

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<sup>66</sup> “Must Save Old College Now,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 24, 1919.

<sup>67</sup> “Opinion Divided on Old College,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 6, 1919; N.W. Dougherty, “Old College,” *Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 3 (July 1919): 71-72; “Raise \$15,000 or Raze College,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 15, 1919.

Old College. Chancellor Tate, who appeared on behalf of the Alumni Association, delivered a desperate speech described as “eloquent” and “stirring,” one that retold the history of Old College and pleaded for its salvation.<sup>68</sup>

By the end of the meeting, the Board of Trustees passed the following resolution:

Resolved, that there be appropriated a sum of not exceeding nine thousand dollars, to be expended under the direction of the Building Committee for the purpose of moving Old College to a point on the campus south of its present site and north of the roadway, approximately where the platform of Jefferson Hall now stands; provided that such work shall be discontinued if in the opinion of the Building Committee it is found in the process of removal that the condition of Old College is such that it cannot be preserved in a condition suitable for future use.

Resolved, that it is the sense of the Board of Trustees that the appropriation just made for the removal of Old College is in the nature of an advancement made at the request of the alumni of this institution, and that the alumni be called upon to raise a fund sufficient to reimburse the Board for the amount to be expended in removing said building.<sup>69</sup>

Apparently, however, this unlikely change of heart had more to do with practicalities than with Chancellor Tate’s elocution, as the *Knoxville Sentinel* reported that once the Board learned that the Law Department – which at the time was occupying the first floor of Old College – had not yet been assigned new quarters in any existing or forthcoming buildings, “a great amount of the opposition to the saving and moving of the structure was overcome....”<sup>70</sup> Accordingly, the Law

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<sup>68</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, July 21, 1919, 183; Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, July 21, 1919, 183; “Old College, First Building Erected at U.T., To Be Saved,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 22, 1919.

<sup>69</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol.7, July 21, 1919, 236.

<sup>70</sup> “Law College in Need of Room,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, October 22, 1919; “Old College, First Building Erected at U.T., to be Saved,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 22, 1919.

Department was granted exclusive use of Old College if its relocation proved feasible.<sup>71</sup>

### **The Final Blow**

Following the Board's meeting on July 22, the Building Committee approached the Southern Ferro Concrete Company with their request to move Old College, but the general contractor was not amenable to the proposal, on three counts: firstly, they contended that Old College could not be moved for the \$9,000 allocated; secondly, they maintained that it would likely not survive the move intact; and thirdly, the move would require the demolition of Jefferson Hall (figs. 11 & 12), which was of logistical and contractual consequence to their primary concern, the construction of the main building.<sup>72</sup>

The potential cost overruns stemmed from the fact that not only would historic Old College need to be carefully transplanted, but that its next setting would need to be prepared beforehand and utilities connected to it – both of which had scheduling [and by contract, cost] implications for the completion of the new main building.<sup>73</sup> An existing building, Jefferson Hall, not only had to be demolished to make way for the transplanted Old College, but the same building

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<sup>71</sup> "Old College, First Building Erected at U.T., to be Saved," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 22, 1919. This effectively eliminated any previously agreed usage of Old College as an alumni hall – though ironically the Alumni Association was still on the hook.

<sup>72</sup> N.W. Dougherty, "Old College," *Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 3 (July 1919): 71-72.

<sup>73</sup> "Razing Oldest U.T. Building," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 24, 1919; "Old College, First Building Erected at U.T., To Be Saved," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 22, 1919.

had been promised to the contractors for use as a “storage house” during the construction of the main building.<sup>74</sup> Jefferson Hall would effectively have to be leased *back* from the contractor just to be demolished, and an equivalent building would have to be built or repurposed to facilitate the contractor’s storage needs.<sup>75</sup>

To that end, the *Knoxville Sentinel* later explained:

The contractors insisted upon a high rent for the use of the building if they were not to be allowed to use it, and also called attention to the fact that the contractors have agreed to forfeit \$25 a day for any delay in completing the building, and that they could not be responsible for any delay caused by moving Old college.<sup>76</sup>

The sum total of these contingencies meant that Old College’s transplantation would more likely cost the University \$15,000 instead of the estimated \$9,000



Figure 11. Undated photograph of Jefferson Hall, taken from the southern end of South College (with Old College in the far right). It was essentially an open-air pavilion, used for social events and for summer classes, among other things. Source: University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0018, Box 8, Folder 31), Knoxville, TN.

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<sup>74</sup> “Razing Oldest U.T. Building,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 24, 1919.

<sup>75</sup> “Old College, First Building Erected at U.T., To Be Saved,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 22, 1919.

<sup>76</sup> “Razing Oldest U.T. Building,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 24, 1919.

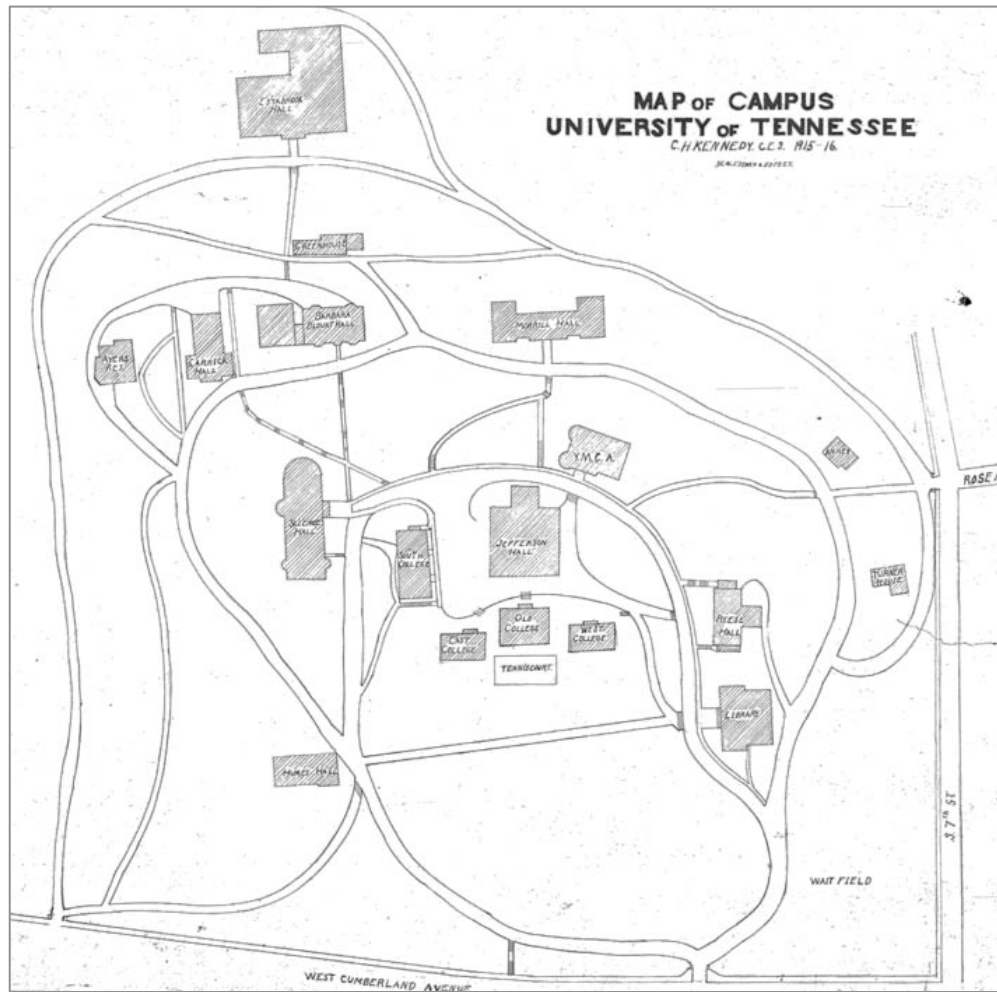


Figure 12. Map of the campus (oriented south), University of Tennessee, 1915-1916. One of the few maps that acknowledges the sizable presence of Jefferson Hall (due south of Old College). Source: University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.560, Box 1), Knoxville, TN.

(though, the fact that the Board originally demanded \$15,000 from the Alumni Association for its salvation should have inured them of this expense).<sup>77</sup>

There was also the serious question of Old College's structural fitness for transplantation. Paraphrasing the Building Committee Chairman T.A. Wright, the *Knoxville Sentinel* reported that the building's masonry integrity was severely compromised on account of its original fabrication:

Mr. Wright states that the condition of Old college calls to mind the vast difference in burning brick 100 years ago and that in use today. He states that the brick kilns of a century ago were heated by wood fires, and were fired from one end only. This resulted in the production of about twenty percent of good brick while the remaining eighty per cent were salmon, of soft brick. The interior of the walls of Old college are made of the soft brick Mr. Wright states and can be crumbled in a person's hand.<sup>78</sup>

Known to a few others as well, the shocking nature of the interior brick was seen as a critical structural fault and subsequently a mortal danger to any men employed to move Old College.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, the contractors refused to move Old College without some understanding of inevitable and perhaps precautionary damage to it.<sup>80</sup>

Considering these inconvenient and seemingly superfluous hurdles, the Board reversed themselves yet again and abandoned the cause of saving Old College – this time for good. On July 24, the building was announced for

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<sup>77</sup> "Razing Oldest U.T. Building," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 24, 1919.

<sup>78</sup> "To Keep 'Old College' Door," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 28, 1919.

<sup>79</sup> "Old College, First Building Erected at U.T., To Be Saved," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 22, 1919; "West and South Colleges Razed," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 25, 1919.

<sup>80</sup> N.W. Dougherty, "Old College," *Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 3 (July 1919): 72.

demolition and razed shortly thereafter, ending ninety-one years of history, nearly two years of speculation, and seven months of preservation efforts.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> "Razing Oldest U.T. Building," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 24, 1919; "Old College," *The Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 3 (July 1919): 71-72.

## CHAPTER THREE ANALYZING THE END OF OLD COLLEGE

### Public Discourses

#### *For Preservation*

In January of 1919, the future well-known Houston architect John Fanz Staub<sup>82</sup> wrote his hometown newspaper, the *Knoxville Sentinel*, the following letter in support of the salvation of Old College:

As an alumnus, I appeal to every former student of the University of Tennessee for a protest against the demolition of Old College, the soul of our alma mater.

This old building is a beautiful heritage from our forefathers and belongs, not only to us, but to those who come after us. I feel, and know that others feel, that we will be condemned if we sanction by our silence the destruction of Old College.

When we visit Oxford and Cambridge, Harvard and the University of Virginia, or any other of the old universities, which have honored and preserved the old buildings, expressive of their traditions, we are charmed with the beauty of these landmarks, and outspoken in our praise of the spirit which has preserved them. Why then, should [we] even consider the tearing down of our own Old College, rich in the historic associations of a century?

The appeal of Old College is by no means confined to the University of Tennessee alumni, for every loyal son of this state reverences it and desires to see it preserved. Its simplicity, stability and dignity are expressive of the character and ideals of the sturdy pioneers, who crossed the Alleghanies [sic] and redeemed a wilderness. This building holds charm and interest for all men and women who cherish those things purely American.

The Alumni are not contending for the preservation of an unsightly thing simply because of sentimental attachments, but are asking that we

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<sup>82</sup> Howard Barnstone, *The Architecture of John F. Staub: Houston and the South* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1979). Staub, who was the grandson of Knoxville's Staub Opera House founder Peter Staub, would later design Hopecote (ca. 1921; National Register property) and the Eugenia Williams house (ca. 1940) in Knoxville – both presently owned by the University of Tennessee.

save the purest and most representative piece of architecture on the hill – the one piece which stands the supreme test of beauty – harmony with its environment....<sup>83</sup>

To be printed by the *Sentinel* as the sole public defense of Old College, Mr. Staub's message was obviously deemed exemplary, and indeed he combined into a single pitch the historical, commemorative, and age values championed by others.<sup>84</sup>

Old College's historical value (or significance) was perhaps its supporters' greatest and most obvious selling point. As the first building the institution built on Barbara Hill after relocating from downtown Knoxville, and supposedly the "oldest brick building west of the Alleghenies," it was not only an historic landmark from its inception, but also one on account of what it had witnessed in the intervening 93 years.<sup>85</sup> Chancellor Tate remarked in June of 1919:

Old college is to Tennesseans, and to alumni of the university, especially, what Independence hall is to Pennsylvania and to the nation.... It stood on the "hill" when Jackson was president. He passed by it on his way to the inaugural ceremonies. David Crockett and Sam Houston, as boys, looked on its walls many times. From it have come numbers of federal judges, United States senators, governors of states, members of states and cabinet members. In that very building was invented the collapsible metal bellows which formed the basis of the depth bombs with which the navies of the allied world defeated the German submarine.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> John Fanz Staub, letter to the editor, *Knoxville Sentinel*, January 14, 1919.

<sup>84</sup> For these and other "values" defined, see Alois Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Essence and Development," translated by Karin Bruckner and Karen Williams, in *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, ed. Nicholas Stanley Price, Mansfield Kirby Taley and Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 1996), 69-83.

<sup>85</sup> "May Preserve Old College," *Knoxville Sentinel*, January 11, 1919; "Three New Buildings at U.T. May Cost More Than \$800,000," *Knoxville Sentinel*, May 23, 1919; "Must Save Old College Now," *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 24, 1919.

<sup>86</sup> "Must Save Old College Now," *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 24, 1919.

And Tate's summary even neglected Old College's role during the Battle of Knoxville. "Why then," Staub asked, "should [we] even consider the tearing down of our own Old College, rich in the historic associations of a century?"<sup>87</sup>

Old College's commemorative value (i.e. that it represented qualities and actions worthy of perpetuation "in the consciousness of future generations") stemmed somewhat from its historical value, and no doubt fed Staub's Ruskinian belief that Old College belonged not only to his generation but to those yet to come.<sup>88</sup> For Staub and Tate, Old College represented "the character and ideals of the sturdy pioneers, who crossed the Alleghanies [sic] and redeemed a wilderness."<sup>89</sup> Tate added that the mere sight of Old College was inspiring:

We, in putting up our handsome new structure should place this old one near by where young men and women who come after us may benefit by the contrast, and realize that, with so much better equipment, they should go much fa[r]ther, and do much more than those successful ones who went out from the portals of the old building.<sup>90</sup>

Commemorating the resolve of "those successful ones" by saving Old College became quite the rallying cry for Old College's proponents, who voiced a contemporary notion that memory and associated pride were concepts the University undervalued – and at its own peril. An article in the April 1919

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<sup>87</sup> John Fanz Staub, letter to the editor, *Knoxville Sentinel*, January 14, 1919.

<sup>88</sup> Riegl, 1996, 77; John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, vol. 22 of *Artists Edition of the Complete Writings* (New York: Merrill and Baker, 1890), 184-186.

<sup>89</sup> John Fanz Staub, letter to the editor, *Knoxville Sentinel*, January 14, 1919. Cf. "Must Save Old College Now," *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 24, 1919: "Tennessee pioneers built it...our own fathers and grandfathers. They were the men who came into this country when it was nothing but a savage wilderness, and built here their homes."

<sup>90</sup> "Must Save Old College Now," *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 24, 1919.

*Tennessee Alumnus* lamented that the University of Tennessee lacked “a great measure of college spirit,” kept “nothing to freshen our memories of our former greatness,” and trailed “endowed schools” to the degree to which they cultivated tangible, on-campus glorifications of their alumni.<sup>91</sup> The same article offered the following solution:

First of all, to develop in our students a proper veneration for the University, we must have something that other schools do not have. Cornell has its Ezra Cornell and its Andrew D. White, Virginia has its Thomas Jefferson and Virginians say “His spirit still lives here.” To bring these men to the minds and eyes of all students, statues of them are erected where all students will see them. At Yale there is a statue of Nathan Hale, a Yale alumnus, sculptured by a Yale alumnus, and placed in front of the oldest building of the university. Students must feel that Yale had her influence upon this character, which has become immortal; they go away feeling that they, too, under similar circumstances must do likewise. We must pick some person or some thing, and place a memorial where all students will see it and know that we have something that belongs to, and is a part of, the University.<sup>92</sup>

So the thinking went: the inspired student had greater potential to become successful as a graduate (which would ostensibly benefit the institution’s reputation and hopefully its coffers in kind), and if later that graduate’s career success was conspicuously marked on the campus (especially through donation), future generations of students would be inspired in just the same way. However unreliable the reasoning, the environmental touchstone or loop-closer was paramount: the physical memorial. For Tate, Staub, and other preservationists,

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<sup>91</sup> “Forum,” *Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 2 (April 1919): 35-36.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

Old College was already that crucial, inspiring memorial, and once filled with trophies and vaunted alumni portraits, could be exponentially so.<sup>93</sup>

In terms of age value (or the extent of experience something visually conveys through decay), it was believed an extant Old College would advantageously display the University's age, but also serve to communicate that the institution's beginnings, as humble as they may have appeared, were a source of ongoing, corporate pride and not something of which to be ashamed (i.e. that from meager Old College, a great institution had grown up around it). In this respect, demonstrative comparisons were again made between the University and older universities, but also between the University and younger ones. Staub remarked in his letter that part of what endeared the ancient universities of Britain and the oldest universities of America was the presence of their oldest buildings, which spoke of an equally admirable "spirit" of preservation in those places.<sup>94</sup> Likewise, Chancellor Tate remarked,

A visitor to the great eastern institutions of learning is not taken first to the magnificent new halls and dormitories, but rather, to the old, ivy-clad ones, where he may see first the beginnings. It is the oldest buildings that the students and faculty are most proud of, where the old memories and sentiments cling, where the history of the school is visualized.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> "Must Save Old College Now," *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 24, 1919: "...it should be made a memorial hall, where trophies of various kinds may find a permanent place. Portraits of successful men who have gone out from the university should deck its walls, and future students should come here to worship as a shrine." Cf. "Forum," *Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 2 (April, 1919): 36: "If we have had alumni who have brought credit to themselves and to the school, it should be known by students, alumni, and by the public at large. The tree is judged by its fruits. Somewhere at the University there should be placed the photographs and biographies of the men whom we delight to honor."

<sup>94</sup> John Fanz Staub, letter to the editor, *Knoxville Sentinel*, January 14, 1919.

<sup>95</sup> "Must Save Old College Now," *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 24, 1919.

If anything, Tate thought, an institution's cradle should be safeguarded for the sake of demonstrating the institution's age and maturity: "We have right here on our university campus a building which founders of new institutions would give thousands of dollars to possess – a tangible link between the glorious past and the progressive present."<sup>96</sup> By physically emphasizing its age through the preservation of its oldest buildings – no matter how humble – the institution could distinguish itself amongst a growing field of competitors bereft of comparable heritage.

### ***For Demolition***

A little more than a week after publishing John Staub's letter, *The Knoxville Sentinel* published the sole public response to that letter, from Knoxville physician William F. Link:

Mr. John Fanz Staub's eloquent protest against the proposed removal of Old College in order to make room for a new building will doubtless be applauded by many former students in whose memory the old building conveniently stands for the university and all that it meant to them in their school days.

But giving such tender sentimental considerations their proper weight, it should not be forgotten that Old College is but poorly adapted to the needs of the present; it is antiquated but scarcely old enough to be venerable; it has not high historic value and in the eyes of the unprejudiced it has no beauty of architecture worthy of perpetuation. In the last respect it differs sharply from the fine old buildings at Oxford or Cambridge, whose beauty...[in] quite as much as their sound construction, has preserved them

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<sup>96</sup> "Must Save Old College Now," *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 24, 1919. Age is still a fixture of how American colleges and universities identify and position themselves. Most domestic collegiate seals, for instance, include an establishment date.

for centuries. We may be sure Old College could find no place at either of those ancient seats of learning.

Did any traveler standing with bared head before Old College ever exclaim “What a beautiful building?” Do townsmen and gownsmen point to it with pride as a most admirable specimen of college architecture?

Speaking of old things, we are seldom, or never, justified in preserving anything merely because it is old, nor yet because the old thing is useful as a symbol of certain pleasant experiences on which fond recollection loves to dwell. That grown-up love of the old for its own sake appears to be a surviving infantile trait. It is like the retarded child’s persistent affection for a soiled and battered doll which it cherished as a baby. It is something that is normally sublimated, outgrown, put aside forever.

On the whole there appears no compelling reason for saving Old College either as a historic relic or as an object of beauty. No better fate could befall...[the] sound bricks<sup>97</sup> of the old building than to find a permanent resting place in the new structure, which we may assume will be al[l] that the old was not – beautiful, commodious, comfortable, convenient. As the old served the purposes of pioneer days so the new will be adapted to modern needs. And let it be said in all kindness it will be built with an eye to the service of present and future generations of students. The trustees are looking forward, not backward.

Only let them build wisely, strongly, beautifully and few will long regret the passing of the old, and most will never cease to rejoice. But let the board be sure that the new building shall really be a thing of beauty and not of mere utility – or worse still, of monumental ugliness. For such a thing of beauty is not only a joy forever but of transcendent educational value.<sup>98</sup>

In justifying Old College’s demolition, Dr. Link chose to focus on what he and others believed to be Old College’s lack of artistic value, age value, and use value.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> This would ultimately be disproven, of course.

<sup>98</sup> W.F. Link, letter to the editor, *Knoxville Sentinel*, January 23, 1919. One could assume that, on such a controversial issue, the paper received multiple letters of the same persuasion but that the editor felt Dr. Link’s letter eloquently encapsulated the breadth and/or depth of the pro-demolition argument.

<sup>99</sup> Again, see Riegl, 1996.

In defense of Old College's artistic value (or its theoretical and formal significance), Staub had asserted that Old College's architectural purity and harmonic beauty prompted its preservation, and not mere sentimentality. Link starkly disagreed, positing that Old College had nothing redemptive architecturally. The institution's representatives and architects were apparently more on the side of Link, aesthetically. The aforementioned 1914 University pamphlet for legislators described the University's existing building stock as "very plain;" Professor Dougherty deemed Old College not exemplary; and just before Staub's letter, the Board of Trustees reportedly considered Old College's presence "detrimental to the erection of buildings of such a character as was specified in the plans and approved by the committee."<sup>100</sup>

On the subject of Old College's age value, Link wrote that, while old, it was hardly worthy of veneration on that account alone; those individuals doing so, he continued, only revealed their sentimental immaturity. In a uniquely offensive manner, Link only justified the opposing side's criticism that Americans disdainfully deemed anything 75-100 years old as not "old enough" for preservation, while they ironically paid "thousands" to see historic buildings in Europe.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> The Legislative Committee of the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, *The University of Tennessee: Why It Needs and Should Have Special Aid from the General Assembly at This Time* (December 29, 1914); N.W. Dougherty, "Old College," *Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 1 (January 1919): 15; "May Preserve Old College," *Knoxville Sentinel*, January 11, 1919.

<sup>101</sup> "Old College, First Building Erected at U.T., To Be Saved," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 22, 1919; "Begin U.T. Work in Six Weeks," *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 5, 1919.

Link was not alone. Though he considered Old College quite old enough, Professor Dougherty asserted, “The fact that a thing is old is no reason for making it sacred. Its associations either make it live or allow it to pass into oblivion.”<sup>102</sup> That people like Staub and Tate were breathless in marking those commemorative “associations” was apparently insufficient for the likes of Link, Dougherty, and also Professor of Engineering Charles Ferris. Ferris couched “the sentiment for saving the old building” as “merely a form of ancestor worship.”<sup>103</sup> For Dougherty, the type of “associations” he required were “traditions about this building...vital to the spirit and life of the student body.”<sup>104</sup>

Thirdly, regarding Old College’s use value (or its ability to safely and efficiently accommodate its intended program), Link was incredulous. Progress was compelling in Link’s mind, as it was for others in his camp. Though Staub and Tate envisioned a new, memorial use for Old College, Link and Dougherty dwelled upon Old College’s supposed inadequacy for contemporary instruction. “The old buildings we have can never be the place for these studies [i.e. arts and sciences],”

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<sup>102</sup> “Three New Building at U.T. May Cost More Than \$800,000,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, May 23, 1919.

<sup>103</sup> “Old College, First Building Erected at U.T., To Be Saved,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 22, 1919; “Begin U.T. Work in Six Weeks,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 5, 1919.

<sup>104</sup> “Three New Buildings at U.T. May Cost More than \$800,000,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, May 23, 1919. It is interesting that Dougherty considered this building devoid of traditions, since an entry on Old College in the 1914 yearbook asserted it contained “more tradition than...all the rest of the campus combined” (*The Volunteer, 1914: A Chronicle of the Events and Happenings at the University of Tennessee as Recorded by the Senior Class* [Knoxville, TN: The Students of the University of Tennessee, 1914], 11). Also refuting Dougherty was the fact that the Faculty in 1914 put an end to a perennial contest between classes to paint their respective class numerals on the tower of Old College, as the contest was regrettably becoming too rough (*Orange and White*, March 12, 1909; *Knoxville Journal*, September 30, 1914 – both of these as cited in James R. Montgomery, “The University of Tennessee Builds for the Twentieth Century: A History of the University of Tennessee during the Administration of President Brown Ayres, 1904-1919,” *The University of Tennessee Record* 60, no. 4 (July 1957): 77).

Dougherty warned. "...We must have new quarters and now is the time to build, taking into account the growth and usefulness of the university for many years to come."<sup>105</sup>

### ***Summation***

The preservation argument was naturally a positive one, extolling Old College's historical, commemorative, and age values. Hence, Old College was an historical landmark, meaningful to all Tennesseans (born and unborn) and not just to alumni. It was illustrative of qualities worthy of commemoration and emulation going forward, and would be an inspirational boon to the University. Furthermore, it would visually set the University apart amongst its peers as a well-established and therefore superior institution.

The demolition argument was decidedly negative, attacking Old College's lack of artistic, age, and use values. From that standpoint, Old College was not visually pleasing, it was not useful, and its age was inconsequential. While preservationists touted Old College's link to civic pride, those seeking its demolition marked its obsolescence as embarrassing and inhibitive.

Old College's antagonists depicted its protagonists as impractical and sentimental, but there was truly little that was sentimental about what Staub and Tate offered; they were duly practical and objective about the institutional ramifications of losing Old College, and not just the subjective consequences of

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<sup>105</sup> N.W. Dougherty, "Old College," *Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 1 (January 1919): 15.

losing it. There were sentimental appeals made for sure (one man, for instance, wrote that he considered Old College his home), but sentimental attachment was something that everyone concerned possessed, so it was not considered a compelling reason to save Old College by either side.<sup>106</sup> That said, Staub and Tate did champion Old College's historical and age values – the comparison of which, over the years, had become a hallmark of Romanticist thought.<sup>107</sup> Under the aura of strict practicality, the Romanticist view could have been vilified as sentimental.

### **A Road Not Taken**

Considering the disparate positions on Old College, and in order to understand why the University's oldest building lacked a compelling argument to secure its fate, it would help to understand why the other available options for treating Old College might have lost out. Yes, Old College was ultimately doomed

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<sup>106</sup> "May Preserve Old College," *Knoxville Sentinel*, January 11, 1919.

<sup>107</sup> For example, Tarnya Cooper ascribes the poignancy of Piranesi's prints to their "romantic" contrasting of the age value of ruins (or the passage of time evident from their dilapidation at the time of depiction) with their historical value (based on their seminality or past greatness. See "Forgetting Rome and the Voice of Piranesi's 'Speaking Ruins,'" in *The Art of Forgetting*, ed. Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler, [New York: Berg, 1999], 107-125). Similarly, John Ruskin asserted that his typically "romantic" responses arose "...eminently out of the contrast of the beautiful past with the frightful and monotonous present; and it depends for its force on the existence of ruins and traditions, on the remains of architecture...and the precursorship of eventful history." See John Ruskin, *Modern Painters, Volume the Third of Many Things*, vol. 22 of *The Complete Works of John Ruskin, L.L.D.* [Philadelphia: Reuuee, Wattlely & Walsh, 1891], 366).

because its fragility prevented its transplantation, but it is well to recall that Old College did not *have* to be moved or demolished in the first place. Another option was available all along: leaving Old College *in situ* and building the necessary additional square footage nearby or elsewhere.

In his letter to the editor of the *Knoxville Sentinel*, John Staub remarked upon the validity of such a scenario in contrast with the intent to demolish Old College:

The conclusion that the need of expansion demands the destruction of Old College, has been reached by but one or two firms of architects.

McKim, Mead & White, among the foremost architects that America has produced, were confronted at the University of Virginia, with a problem similar to that now before the University of Tennessee. They preserved the old, built the new in the same style, and the result is the noblest achievement in American university architecture.

There are many other architects in this country, who have displayed similar judgment and taste and enjoy international reputations, among whom are Parker, Thomas [and] Rice, the architects of Johns Hopkins university, and Ralph Adams Cram, the architects of Sweetbriar college.

In conclusion, let me appeal to the alumni to urge the board of trustees to consult such authorities, and have them at least act in an advisory capacity, before accepting the present plan as the only and final one.<sup>108</sup>

Indeed, Grant C. Miller had summarily dismissed anything besides demolition, according to the *Knoxville Sentinel* in January of 1919:

The members of the board of trustees were unanimously opposed to what they considered the sacrilege of razing the building, and expressions of regret were heard from every side. All of the board members wanted it to be preserved, built around, or saved in some way. They agreed, however, to sacrifice the building if it were found to be necessary for the usefulness of the new buildings proposed to take its place. After a talk with Grant C. Miller, a Chicago architect, it was seen to be impossible to erect a building which would fulfill the requirements of the University of Tennessee without utilizing this space. The architects were still given instructions to revise their

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<sup>108</sup> John Fanz Staub, letter to the editor, *Knoxville Sentinel*, January 14, 1919.

plans in order to save it if it could be done. Their reply was that it would have to be torn down.<sup>109</sup>

What was it about Old College's site that Miller deemed absolutely necessary "for the usefulness of the new buildings" and "the requirements of the University of Tennessee?"<sup>110</sup> University Trustee and Judge Hugh Lawson McClung relayed that the board was "made to see" (ostensibly by Grant Miller) that Old College's demolition was necessary, but we do not know Miller's persuasive reasoning.<sup>111</sup> From public record, however, we can speculate about the situational advantages of demolishing Old College, pertinent to the new building's usefulness and the University's supposed requirements.

Foremost, Old College's site was uniquely privileged: it occupied a position at the figural heart of the campus and at the literal apex of it. Professor Dougherty remarked that the symbolism of what should occupy this prime real estate was indeed weighty:

The space now occupied by Old college, East college, and West college is the position of vantage on the "hill." The backbone of the university should be placed upon this ground. The college of arts and sciences has long outgrown its accommodations and the time has come for buildings to properly house the equipment and furnish room for the classes. Arts and sciences must always be the traditional center about which a university must grow, and it is fitting, therefore, that this college should occupy the traditional position on the campus.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> "May Preserve Old College," *Knoxville Sentinel*, January 11, 1919.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> N.W. Dougherty, "Old College," *Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 1 (January 1919): 15.

Architecturally elevating the Arts and Sciences certainly comported with President Ayres' pursuit to return them to the curricular parity they had enjoyed with agricultural and mechanical studies prior to the administration of his predecessor, Dr. Charles Dabney.<sup>113</sup> One could easily surmise that, as an ambitious architect, Grant Miller was only too pleased to facilitate so prominently Ayres' wishes.

Secondly, an article in the May 23, 1919 *Knoxville Sentinel* remarked:

The structure [the new main building] will face Main [or Cumberland] avenue and will be located on top of the "Hill" in the space now occupied by Old college, East college, and West college. The plan as developed contemplates grading the top of the hill down to the level of the floor of Jefferson hall. The advantage of doing this would be to increase the space available for the new buildings and at the same time get the new buildings down mere [sic] nearly to the level of the Y.M.C.A. and Science hall.<sup>114</sup>

From this, we can postulate that Miller saw frontality towards Cumberland Avenue as a priority, and that he considered grading the Hill's summit as necessary for providing a suitable footprint for such a large, new building and for better relating that building to the surrounding, existing facilities at lower elevations. For the new building to face Cumberland and maintain elevational prominence, Miller would have to remove Old College (since it sat towards the northernmost edge of the summit). To grade the summit, Miller would require the absence of any of the existing buildings there – Old College included.

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<sup>113</sup> Montgomery, Folmsbee, & Greene.

<sup>114</sup> "Three New Buildings at U.T. May Cost More Than \$800,000," *Knoxville Sentinel*, May 23, 1919.

But what about simply refurbishing Old College and incorporating it into a new scheme, like Staub suggested? Perhaps Miller felt like Dougherty did in the following precaution:

Should an effort be made to incorporate it [Old College] in the new building plan it seems that it would lose its identity, and at the same time mar the artistic effect of the whole scheme. The argument is made that Old college is exceptionally beautiful and artistic. It is doubtful, however, whether many people would be willing to construct a modern building on the same plan.<sup>115</sup>

As such, if Old College was to remain *in situ*, it would have either forced the architect to design the new, adjacent buildings in the same, ostensibly inferior style, or to tolerate it as an anomaly amongst the new, alternatively-styled grouping. Miller, whose varied oeuvre testifies to the fact that he was quite a stylistic chameleon, would presumably have been capable of competently applying Old College's Adam styling and planning to a new grouping of associated buildings. But if directed to design the new buildings in a vastly different style (which he supposedly was), perhaps he would have resisted the aesthetic variance Old College represented. It is quite possible, too, that with the commission for the institution's flagship building, Miller felt emboldened to begin something aesthetically revolutionary and totalizing, and neither to cow-tow to precedent nor to shortsightedly contribute yet another architectural style to the University's motley repertoire.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> N.W. Dougherty, "Old College," *Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 1 (January 1919): 15.

<sup>116</sup> Grant C. Miller, *Grant C. Miller, Architect* (Chicago: Grant C. Miller, 19--); Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, July 23, 1918, 75.

Suffice it to say, there was obviously a movement early on that coveted Old College's site more than the building itself, and by the time the school officially moved to save Old College in late July 1919, they had progressed too far down the road of replacement (construction documents funded and approved, etc.) to turn back once Old College was found unfit to be moved.

### **The Price of Preservation**

Was there enough default support for preservation amongst the institution and the local populace? The fact that the University was perpetually hesitant to invest in Old College's salvation, and the fact that the public fundraising drive to save it failed where a subsequent and more ambitious fundraising drive for a University athletic field succeeded, are quite telling.

The trustees initially decided not to move Old College due to a lack of residual funding from the million-dollar bond issue, and on account of their architect's insistence that the building was better demolished than moved. They even contracted with the Southern Ferro Concrete Company for a credit of \$600 for Old College's value as salvage building material.<sup>117</sup> When public backlash exercised their consciences, they agreed to allow the building to be moved, but only if \$15,000 was publicly donated. After their ultimatum's deadline expired, the

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<sup>117</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, June 2, 1919, 134.

trustees agreed to advance the Alumni Association \$9,000 to save Old College, but then the trustees ironically balked when the expense would be more like \$15,000, and the integrity of the building thereafter was not guaranteed. The trustees' willingness to save Old College was always tempered by fiduciary semblance, as if Old College's preservation was tantamount to frivolity.

If the Alumni Association had collected the \$15,000 initially called for by the Trustees, perhaps the Board would have felt absolved to attempt the transplantation in the face of possible collapse.<sup>118</sup> But before Old College's structural faults were publicly known, the very fact that the Alumni Association was unable to solicit even a seventh of the \$15,000 to save Old College, when the Knoxville Board of Commerce collected \$35,000 for a new University athletic field immediately thereafter, speaks to the degree of Knoxville's prioritization of preservation.<sup>119</sup> Recall that the Alumni Association just barely agreed to spearhead the Old College fundraiser over objections that Knoxville's would shoulder most of the financial burden, and compare that to the fact that most of the donated money for the athletic field came from Knoxville's, and in large sums at that.<sup>120</sup> Granted, the window given the Alumni Association to gather funds for Old

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<sup>118</sup> The inflation-adjusted equivalent of nearly \$200,000 at the time of this writing. See United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "CPI Inflation Calculator," [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm) (accessed January 10, 2013).

<sup>119</sup> "The New Athletic Field," *The Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 3 (July 1919): 73-74.

<sup>120</sup> "Opinion Divided on Old College," *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 6, 1919; "Col. Shields' Offer May Assure Athletic Field for University," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 16, 1919; "More Give to Athletic Field," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 21, 1919; "Need \$10,000 More to Assure New Athletic Field at U.T.," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 25, 1919; "Athletic Field Dream Now Realized," *Orange and White*, September 25, 1919.

College's salvation was artificially abbreviated at six weeks, but by comparison, the subsequent campaign for the athletic field amassed more than seventeen times as much money, to complete their drive in only *one week*.<sup>121</sup>

What was it about the prospect of a new athletic field that captivated Knoxville so much more than the preservation of the University's most iconic building? For starters, the campaign for the athletic field sought something the University had never possessed: an athletic field large enough for proper football and baseball games. Why something so recreational could be seen as so essential was doubtlessly due to the organizers' shrewd and prominent local marketing.<sup>122</sup> A new athletic field, according to them, would within a few years double the University's yearly value to the community (to \$1 million annually),<sup>123</sup> almost triple the enrollment (which would increase governmental appropriations and again

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<sup>121</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, June 2, 1919, 129-130; "Athletic Field Dream Now Realized," *Orange and White*, September 25, 1919. So confident were the athletic field's campaigners in the merit and popularity of their cause, they expected to have the entire \$35,000 by the end of the first day of the campaign (which turned out to be only slightly overzealous; "Col. Shields' Offer May Assure Athletic Field for University," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 16, 1919). Cf. "Raise \$15,000 or Raze College," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 15, 1919.

<sup>122</sup> "Athletic Field Needed," *Orange and White*, May 1, 1919; "Col. Shields' Offer May Assure Athletic Field for University," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 16, 1919; "Col. Shields' Offer May Assure Athletic Field for University," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 16, 1919; "2,000 Students at University in Next Ten Years," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 17, 1919; "Athletic Field to Make U.T. Worth \$1,000,000 Year to City," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 18, 1919; "Dr. Morgan Continues 'Ag' Dean As Well As President of the U.T.," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 21, 1919; "More Give to Athletic Field," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 21, 1919. The athletic field campaign garnered a front page in the *Knoxville Sentinel* (July 16, 1919), and numerous endorsements and publicized donations from local and state officials and businessmen. The Old College campaign, by comparison, did not.

<sup>123</sup> "Athletic Field to Make U.T. Worth \$1,000,000 Year to City," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 18, 1919.

boost the local economy), and offer the lifelong, constitutional benefit of athletic endeavor to more student-athletes.<sup>124</sup>

Devoting money to the athletic field was more widely considered a prudent investment – with greater economic returns for all of Knoxville, and not just for alumni – while the money to be spent in the salvation of Old College was ostensibly just a dead-end, profligate, and sentimental expense. Therefore, the monetary cost associated with the athletic field, although greater than that associated with saving Old College, was cheap considering its upside, whereas a status-quo Old College was comparatively expensive. Old College’s apologists had tried to make similar instrumental arguments about the abiding benefits of saving Old College, but apparently those were not as credible as the prospects attending the athletic field – likely because Old College’s benefits were not as ubiquitous, quantifiably lucrative, or novel.

Perhaps the most conspicuous lack of credence Old College’s preservation received was Col. W.S. Shields’ substantial donation to the athletic field in lieu of saving Old College. President of Knoxville’s City National Bank, a University Trustee, and a Building Committee member, Shields initiated the \$35,000 athletic-field fundraiser by promising nearly a \$23,000 bonus for reaching the goal, and he did so unabashedly near the Alumni Association’s deadline to save Old College,

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<sup>124</sup> “Athletic Field to Make U.T. Worth \$1,000,000 Year to City,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 18, 1919; “U.T. Field is Now \$25,000,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 26, 1919; “2,000 Students at University in Next Ten Years,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 17, 1919; “Col. Shields’ Offer May Assure Athletic Field for University,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 16, 1919.

knowing their substantial deficit.<sup>125</sup> The equivalent of his donation to the athletic field could have singlehandedly moved Old College (with funds leftover), and yet he favored the athletic field. Old College was apparently just not worth it.

After the demolition of the Colleges, 15,000 cubic yards of soil graded from the Hill's summit were hauled down to level out the new athletic field, which was named "Shields-Watkins Field" in honor of its greatest benefactor and his wife.<sup>126</sup> Neyland Stadium – the fourth-largest stadium in the country at this writing – enshrines this field today.<sup>127</sup> Old College, by contrast, has faded into oblivion; following its demolition, its only visible commemoration was to be depicted in each building on the Hill– a minor gesture that, with one exception (fig. 13), has likewise disappeared.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> "First Assembly Wednesday Morning," *Orange and White*, September 25, 1919; "Col. Shields' Offer May Assure Athletic Field for University," *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 16, 1919.

<sup>126</sup> "Begin Work on U.T. New Main Buildings in Next Two Weeks," *Knoxville Sentinel*, September 20, 1919; "Shields-Watkins Name of New Field," *Orange and White*, November 27, 1919. How poetic that the very soil which underpinned Old College was transferred to the athletic field!

<sup>127</sup> CBS Interactive, "Neyland Stadium," [http://www.utsports.com/facilities/neyland\\_stadium.html](http://www.utsports.com/facilities/neyland_stadium.html) (accessed January 10, 2013).

<sup>128</sup> "Old College," *The Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 3 (July 1919): 71-72.

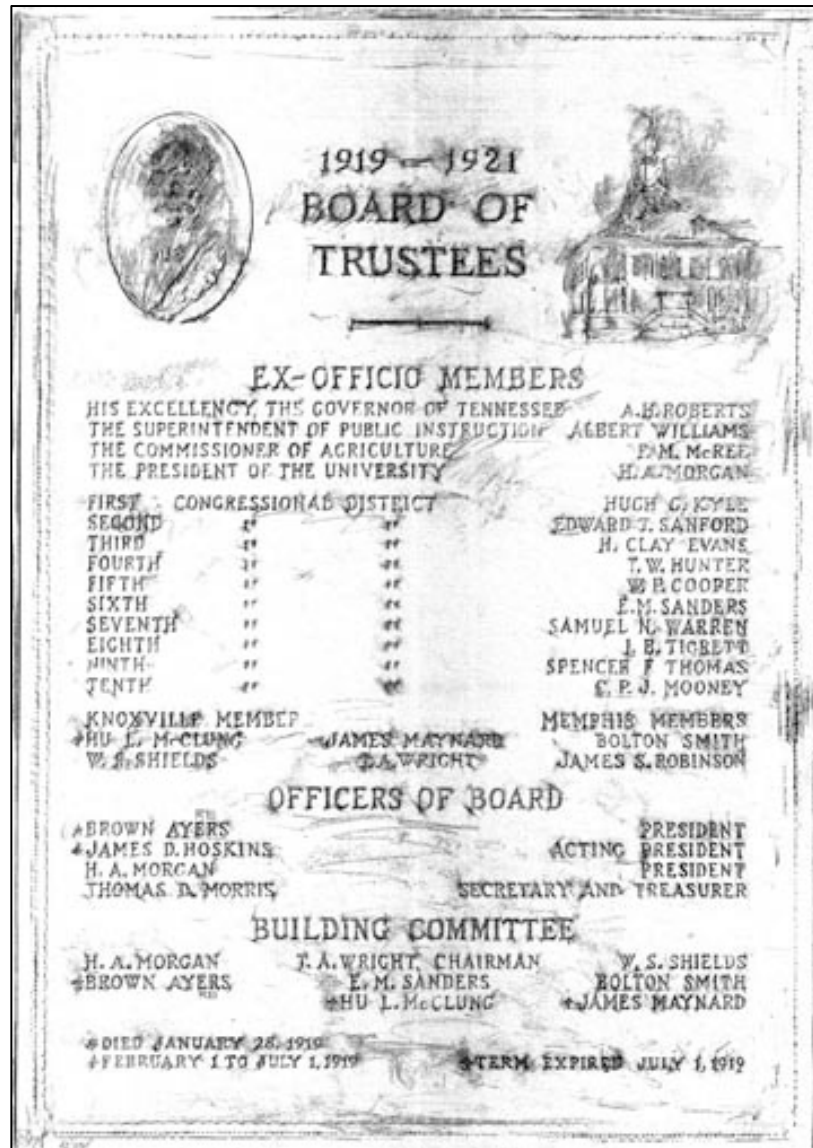


Figure 13. A rubbing of the original bronze plaque located in the north foyer of Ayres Hall. Note the likeness of Old College in the upper right. Incidentally, this plaque was replaced in 1992 because it misspelled "Ayres." Source: Facilities Services Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

## CHAPTER FOUR DESIGNING A NEW MAIN BUILDING AND A NEW CAMPUS

What replaced the Colleges atop the Hill was both visually reminiscent of, and distinct from them (fig. 14). Like the conglomerate of East, Old, and West Colleges, the new main hall struck the familiar, tripartite elevation of a vertically accented, brick-built central block flanked by mirrored appendages. Despite the fact that the newly styled main hall was drastically larger and taller – featuring a massive, central bell tower, glazed hyphens, and gabled dependencies, all meant to survey and presage a revolutionary master plan – incredibly, Ayres Hall was intended to come in more like a lamb than like a lion.<sup>129</sup>

On July 23, 1918, the Board of Trustees' Building Committee recommended to the greater Board that "the general layout of the campus be not radically changed," and, "taking into consideration the need for harmony with the present University buildings, and simplicity of construction, in view of the present high cost of building materials," they ordered that its new buildings conform to the "Elizabethan Style."<sup>130</sup> President Ayres, in informing architect J.E.R. Carpenter that his classical proposal had lost out to MFD's "Elizabethan" submittal, wrote,

The Committee was influenced by the consideration that to change to a classical or colonial type of architecture would involve, or imply, a total reconstruction of the University group; and, realizing the difficulties that had

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<sup>129</sup> For a {semi-} Gothic main building, this was a rather rare massing scheme, also used by Charles D. Maginnis at Boston College's Gasson Hall in 1908; by Miller, Fullenwider, and Dowling at the University of Evansville's Olmsted Administration Hall in 1921; and later by Carneal, Johnston, and Wright at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's Burruss Hall in 1936.

<sup>130</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, July 23, 1918, 75-77.

been experienced in getting the State to provide for the buildings now proposed, they felt that it would be a long time before such a revolution in style could be made effective. For this reason they thought best to use a style that immediately harmonized, in a way, with the present buildings, although, of course, they did not deceive themselves...[with] the thought that perfect harmony would result.<sup>131</sup>

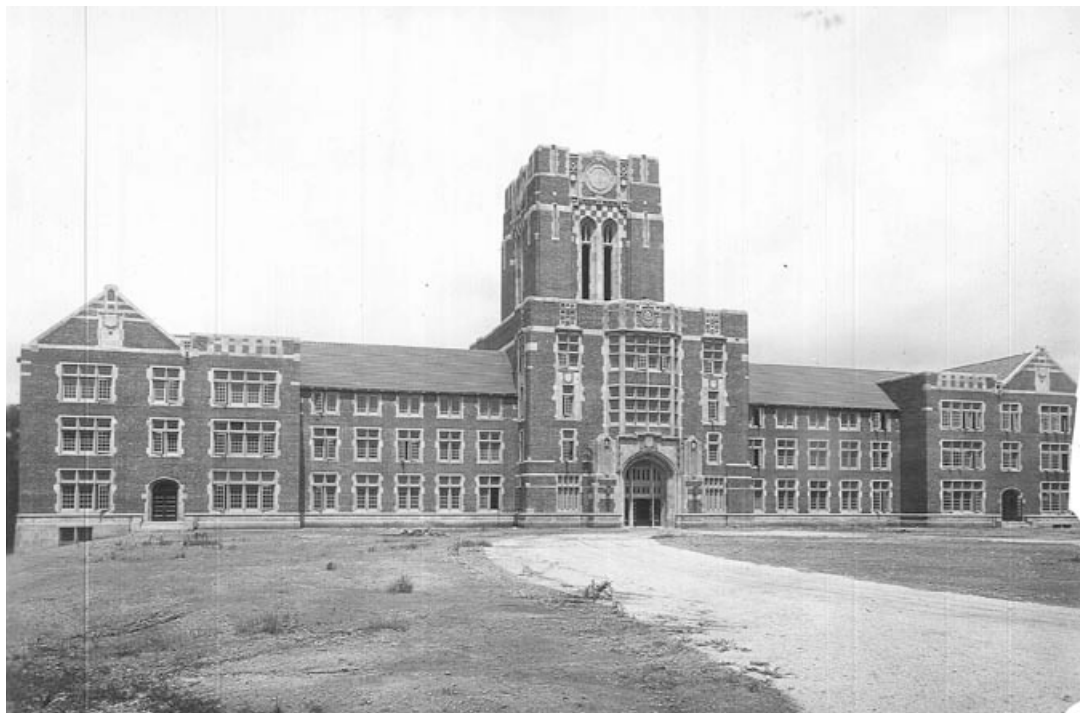


Figure 14. Early photograph of the south façade of Ayres Hall. Source: University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0018, Box 6, Folder 46), Knoxville, TN.

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<sup>131</sup> Brown Ayres to J.E.R. Carpenter, August 14, 1918, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0004, Box 33, Folder 630). James Edwin Ruthven Carpenter, Jr. (1867-1932), a Tennessee native who attended the University of Tennessee, studied architecture at MIT and the École des Beaux-Arts before embarking on a prominent, New York practice. Among other commissions, his firm designed Nashville's Hermitage Hotel and multiple Park Avenue and Fifth Avenue apartment buildings in Manhattan. See Carroll Van West, "J. Edwin R. Carpenter," *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, <http://www.tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=203> (accessed March 17, 2013); and Andrew Alpern, *The New York Apartment Houses of Rosario Candela and James Carpenter* (New York: Acanthus Press, 2001).

Therefore, it would appear that two issues were salient for the Board when selecting an architectural style – visual continuity and cost.

At first blush, it is hard to imagine just what architectural style would have been in “harmony” with the panoply of styles represented on the campus at that time, much less why an alien style such as the Elizabethan Revival would have sufficed better than others, extant or not.<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, a classical or colonial main building for a campus already containing Old College and the recent Carnegie Library would not have been as radical or as revisionary as the Board claimed.<sup>133</sup> The institution seemed, therefore, set on taking the campus in a comprehensively new, aesthetic direction -- just apparently in a disarmingly gradual way that would, even in the short term, affiliate the main building with its preexisting satellites.<sup>134</sup> However, the fact that they began their coy, aesthetic revolution with the most centralized and elevated building on the campus – its kingpin, so to speak – when, as President Morgan concluded soon thereafter, few

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<sup>132</sup> Brown Ayres to Patton and Miller, December 23, 1909, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0004, Box 23, Folder 439.1). As an indication of the vexing concern for continuity amidst the lack of an evident, stylistic standard, in this letter regarding the design of the Carnegie Library, Ayres wrote, “I think it would be unfortunate for us to put up a building quite out of keeping with the others here now, and it seems to me that the sketch submitted differs too much from our prevailing style (if any).”

<sup>133</sup> In fact, earlier in 1909 President Ayres asked Patton & Miller to sketch a new main building that was “in harmony” with the “Colonial” nature of the Carnegie Library then under development. See Brown Ayres to Patton & Miller, December 23, 1909; Patton & Miller to Brown Ayres, December 31, 1909; and Patton & Miller to Brown Ayres, January 8, 1910, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0004, Box 23, Folder 439.1).

<sup>134</sup> “Three New Buildings at U.T. May Cost More than \$800,000,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, May 23, 1919. This article mentions that the agricultural building, built in concert with the main hall, was “made to conform to that of the general scheme planned for the university campus.”

of the University's existing buildings "would be called permanent structures,"<sup>135</sup> supports the notion that the Board intended this new style to constitute a prospective standard.<sup>136</sup>

### **The Elizabethan through History**

Just what the Board meant or expected by "Elizabethan" is not obvious, given firstly their aforementioned lack of specificity; secondly, the varied character of the style between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; and thirdly, the general imprecision of the term in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century architecture.

Originally, the Elizabethan (1558-1603), corresponding with its eponymous Queen, marked a transition between British Medieval Gothic and ascendant Italian Renaissance classicism.<sup>137</sup> Mainly manorial and masonry-built, it was viewed as distinct from the precursory Tudor by its combination of Gothic elements (multi-level Gothic bay and oriel windows, square or round turrets, parapeted gables, etc.) and classical elements (ABCBA symmetry and classical aediculae, for instance) with novelties like a greater proportion of glass in exterior walls and the occasional

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<sup>135</sup> Harcourt A. Morgan to Miller, Fullenwider, and Dowling, July 1, 1921, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0004, Box 33, Folder 630), Knoxville, TN.

<sup>136</sup> There is some irony in this: of creating a new style in deference to that of the University's existing buildings, when most of those buildings were, even at the time, considered impermanent. Indeed, Miller's 1925 master plan does away with most of the campus' existing building stock (see fig. 23). But it seems the Board, as Ayres intimated in his letter to J.E.R. Carpenter, had no idea how long it would take the institution to acquire the money necessary to implement any large-scale building program, making it wise to ensure the new style related to the aggregate of the old.

<sup>137</sup> William Dudley Hunt, Jr., *Encyclopedia of American Architecture* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1980), 291.

curvilinear fractable (fig. 15). Tudor, untainted by classicism, typically encompassed either crenellations, asymmetry, and cloistered plans in polite manors, or steeply pitched gables and half-timbering in more vernacular structures.<sup>138</sup> According to John Betjeman, Elizabethan also differed from the successive Jacobean (1603-1625) by the extent to which its Gothic influences overshadowed its classical ones.<sup>139</sup>



Figure 15. Rear façade of Montecute House, Somerset, UK (est. 1598). One example of an Elizabethan manor. Source: Wikimedia Commons, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Montacute\\_House\\_Apr\\_2002.JPG](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Montacute_House_Apr_2002.JPG)

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<sup>138</sup> Mark Girouard, "Elizabethan Architecture and the Gothic Tradition," *Architectural History* 6 (1963): 23-29; Gavin Edward Townsend, "The Tudor House in America: 1890-1930" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1986).

<sup>139</sup> John Betjeman, *Ghastly Good Taste; Or, A Depressing Story of the Rise and Fall of English Architecture* (London: Anthony Blond Ltd., 1970), 41.

The Elizabethan accompanied early British settlers to the American colonies, but it never took hold there like the later Georgian did.<sup>140</sup> Generations later, back in the motherland, a “Jacobethan” revival emerged following 1821’s allegorically Elizabethan coronation of George IV; the 1830 completion of Thomas Hopper’s sensationally Jacobethan manse Margam Abbey; and the nationalistic importance of the Elizabethan to the 1834 competition for the British Houses of Parliament.<sup>141</sup> Given the Victorian gentry’s penchant for the same sort of eclecticism that their 16<sup>th</sup>-century ancestors celebrated, historical documentations of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Styles multiplied, and an effete Elizabethan Revival found its way into several prominent architectural pattern books – on both sides of the Atlantic – by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 16).<sup>142</sup> However, exponents like Richard Brown, Andrew Jackson Downing, and Samuel Sloan were quick to qualify the style – even as they manipulated it – as aesthetically “debased,” indulgent, and degenerate.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Hunt, *Encyclopedia of American Architecture*.

<sup>141</sup> Betjeman, *Ghastly Good Taste*, 1970, 41; Timothy Mowl, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Style* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1993), 195; Marvin Trachtenberg and Isabelle Hyman, *Architecture: From Prehistory to Post-Modernism* (New York: Prentice Hall/Harry N. Abrams, 1986), 456. Betjeman first coined the term “Jacobethan” as a convenient, catch-all description of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Styles’ kindred ambivalence. Mowl uses the term to denote the muddled resurgence of these styles in Victorian England so as to differentiate the work of the 19<sup>th</sup> century from that of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. For the George IV’s coronation, Elizabethan was symbolic of past Protestant victory against Catholic foes, which was appropriate given England’s recent victories against France in the Napoleonic Wars. The Parliament competition, meanwhile, required entries to conform to one of the two quintessentially “British” styles: Gothic or Elizabethan.

<sup>142</sup> Mowl, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Style*.

<sup>143</sup> Richard Brown, *Domestic Architecture* (London: George Virtue, 1841); Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1968); Samuel Sloan, *Sloan’s Victorian Buildings: Illustrations of and Floor Plans for 56 Residences & Other Structures* (1852; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1980), 35.

Downing, in his *Architecture of Country Houses* (1850), warned his fellow Americans:

Looking at the Elizabethan...style critically, or in a philosophical point of view, we cannot deny that it often violates all rules of art, and indulges in all manner of caprices. Mere architects and pedantic judges have accordingly condemned it in all ages. Viewed, however, as a style addressed to the feelings, and capable of wonderfully varied expression, from the most grotesque and whimsical to the boldly picturesque and curiously beautiful, we see much in that style to admire – especially for domestic architecture. Still, as we think it a most dangerous style for any but an architect of great taste and judgment to handle, and one rarely in keeping with character or circumstances in this country, we have not presented any strictly Elizabethan designs for exteriors.<sup>144</sup>



Figure 16. "A Villa in the Elizabethan Style," by Andrew Jackson Downing. Source: Andrew Jackson Downing, *Cottage Residences, Rural Architecture & Landscape Gardening* (1842; repr., Watkins Glen, NY: Library of Victorian Culture, 1967), 168.

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<sup>144</sup> Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses*, 390-391. What is interesting about this description is that Downing admits that this style is especially subject to an architect's whim and thus must only be entrusted to one with proven "taste."

Whether Grant Miller, still a generation removed from this quote, amounted to “an architect of great taste and judgment” is superfluous, but he had at least already grappled with what he considered to be this style – though his interpretation differed somewhat from 16<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century conceptions of it<sup>145</sup> (as did Ralph Adams Cram’s; fig. 17). Per 16<sup>th</sup>-century Elizabethan custom, Miller’s main building elevation featured multi-level gothic bay windows, gothic towers (on its preliminary south façade), classical ABCBA symmetry courtesy of an E-shaped plan, parapeted gables, and a wealth of rectangular, divided-lite windows. Its streamlined, gothic bell tower (an ecclesiastical feature) and its gothic central portal, however, were not as in keeping with 16<sup>th</sup>-century Elizabethan precedent, and indicate prominent points of Miller’s license.<sup>146</sup>

It appears, then, that Miller’s idiosyncratic Elizabethan Revival was operating within a general confusion, or at least a general liberality (neither unwarranted by history), over just what “Elizabethan” constituted – seeing as how (1) the Elizabethan had evolved over its 300-year history and never truly been codified, and (2) as Gavin Townsend notes, the terms “Tudor” and “Elizabethan” became conflated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (and their meanings even reversed at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup>). Not until the 1910s and 1920s was “Elizabethan” coming to

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<sup>145</sup> If one uses Ayres and Morgan Halls as exemplars of Miller’s interpretation, then based on renderings in his monograph, Miller and his former partner Patton had continuously developed an idiosyncratic “Elizabethan” just as chaste and formulaic.

<sup>146</sup> Mark Girouard, *Elizabethan Architecture: Its Rise and Fall, 1540-1640* (New Haven: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art / Yale University Press, 2009); Mark Girouard, “Elizabethan Architecture and the Gothic Tradition,” *Architectural History* 6 (1963): 23-29.

mean more of its 16<sup>th</sup>-century self again – well after J. Alfred Gotch's *Early Renaissance Architecture in England* (1901) attempted to set the record straight, and all while English domestic architecture of the 16<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> centuries was becoming the second-most popular residential inspiration in American architectural journals.<sup>147</sup>

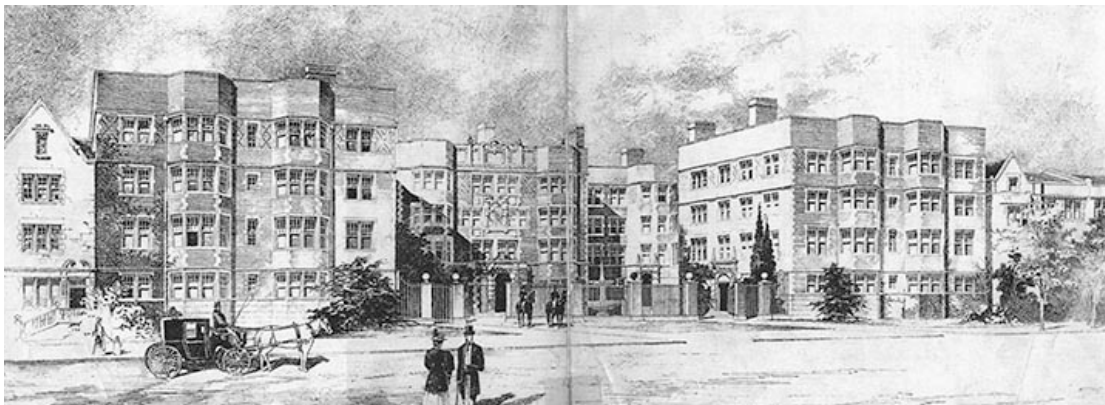


Figure 17. Rendering for Cram, Wentworth, & Goodhue's Richmond Court Apartments, Brookline, MA, 1898. Miller's Elizabethan bears the strongest affinity for Cram's interpretation of Elizabethan, exhibited here. Source: Ethan Anthony, *The Architecture of Ralph Adams Cram and His Office* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007): 207.

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<sup>147</sup> Gavin Townsend notes that, in 1842, A.J. Downing considered the same plan that Richard Brown had deemed "Tudor," "Elizabethan." By the next century, Townsend writes, a complete reversal of appellation had occurred: "If a building were constructed of masonry, and had pointed or scrolled gables, it was apt to be called 'Early Tudor.' The presence of any half-timbering suggested classification as 'Elizabethan.'" In 1925, *Architectural Record* analyzed the most popular styles depicted in several architectural journals over the previous two years; "English Domestic Architecture of the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and early 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries" came in second. See Gavin Townsend, "The Tudor House in America: 1890-1930" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Clara, 1986), 1-6; and Mark Alan Hewitt, "The Other Proper Style," *Old House Journal* 15, no. 2 (March/April 1997): 30-37.

## An Unlikely but Understandable Choice

In turn-of-the-century architectural design, Victorian eclecticism was bowing to *de rigueur* Eclecticism, which, instead of prizing formal invention and the fusion of historical elements of broad origin (in the Victorian vein), entailed the case-specific selection and emulation of a particular historical genre for its programmatically appropriate analogies. Architects then learnedly manipulated that genre's details in an effort to be convincingly idiomatic, but rarely hackneyed.<sup>148</sup>

Considering the profession's penchant for historical verisimilitude at this time, and despite the fact that "English Domestic Architecture" was so popular, Miller's Elizabethan Revival was a peculiar choice for an American collegiate institution seeking a standardized, prospective style, and especially so given that

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<sup>148</sup> Mark Alan Hewitt, *The Architect and the American Country House, 1890-1940* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); Walter C. Kidney, *The Architecture of Choice: Eclecticism in America, 1880-1930* (New York: George Braziller, 1974). Mark Alan Hewitt writes, "Currently,...we use *eclectic* to describe art whose sources are diverse and people whose taste is pluralistic and catholic – though this is not its original meaning. The term is derived from the Greek *eklektos*, meaning chosen or picked out, a definition that more accurately suggests the philosophy of architects at the turn of the century – that of choosing and transforming architectural details from history under the rubric of a style or idiom" (p. 38). Walter C. Kidney, differentiating 20<sup>th</sup> century Eclectics (with a capital "E") from Victorian eclectics (with a lowercase "e"), elaborated with the following: "The amount and kind of imitateness among the Eclectics varied from architect to architect and decade to decade. Literal imitation did occur.... But such copies or near copies are exceptional.... Unlike the mid-Victorian, the Eclectic studied all aspects of the style in which he proposed to design [,] not just the standard ornamental motifs, but the scale, proportions, massing, colors, and textures. These things contributed, in varying degrees, to the true look of the style. Once his contribution was assessed, the Eclectic felt free to introduce variations of his own: to abbreviate or suppress typical or ornamental details, even to create original ones; to substitute a new material for an 'authentic' one. By a skillful adjustment of the elements and by careful details he could create something marginally original, yet free of any feeling of incongruity, relying on his sense of how the style of choice worked visually" (p. 3).

contemporary fashion suggested either Collegiate Gothic or Beaux-Arts classicism in such a case.<sup>149</sup> Long at odds with each other and with Victorian eclecticism, both Eclectic styles were expensive and architecturally strict-constructionist (the latter ostensibly making them good campus standards).<sup>150</sup>

Collegiate Gothic, as Ayres Hall is often hastily classified,<sup>151</sup> originally comprised 19<sup>th</sup>-century Britain's architecturally faithful commitment to 13<sup>th</sup>-through 16<sup>th</sup>-century English Gothic precedents as a reaction against the dilettantism, eclecticism, and license of English "Gothick" and later Victorian Gothic.<sup>152</sup> Its obsessively Tudor- and Oxford-inspired forms originally served as a visual, post-Reformation boost to a Protestant nation embroiled in the Napoleonic Wars with Catholic France.<sup>153</sup> By the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, elite New England colleges and their institutional acolytes had appropriated these forms with equal archaeological fervor and for similarly sectarian purposes – though at this

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<sup>149</sup> Glenn Patton, "American Collegiate Gothic: A Phase of University Architectural Development," *The Journal of Higher Education* 38, no. 1 (January 1967): 1-8; Paul Turner, *Campus: An American Planning Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: The Architectural History Foundation / MIT Press, 1984). Furthermore, John Staub's admonition to the Board of Trustees (see Chapter 3) for not consulting the firms of McKim, Meade, and White (the preeminent classicists of their day) or Ralph Adams Cram (the master American Gothicist), speaks to this fact.

<sup>150</sup> Walter C. Kidney, *The Architecture of Choice*. For a neat discussion of the gothic-classical rift, see Alain de Botton, *The Architecture of Happiness* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006); after that, see Heinrich Hübsch, *In What Style Should We Build?: The German Debate on Architectural Style* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>151</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Ayres Hall, Knoxville, Knox County, Tennessee, National Register #12000466; Klein.

<sup>152</sup> Johanna G. Seasonwein, *Princeton and the Gothic Revival, 1879-1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Art Museum, 2012); Mowl, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Style*. Mowl claims the greatest inspirations were Oxford's Jesus, Exeter, and Lincoln Colleges.

<sup>153</sup> Mowl, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Style*. Tudor forms (rectangular apertures, hood/label molds, oriel windows, towers, crenelated parapets, etc.) and their relative lack of pointedness were seen as less Catholic.

point it was meant to recall the grand academic tradition of Oxbridge while psychologically insulating upper-crust WASPs from a growing immigrant threat.<sup>154</sup> Early American Collegiate Gothic buildings like those designed by Miller's better-known contemporaries Cope & Stewardson; Day & Klauder; Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge; Ralph Adams Cram; and James Gamble Rogers (to name a few) were all rigorously yet refreshingly derived from English precedents (many of them purposefully explicit in their likeness; fig. 18). Despite these buildings' intrinsic expense, their exaggeratedly picturesque qualities found collegiate subscription beyond elite institutions until the Second World War; over the years, the specific British allusions dissipated, replaced instead by a desire to generically reference academia or, where Collegiate Gothic was extant, to merely maintain visual coherency.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Jean F. Block, *The Uses of Gothic: Planning and Building the Campus of the University of Chicago, 1892-1932* (Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 1983); Seasonwein; Patton; Turner; T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

<sup>155</sup> Block, *The Uses of Gothic*, 85; Turner. Gothic architecture's picturesque qualities included localized symmetry / global asymmetry, irregularity, textured surfaces, intricate carvings and fenestration, etc. Collegiate Gothic called for field masonry of ashlar stone or brick, along with trim stone and often leaded came glass. Stone was particularly expensive to extract, dimension, and transport. Furthermore, labor-intensive stone carvings abounded on Collegiate Gothic building exteriors – amidst tracery, moldings, and decorative relief – as did interior wainscoting, vaulted ceilings, and hammerbeam trusses. As evidence of the style's financial commitment, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (one of the wealthiest Americans during his lifetime) complained to the University of Chicago's president in 1901 that their Collegiate Gothic Bartlett Gymnasium (which Rockefeller was partially subsidizing) was more "elaborate and hence more costly than is necessary or wise...." "Possibly this is necessitated by the style of architecture," he continued, "if so it seems to me that a simpler style would not only be less costly but greatly to be preferred."

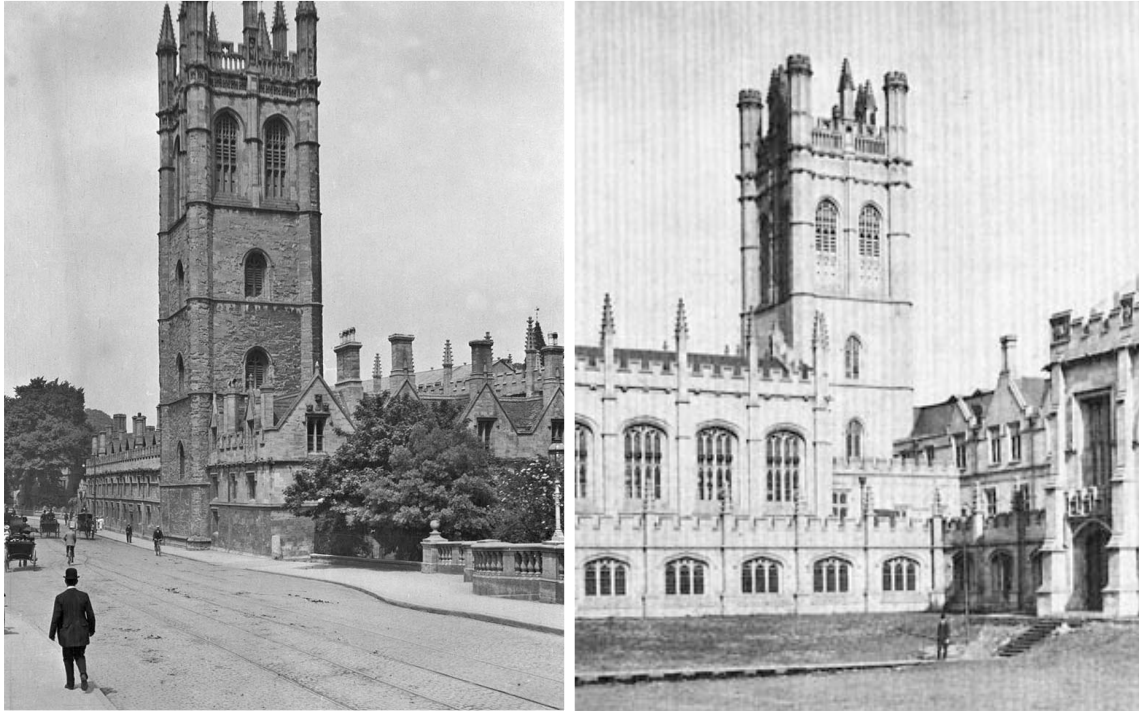


Figure 18. At left: Bell tower, Magdalen College, Oxford, UK (built 1492-1509). At right: Mitchell Tower, University of Chicago, Chicago, USA (completed 1903; designed by Shepley, Rutan, & Coolidge). Sources (L-R): Clarence Ward Archive of the National Gallery of Art, Department of Image Collections, via ARTstor; Jean F. Block, *The Uses of Gothic: Planning and Building the Campus of the University of Chicago, 1892-1932* (Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 1983), 68.

The other default, stylistic option for higher-educational architecture at the time was Beaux-Arts classicism, which rivaled Collegiate Gothic in its expense and historical pretense. In the forms of the Roman Empire and the Italian Renaissance – glorified by the “White City” of Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 – Americans saw unification incarnate and a fitting allegory for their own imperial ambitions and economic self-importance (their “American Renaissance”).<sup>156</sup>

Through adherence to classical architectural principles; by adopting the École des

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<sup>156</sup> Richard Guy Wilson, “Chapter I: Expressions of Identity,” in *The American Renaissance 1876-1917* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum / Pantheon Books, 1979), 11-26.

Beaux-Arts' balanced concern for holistic composition and optimal use; and by marshaling many allied arts; American architects sought to assert their homeland as Europe's inevitable supplanter.<sup>157</sup> In the process, the American Renaissance redefined classical antiquity's cultural import: from a chaste, 19<sup>th</sup>-century reference to republican (mainly Greek) virtue, to an ornate, 20<sup>th</sup>-century symbol of capitalism and empire (of the Roman sort) – all coyly under the rubric of civic-mindedness.<sup>158</sup> As robber-barons – analogous to Renaissance merchant-princes – endowed self-reverential academic buildings and eponymous new universities, they often brought with them the same hyper-symmetrical, regularized, and trabeated style that had lent their cutthroat corporations and immodest mansions such repute and monumentality.<sup>159</sup> That said, private and public institutions alike commissioned Beaux-Arts classical buildings and master plans around this time.<sup>160</sup>

Running counter to the Gilded Age's prevailing, historicist belief that Victorian eclecticism was amateurish, "Elizabethan" (which blended two distinct styles in a manner Victorians were wont to do) constituted a strange suggestion from the stylistic factotum Grant Miller.<sup>161</sup> What about Miller's Elizabethan Revival

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<sup>157</sup> David Van Zanten, "Architectural Composition at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts from Charles Percier to Charles Garnier," in *The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, ed. Arthur Drexler (New York: The Museum of Modern Art / The MIT Press, 1977), 111-323; Richard Guy Wilson, "Chapter I: Expressions of Identity," in *The American Renaissance*.

<sup>158</sup> Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: Harper, 2009).

<sup>159</sup> Turner, *Campus*; Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*.

<sup>160</sup> Private schools included Columbia, MIT, and Sweet Briar College. Among the public schools were the Universities of Virginia, California, and Minnesota.

<sup>161</sup> T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981): 187-188.

appealed to him as a campus standard, beyond the aforementioned ability of the style to blend in with the University's varied building stock? Perhaps for starters, Miller was well versed in another Gothic-Classical transitional style, the Romanesque (to which he dedicated his 1895 graduate thesis at the University of Illinois), so likely the style offered him a measure of comfort.<sup>162</sup> Also, from a strictly formal perspective, perhaps what Miller appreciated about the Elizabethan tradition was the fact that, while blending elements and techniques reminiscent of Collegiate Gothic and Beaux-Arts classicism, unlike either of those sources, Elizabethan had no rigid canon dictating what he should do, and against which his budget-conscious and comparatively unscholarly designs could be judged and presumably found wanting.<sup>163</sup> As Mowl suggests, an appreciation of the Elizabethan necessitates a liberal abandonment of ingrained notions of aesthetic correctness.<sup>164</sup> With the highest-profile commission of Miller's career, and one with so great a ramification for the subsequent look of the campus, the synthetic gray area Elizabethan Revival offered could have been strategically liberating for Miller (and for the institution). In fact, Miller would follow Ayres Hall up with an eerily similar main building for the University of Evansville (the Olmsted Administration Hall; fig. 19), so apparently he felt impressed enough with his Tennessee solution to export it.

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<sup>162</sup> Grant C. Miller, "The Development of the Romanesque Style of Architecture" (master's thesis, University of Illinois, 1895).

<sup>163</sup> I assert this after comparing the oeuvre printed in his monograph to contemporary work by such historicist practitioners as McKim, Meade, and White and Ralph Adams Cram.

<sup>164</sup> Mowl, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Style*.

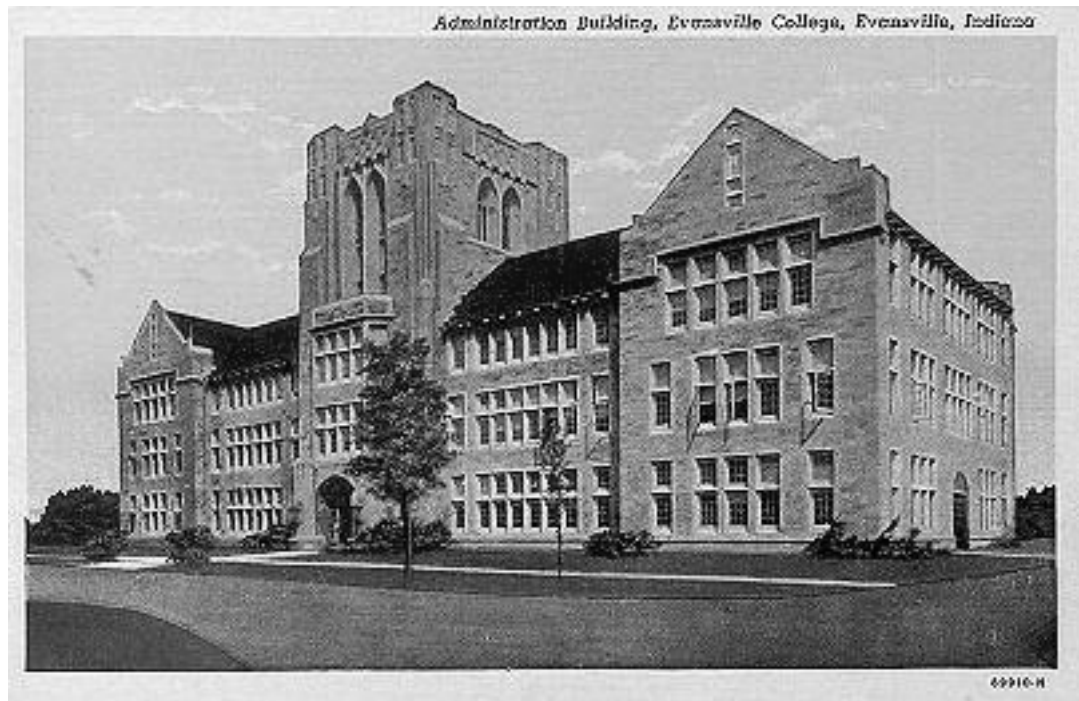


Figure 19. Olmsted Administration Hall, University of Evansville, Evansville, Indiana, Miller, Fullenwider, & Dowling, 1921. Source: <http://historicevansville.com/image2.php?id=educational%2FUE++postcard+2.jpg>

From a monetary standpoint, eschewing outright Collegiate Gothic or Beaux-Arts classicism was certainly more frugal – a merit the Trustees ascribed to Miller’s Elizabethan Revival when selecting it for the new main building. With just \$705,356 on hand (equivalent to just \$9,384,000 at the time of this writing<sup>165</sup>) to construct two, large, prominent buildings, resources were finite, and as evidence, value engineering was employed in June 1919 to stay within budget.<sup>166</sup> In line with Miller’s recorded preference for programmatic fidelity over material decadence – and respecting the school’s space shortages – material substitutions

<sup>165</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics Inflation Calculator

<sup>166</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, June 2, 1919, p. 131. For comparison, the University of Chicago in 1910 had \$1,500,000 at their disposal to build one Gothic Chapel (see Block, *The Uses of Gothic*, 152).

and omissions comprised the bulk of the cost-saving measures, allowing for just one minor space reduction (the elimination of the “towers” on the south elevation; compare fig. 14 to fig. 22).<sup>167</sup> Assuredly, the canonically prescribed, resource- and labor-intensive intricacies demanded by Collegiate Gothic or Beaux-Arts classicism would not have lent themselves to the scale required or limited funds available in this case. And the Board of Trustees – the decades-old uproar over Old College’s \$13,000 “extravagance” perhaps lingering in their minds – would not have been eager to indicate publicly funded profligacy now (especially when the institution would soon need more public funding and when its recent aid had been so hard-won).

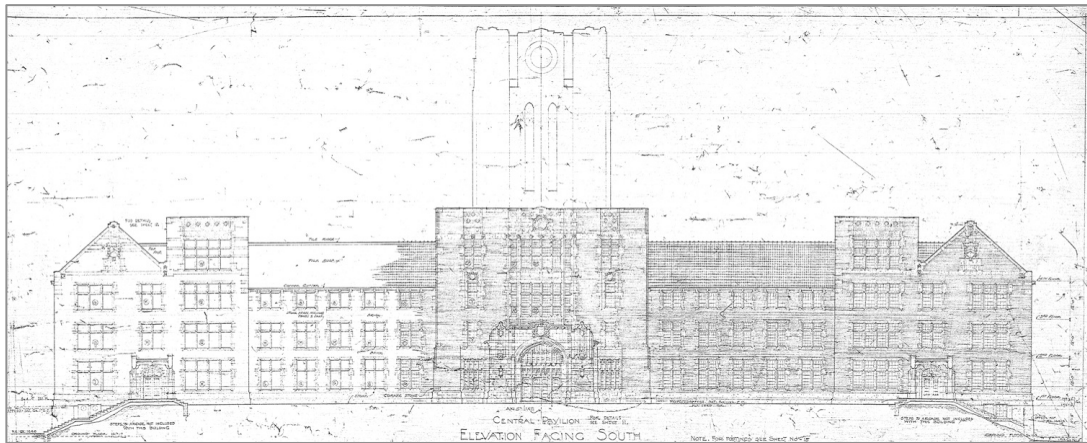


Figure 20. South Elevation of Ayres Hall from its construction documents, dated February 17, 1919. The fourth floors of the “towers” at the wings were omitted during value engineering in June 1919; cf. fig. 15. Source: University of Tennessee Facilities Services Archives, Knoxville, TN.

<sup>167</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 7, June 2, 1919, p. 132; Grant C. Miller, “Library Buildings” (paper presented at a meeting of the Iowa Library Association, Grinnell, Iowa, October 30, 1902).

## Campus Replanning

In a letter to the Board of Trustees dated July 31, 1906, President Ayres hastily implored the following:

...we should at the earliest possible day employ a landscape architect of first-class ability to make a careful study of our grounds and prepare for us a map locating the buildings of the greater University of the future in such a way that the final results will be a harmonious whole rather than a piece of patchwork. There is opportunity for some skillful planning here.<sup>168</sup>

Effectively, eleven years before the million-dollar bond issue, Ayres lamented an existing campus plan that was, in his estimation, incongruous and haphazard – a sense of disorder that is yet evident from the campus' plan as of 1918 (figs. 12 and 21), though likely not accidental either. As it turns out, there is much in this plan that adheres to Frederick Law Olmsted's preponderant thoughts on land-grant college planning.



Figure 21. Bird's eye painting (from the northeast) of the University of Tennessee, ca. 1910. Cumberland Avenue runs in the foreground. For plan diagram, see fig. 12. Source: University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0018, Box 6, Folder 19), Knoxville, TN.

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<sup>168</sup> Brown Ayres to the Board of Trustees, University of Tennessee, July 31, 1906, University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.001, Box 3, Folder 4).

Olmsted, who is best known for his 1858 co-design of New York City's Central Park, was also – before his 1888 master plan for Stanford University – an influential proponent of a particularly picturesque mode of planning land-grant colleges. Olmsted found in the park-like clearings, the meandering roads, and the dispersed, low-density, and informally grouped buildings of his plans for several land-grant institutions, a forgiving system for inevitable growth and an apt metaphor for the educational egalitarianism these new democratic colleges were meant to propagate. By the string of commissions he received and by the extent of their influence (fig. 22), land-grant educators nationwide blessed his romantic philosophy (to near standardization) of not just designing a school, but a flexible and socially consequential, suburban community.<sup>169</sup>

Accordingly, in the University of Tennessee's plan as of 1918, picturesque informality rules the day – much to Ayres' dismay. Most of the buildings present by this point had been built during the construction-boom of President Dabney's polytechnically inclined reorganization, and even the ones built thereafter adhered

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<sup>169</sup> Turner. Plans for Land-Grant Colleges that Olmsted submitted included those for Massachusetts Agricultural College (eventually the University of Massachusetts at Amherst; 1866), Cornell (1867), and Maine State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (eventually the University of Maine; 1867). In these plans, Olmsted favored a "cottage" system of several, small, dispersed buildings rather than a conglomerate of high-density "barracks." Olmsted ascribed to a certain amount of environmental determinism, believing, in Turner's words, "a college planned as a domestically scaled suburban community, in a park-like setting, would instill in its students civilized and enlightened values" (p. 142). Turner credits a review of Olmsted's plan for Amherst in the December 22, 1867 *The Nation* as broadcasting Olmsted's thoughts for land-grant colleges most widely and, for his business, fortuitously. Other schools that borrowed heavily from Olmsted's principles include Michigan State Agricultural College (eventually Michigan State University) and Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (eventually Iowa State University).

to no guidelines beyond addressing the campus' sinuous web of streets.<sup>170</sup>

Coherency, axuality, and formal, orthogonal groupings were consistently shunned in favor of an Olmstedian "patchwork" echoing many of the school's land-grant peers; in fact, the symmetrical grouping of East, Old, and West Colleges – which predated Dabney and the Morrill Act considerably – comprised the only formality on the campus.

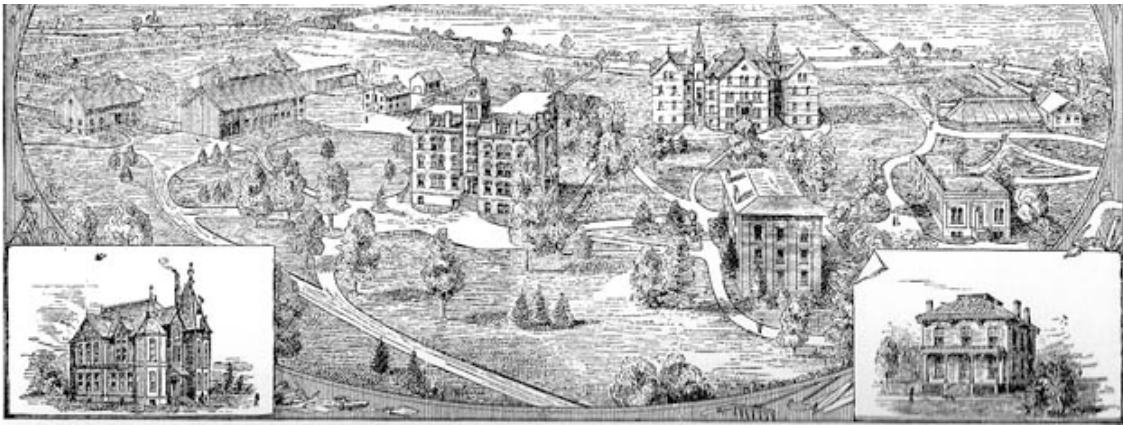


Figure 22. Bird's eye lithograph of Michigan State Agricultural College (Michigan's Land-Grant institution; now Michigan State University) from the 1870s. One can see the influence of Olmsted in the lack of any formal ordering principle. Source: Paul Venable Turner, *Campus: An American Planning Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: The Architectural History Foundation / The MIT Press, 1984): 148.

Grant Miller's 1925 master plan, by comparison, was utterly revisionary (compare fig. 21 to fig. 23).<sup>171</sup> At the heart and focal point of this campus plan –

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<sup>170</sup> Montgomery, Folmsbee, and Greene. Dabney presided over the University from 1887 to 1904. The majority of the buildings present on the main campus in 1918 were built during his tenure.

<sup>171</sup> Indications point to the fact that, whether or not it was drawn, a general plan for as many as twenty new buildings existed as early as 1918 – all at Ayres' behest. See "New Building on U.T. Farm," *Knoxville Sentinel*, December 18, 1918; "Three New Buildings at U.T. May Cost More than \$800,000," *Knoxville Sentinel*, May 23, 1919.

which dispensed with nearly every existing structure – sat Miller’s hierarchically dominant main building (Ayres Hall) and its two, unbuilt southern associates (envisioned alongside the main building from the start; fig. 24). The triumvirate of the main building, the unrealized Auditorium Building (aligned with the main building’s west wing; fig. 25), and the unrealized Administration Building (aligned with the main building’s east wing) was to form a bilaterally symmetrical “inner campus, or quadrangle.”<sup>172</sup> A *cour d’honneur* is a more apt description, however,

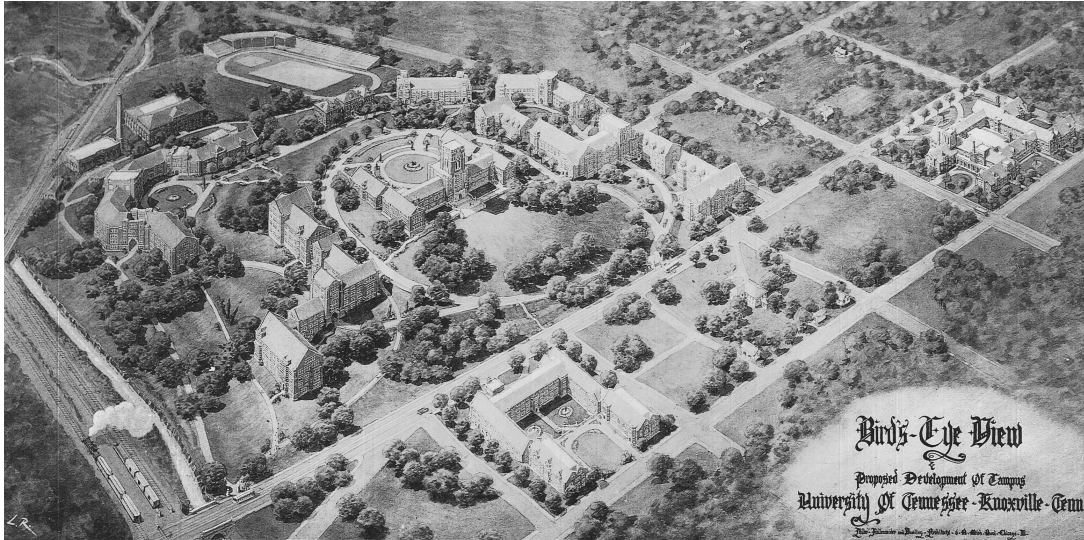


Figure 23. Bird’s eye rendering (from the northeast) of Miller, Fullenwider, and Dowling’s proposed master plan, 1925. Compare to 1910 rendering of existing campus (fig. 21). Source: University of Tennessee Special Collections (AR.0018, Box 6. Folder 23), Knoxville, TN.

as the quadrangle’s southernmost edge was left open in Miller’s plan to preserve the vantage of the river. To the east and west of the central grouping, spreading

<sup>172</sup> “Three of Largest New Buildings,” *Orange and White*, May 29, 1919; “Three New Buildings at U.T. May Cost More than \$800,000,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, May 23, 1919.

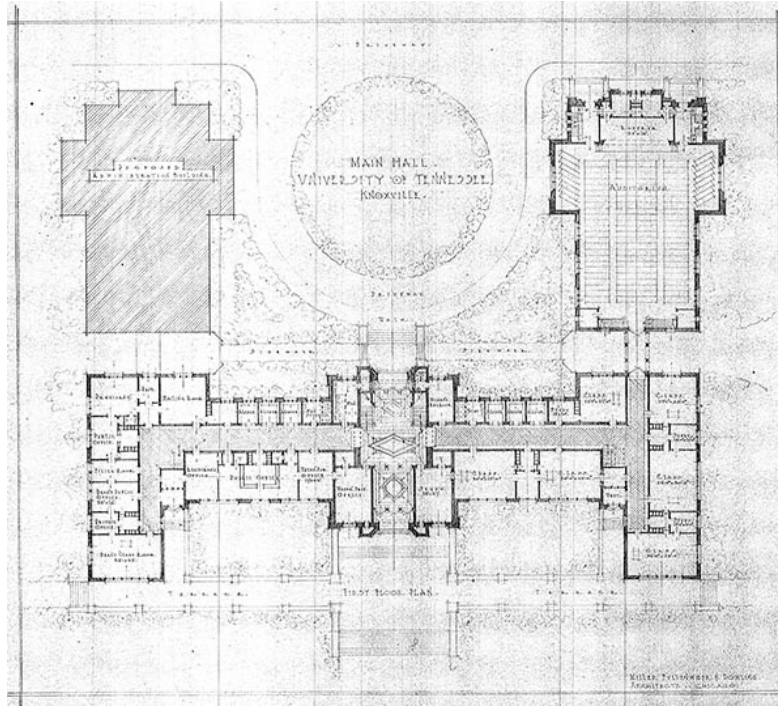


Figure 24. Plan (oriented south) of Ayres Hall (at bottom), the proposed Administration Building (at upper left), and the proposed Auditorium Building (or Chapel; at upper right); ca. 1925(?); Miller, Fullenwider, & Dowling. Comparable footprints for the Administration and Auditorium Buildings were drawn alongside the main building in its 1919 construction drawings. Source: University of Tennessee Facilities Services Archives, Knoxville, TN.

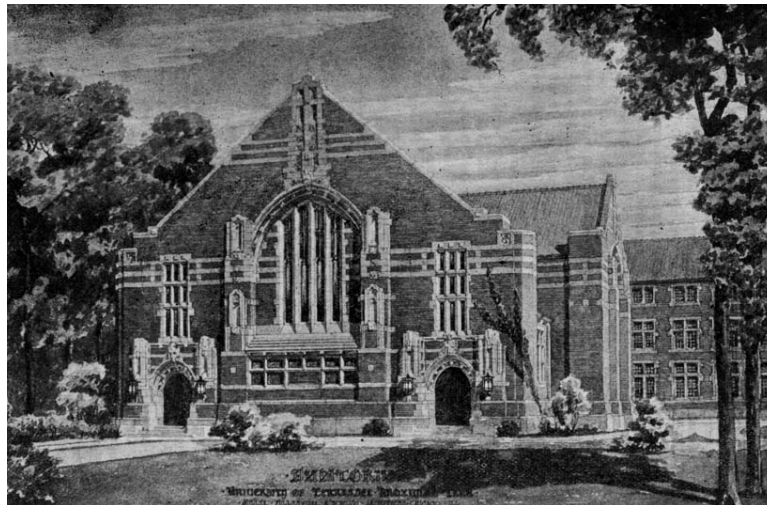


Figure 25. Rendering of the proposed Auditorium Building (or Chapel) from the south, by Miller, Fullenwider, & Dowling. Ayres Hall's western hyphen is drawn in the background. Source: *The Tennessee Alumnus* 4, no. 2 & 3 (April-July 1920): 38.

north and downhill towards Cumberland Avenue, extended z-block configurations of similarly styled buildings (roughly symmetrical about the main building's central axis). On the southern periphery of the Hill an irregular ring of predominantly snake-like buildings encircled the second concentric road of the campus. Of curious note, the only extant features that would have survived Miller's plan were Estabrook Hall and Morrill Hall (both on the outskirts), and curiously enough, the rambling Circle Drive. Even Miller's 1911 Carnegie Library (a neoclassical building) would have been sacrificed as order and coherency, per the late Ayres' wishes, reigned supreme.

The recurring use of the term "quadrangle" to describe Miller's proposed "inner campus," and his plan's theme of contiguous and often boundary-defining serpentine buildings, speak of a debt to Collegiate Gothic precedent. Amongst those American academics clamoring for a more intimate community within their increasingly complex and impersonal Universities, the insular, cloistered notions of the ancient English residential colleges provided ample inspiration in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – and its most potent symbol was the hermetic quadrangle.<sup>173</sup> Essentially, architectural encapsulations promised to facilitate internal academic exchange (what Princeton University President Woodrow Wilson called "mind-and-mind interaction") and, especially in urban contexts, to filter outside encroachments (be they visual, audible, or personal) – the better to improve scholastic performance

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<sup>173</sup> Turner, 215; Glenn Patton, "American Collegiate Gothic: A Phase of University Architectural Development," *The Journal of Higher Education* 38, no. 1 (January 1967): 1-8.

and bolster ethno-moral solidarity within. Collegiate Gothicists like Cope & Stewardson and Ralph Adams Cram answered the call with romantic gusto, even extrapolating the quadrangular emphasis on seclusion to a new and irregularly segmental form of building-as-campus-screen, as exemplified by the snake-like and peripheral Pembroke and Rockefeller Halls at Bryn Mawr College, Blair and Stafford Little Halls at Princeton (figs. 26 & 27), and the majority of Cram's plan for the University of Richmond.<sup>174</sup>



Figure 26. Reconstructed plan diagram of Princeton University, ca. 1909. Blair and Stafford Little Halls' serpentine plans block the railroad from the rest of the campus. Source: Paul Venable Turner, *Campus: An American Planning Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Architectural History Foundation / MIT Press, 1984): 228.

<sup>174</sup> Turner; Seasonwein; Anthony, e-mail message to the author, February 9, 2013. Cope and Stewardson's Pembroke and Rockefeller Halls acted as the campus' southern boundary. At Princeton, Cope and Stewardson's Blair and Stafford Little Halls were an effort to screen a rail line while offering an impressive portal to the campus from it. Cram's serpentine buildings at Richmond, meanwhile, were more containers of his vistas than defenses from the outside world.



Figure 27. Undated photograph of Blair Hall (est. 1897), Princeton University. Designed by Cope & Stewardson in the Collegiate Gothic style. Source: Wayne Andrews Archive (Esto) via ARTstor.

At the same time, the formality, hierarchy, and architectural homogeneity of Miller's plan acknowledged the zeitgeist of Beaux-Arts and City Beautiful planning. As American colleges began instructing more disciplines and adopting the German-University model of not only disseminating knowledge, but creating it through research, their physical environs necessitated commensurate growth and adaptation – often with the sort of aesthetic myopia lamented by Brown Ayres. Since these Universities contained not only a constellation of educational departments, but also a growing mix of building types for instruction, experimentation, administration, residence, mess, library holdings, and extracurricular activities, for many this multiplicity required a rational, architectural system to enforce legible unity and stratification.<sup>175</sup> The City Beautiful movement, which had brought Beaux-Arts classical and verdant order to the blighted cores of

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<sup>175</sup> Glenn Patton, *American Collegiate Gothic*; Turner.

Washington, DC (fig. 28) and Chicago years earlier, promised just such a comprehensive system for the chaotic campus: one that would grandly codify the ensemble. Looking to the example of Jefferson's University of Virginia (fig. 29) and magnifying it, the Beaux-Arts campus diagram – like that of a traditional banquet setting – typically began with a monumental, flagship building at the terminus of a primary axial [and usually vegetative] vista, surrounded by deferential yet stylistically consistent pavilions that were symmetrically arrayed about the primary vista's axis (fig. 30).<sup>176</sup>

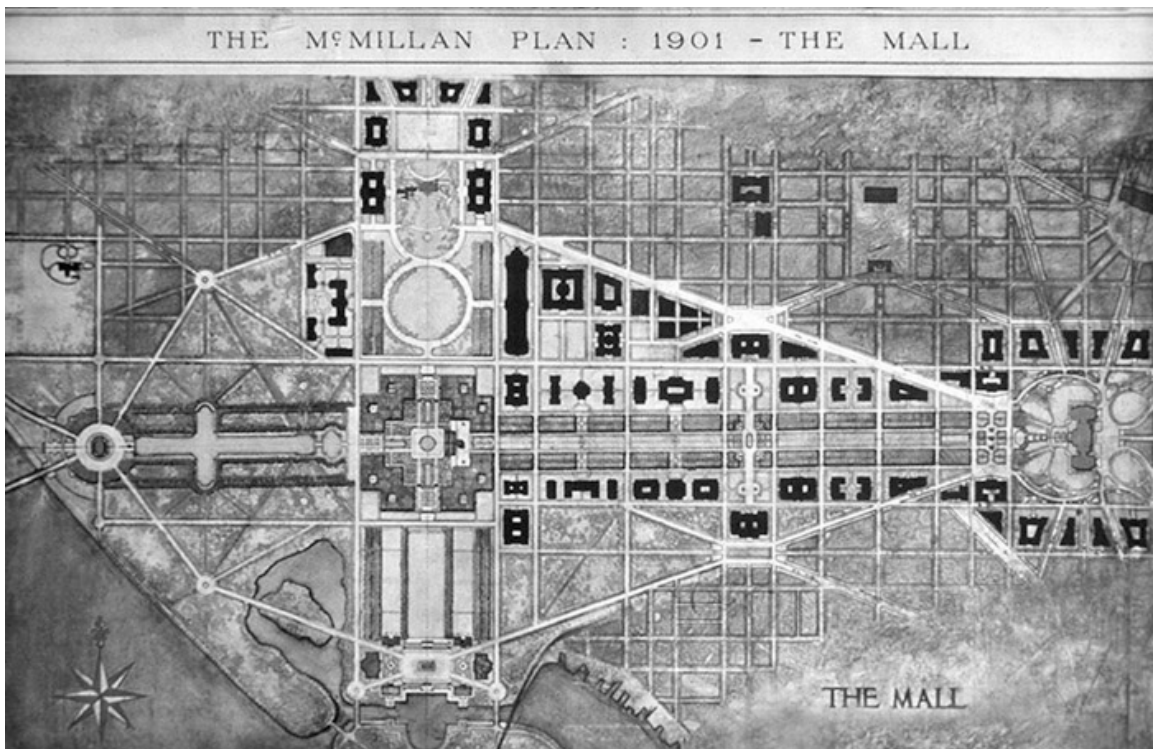


Figure 28. The McMillan Plan for Washington, DC, 1901. Source: National Capital Planning Commission, [http://www.ncpc.gov/ncpc/Main\(T2\)/Media\(Tr2\)/Media\(Tr3\)/Images.html](http://www.ncpc.gov/ncpc/Main(T2)/Media(Tr2)/Media(Tr3)/Images.html).

<sup>176</sup> Turner. Beaux-Arts designers introduced cross-axes perpendicular to the primary axis as a means to incorporate more pavilion-like buildings than could reasonably fit bestride the primary axis.

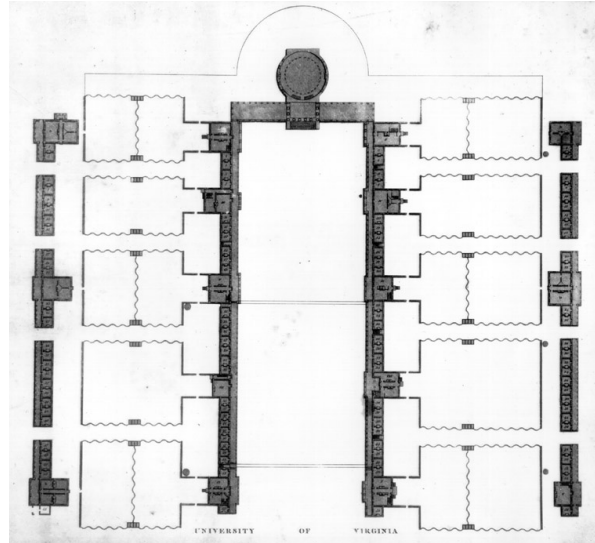


Figure 29. Thomas Jefferson's plan for the University of Virginia, as engraved by Peter Maverick, 1826. A primary axis runs the length of the "Lawn" and terminates at the Pantheon-like Rotunda (top center) with professors' "Pavilions" and student rooms interspersed symmetrically about said axis. Moving outwards from the Lawn are gardens and, further still, "Range" rooms and "Hotels," again roughly symmetrical about the primary axis. Source: The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, The Albert & Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.

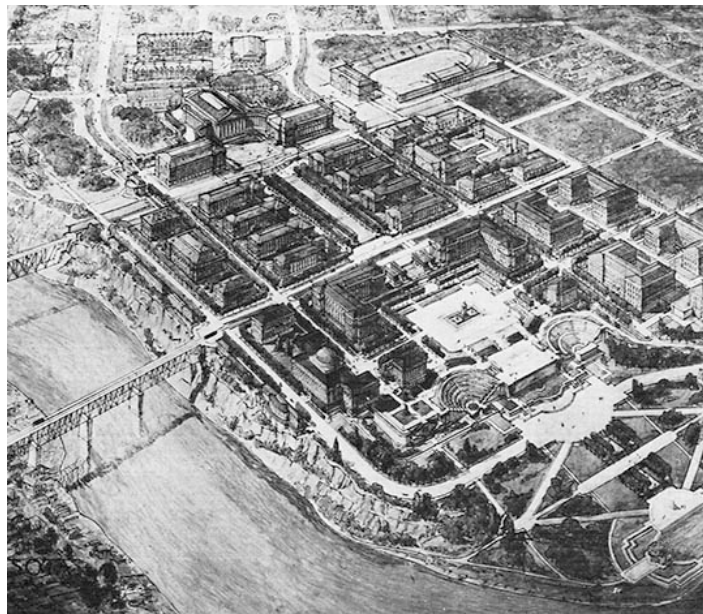


Figure 30. Bird's eye rendering of Cass Gilbert's master plan for the University of Minnesota. Note the dominant Parthenon-like structure at the head of the primary axis, and the pervasive symmetry of the plan about that axis. Source: Paul Venable Turner, *Campus: An American Planning Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Architectural History Foundation / MIT Press, 1984): 197.

## Summation

Miller's plan for the University of Tennessee effectively hybridized the hallmarks of Collegiate Gothic and Beaux-Arts classical planning, a practice which was not unheard-of for the period.<sup>177</sup> Like Miller's plan, campus plans for Princeton University (1906-1911; fig. 31), Reed College (1912; fig. 32), Yale University (1919), and later Duke University (1925; fig. 33) also blended irregular quadrangles, serpentine configurations, axial vistas, and hierarchically scaled structures with consistent architectural styling (nearly always Gothic Revival for new construction). What was uncommon and perhaps novel, however, was for a designer to carry such a thesis of gothic-classical fusion through to the style of the buildings (i.e., to select Elizabethan as a campus standard). Obviously, to go to such lengths of consistency, it was important for Grant Miller (and perhaps for his client even more so) that the University of Tennessee scheme not be resolutely Collegiate Gothic or Beaux-Arts Classical, but purposefully and conspicuously compromised.

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<sup>177</sup> Turner, 220, 245.

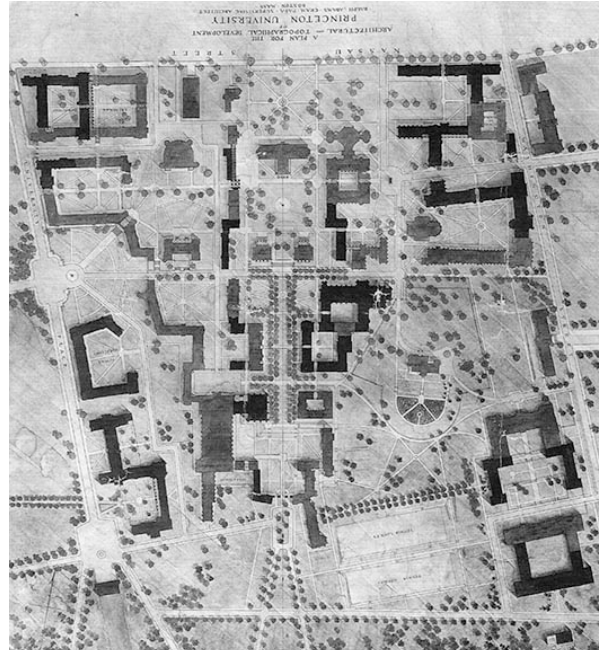


Figure 31. Master plan for Princeton University, 1911; Ralph Adams Cram, Architect. Cram was tasked in 1907 with making order out of Princeton's existing hodgepodge (see fig. 26), so he created a main axis that divided the campus and terminated at the existing (and evermore preeminent) Nassau Hall, and then he suggested new Collegiate Gothic buildings (in black) either reinforce that main axis, create localized symmetries, or create courtyards on the periphery. Cram's plan was too aggressive for the school, however, and was largely abandoned. Source: Ethan Anthony, *The Architecture of Ralph Adams Cram and His Office* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2007): 152.

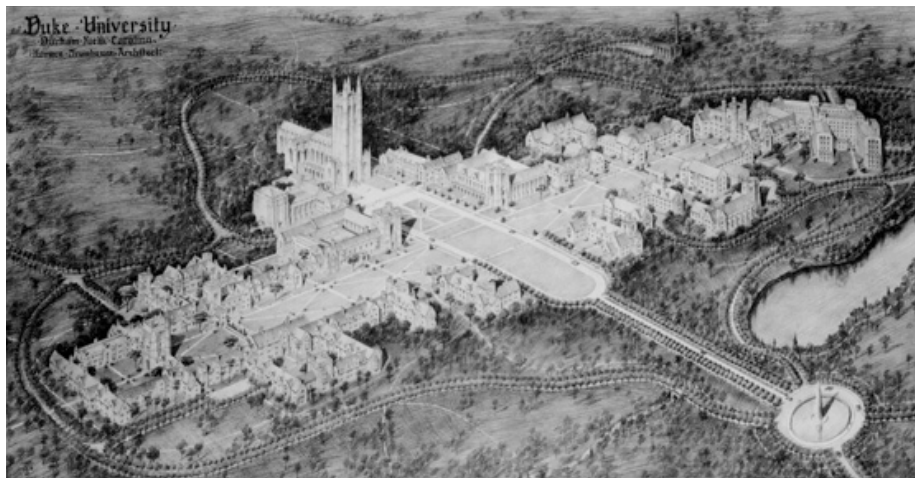


Figure 32. Bird's eye rendering of Duke University master plan ca. 1925; Horace Trumbauer, Architect. Note the Gothic Revival Chapel terminating the primary axis and the irregular Gothic Revival quadrangles flanking the secondary axis. Source: Construction of Duke University, 1924-1932, University Archives, Duke University.

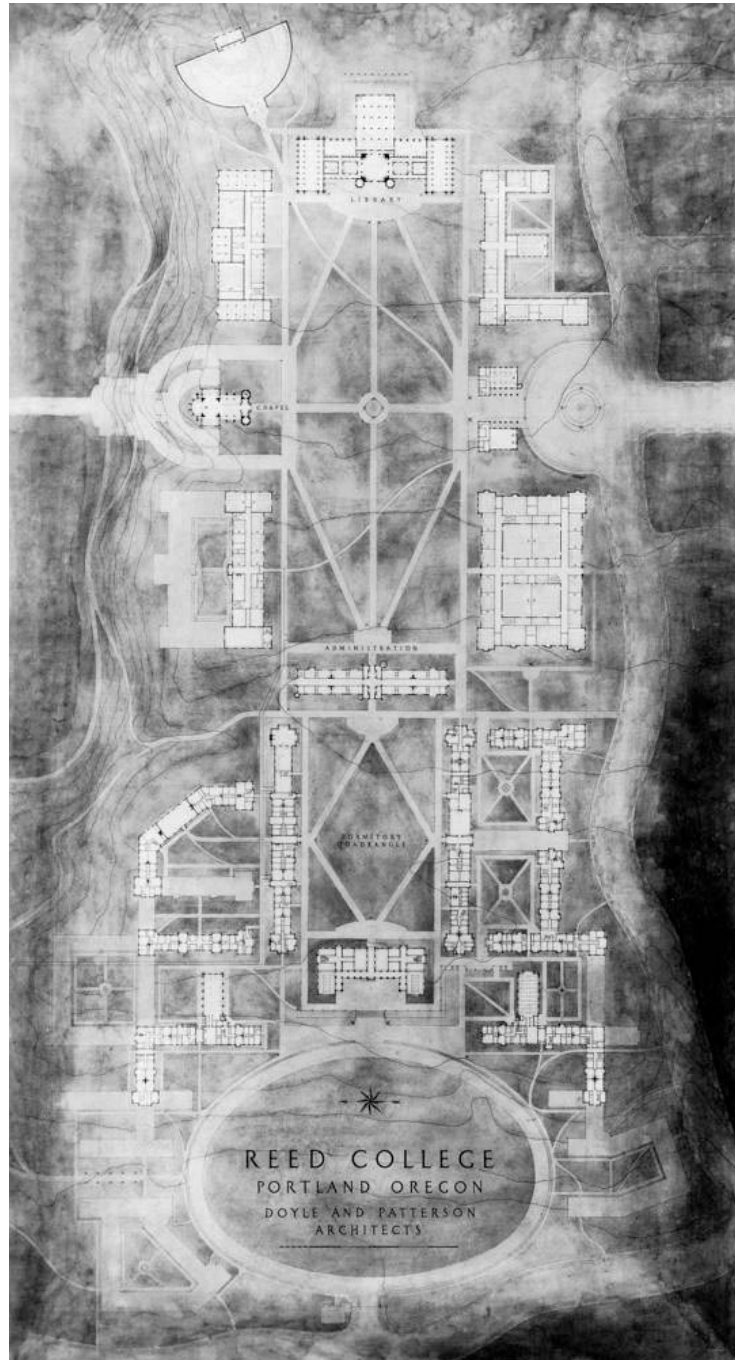


Figure 33. Reed College (Portland, OR) master plan, ca. 1910; Doyle & Patterson, Architects. Note the main building at the terminus of the primary axis and the irregularity and quadrangles that occur away from that axis. All of the buildings in this scheme were drawn in the Gothic Revival, and the main building was drawn with a dominant bell tower. Little of this plan was executed. Source: Council of Independent Colleges, Historic Campus Architecture Project, via ARTstor.

## CHAPTER FIVE INTERPRETING AYRES HALL

Ayres Hall received a generally positive (if surprisingly sparse) reception in the local press. Even before its completion, Professor Dougherty wrote in *The Tennessee Alumnus* that the new building would give students “something on which they may look with pride and a feeling of admiration.”<sup>178</sup> Alumnus T.T. Rankin wrote the *Tennessee Alumnus*, again before the main building was complete:

But I rejoice with all the other alumni at the great building program that you have. And I shall right cheerfully yield up whatever sentimental regrets I might find in my heart, and bid you God speed in the New Enterprise. The cut of the new building is a fine illustration of what can be done with the dome of the Hill, and I shall await with interest the announcement of the Corner Stone Laying and Dedication.<sup>179</sup>

The *Knoxville Sentinel* wrote of the building while still under construction: “The new building when completed will be the finest college or university building in the state.”<sup>180</sup> After its completion, the *Knoxville Sentinel* asserted that the building was “cheerful,” “attractive,” and “only the first step toward the realization of a new and greater University of Tennessee.”<sup>181</sup>

As has been emphasized before, the demolition of Old College to make way for Ayres Hall was a momentous occurrence: institutions of higher learning in

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<sup>178</sup> N.W. Dougherty, “The Building Program,” *The Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 1 (January 1919): 5-6.

<sup>179</sup> T.T. Rankin, Letter to the Editor, *The Tennessee Alumnus* 3, no. 2 (April 1919): 42.

<sup>180</sup> “Begin Work on U.T. New main Buildings in Next Two Weeks,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, September 20, 1919.

<sup>181</sup> “Ayres Hall, Around Which State’s Educational Activities Will Center,” *Knoxville Sentinel*, June 7, 1921.

America do not flippantly swap out their main buildings, since those buildings constitute the faces of each respective institution. Faces project identities – a carefully crafted brand, if you will -- and given the high profile nature of this change, surely the University of Tennessee had something specific to say about itself with Ayres Hall (something that Old College either could not communicate alone or could undermine by its continued existence). Part of Ayres Hall's message, as evidenced during the demolition controversy, was to assert that the University was a relevant (i.e. modern) and capable institution. But to hope to better understand that message and its calculus (neither explicit) one must study the socioeconomic context that was reflexively receiving and dictating that message.

### **Socioeconomic Context**

The period between the Civil War and the turn of the century was a transformative time in America, especially in the "New South." Peacetime afforded northern entrepreneurs the belated opportunity to capitalize on Dixie's abundant natural resources and cheap labor, and few southern cities were as ripe for carpetbaggers as Knoxville. An unlikely Unionist stronghold even in antebellum times, Knoxville was an important railway junction centered amidst a fertile and topographically bounded region. All of this made Knoxville an epicenter for

commerce and industrial production, as well as a beacon for the comparatively depressed and overpopulated hinterlands.<sup>182</sup>

By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Knoxville was the South's third largest wholesaler, where local jobbers imported and distributed manufactured goods to regional resellers, all while exporting locally produced coal, marble, lumber, wheat, corn, and livestock. This was a wildly successful commercial and manufacturing economy, one that promised to the influx of rural, destitute, and poorly educated East Tennesseans (whose rapid population growth had far exceeded available farmland) steady work, modest pay, and an electrified nightlife.<sup>183</sup> But the emptying of farms fostered agrarian nostalgia and a fear of cultural entropy, as it thrust this hardscrabble proletariat into close and often uncomfortable proximity to the mercantile elite seemingly benefitting the most from these booming times. Naturally, a class-consciousness developed – one that divided easily along the polarity of city and country, electric light and candlelight, luxury and poverty, white- and blue-collar, education and intuition, and modernity and simplicity.<sup>184</sup> Wheeler writes,

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<sup>182</sup> William Bruce Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee: A Mountain City in the New South*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2005); Jack Neely, *The Marble City*.

<sup>183</sup> Wheeler (2005, 20) reports that by the turn of the century, Knoxville's wholesale trade was turning an annual volume of \$50 million, while the yearly value of goods manufactured in Knoxville was \$6 million. In fact, bank clearings between 1900 and 1905 rose from approximately \$28 million to \$63 million.

<sup>184</sup> Wheeler, *Knoxville*, 2005; Ernest Freeberg, *The Age of Edison: Electric Light and the Invention of Modern America* (New York: Penguin Press, 2013); T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: Harper, 2009) 136-138.

“Few [white in-migrants] had left behind their Appalachian mores, their suspicion of government and authority at all levels, their rough-and-tumble democratic politics, their belief in the superfluity of education, their fundamentalist religions, or their hatred of those who possessed more than [sic] they did.”<sup>185</sup>

Meanwhile, the social consequences of exaggerated, economic inequality were rife nationally. In the preceding Gilded Age, industrialization and speculation had concentrated money – sometimes in unfathomable quantities -- in the hands of few individuals (most notably the monopolistic “robber barons”), but the means by which it was acquired and grown frequently mystified laypeople and lead them to question whether that money was being earned. Jackson Lears writes of the period,

Skilled workers believed in the redemptive powers of their own labor, its capacity to regenerate individual and society alike. They took pride in themselves and their participation in the honorable army of producers – people who produced economic value through their own efforts, unlike the ‘parasites’ (lawyers, bankers, brokers) who merely manipulated abstractions or other people’s money.... This producerist outlook evoked Jeffersonian republicanism in its distrust of concentrated power.<sup>186</sup>

For any gain to not be earned would imply that it came at someone else’s expense. “Producers” lamented various instances of exploitation by both the public and private sectors. For instance, U.S. monetary policy during Reconstruction created inflationary pressures on the dollar, to the point that,

While the Civil War had been fought with 50-cent dollars, its cost would be paid in 100-cent dollars. Taxpayers would pay the difference to the banking community, which held the bonds. Ordinary citizens would suffer while investors grew rich.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Wheeler, *Knoxville*, 2005, 27.

<sup>186</sup> Lears, *Rebirth*, 74.

<sup>187</sup> Lears, *Rebirth*, 150-151.

Likewise, many farmers begrudged the patent system's monopolistic protection for the inventors of necessities like barbed wire. Patent royalties amounted to,

...an unfair tax that lined the pockets of distant corporations. Patents seemed like one more abuse of power by an urban elite....<sup>188</sup>

Private companies, meanwhile, could be capable of business decisions that were at most exploitative and at least maladroit. Rail companies from the 1870s and 1880s were overcapitalized to such a degree that their stock prices bubbled while their roadbeds and locomotives deteriorated.<sup>189</sup> Local companies like Knoxville Woolen Mills – formed in 1884 and at its height one of the largest clothing manufacturers in America – failed calamitously in 1911 when the cumulative effects of low wages, over-depreciated assets, and hefty profit-taking by principal stockholders (many of whom, coincidentally, served on the University's Board of Trustees at some point) eroded the company's product quality, its market share, and ultimately its balance sheet.<sup>190</sup> In effect, it was not impossible for corporate America to sacrifice an enterprise's long-term prospects for short-term profit, and to test the limits of Americans' trust in the security of their jobs or the value of equities.

America was all the while becoming a land of consumers, and corporate America sought to capture foreign resources and export the American lifestyle

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<sup>188</sup> Ernest Freeberg, *The Age of Edison*, 150-151.

<sup>189</sup> Lears, *Rebirth*.

<sup>190</sup> Wheeler, 19 & 31. Principal stockholders included E.J. Sanford, James D. Cowan, Charles J. McClung, C.M. McGhee, William P. Chamberlain, A.J. Albers, Oliver P. Temple, and Lawrence D. Tyson.

(along with the products underpinning it) in the name of economic growth. This international focus – often cloaked under the beneficent guise of spreading democracy, morality, and American standards of living -- ironically thrust the United States into the often seedy, oppressive business of imperialism. Through corruption, intimidation, and surgical militarism, the United States preserved Americans' economic interests (at the expense of locals' interests) in places like Latin America and the Caribbean – all for the sake of securing resources, labor, and more consumers.<sup>191</sup>

Even the nature of work itself was changing in a dehumanizing fashion, as America moved from an entrepreneurial society to a bureaucratic, corporate one. Mechanization, while it granted efficiencies, took away many jobs that had offered workers autonomy, gratification, and personal growth.<sup>192</sup> As the division of labor separated workers from the totality of what they were laboring towards (sometimes in deplorable conditions to boot), and as Taylor's Scientific Management further fragmented knowledge work and manual work, blue-collar producers and white-collar antimodernists alike resisted what they saw as dispiriting about these trends:

...the transformation of work reinforced difficulties pervading the wider culture; the splintering sense of selfhood, the vague feelings of unreality. Yearning to reintegrate selfhood by resurrecting the authentic experience of manual labor, a number of Americans looked hopefully toward the figure of the premodern artisan. This work was necessary and demanding; it was

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<sup>191</sup> Lears, *Rebirth*, 2009; Freeberg, *Age of Edison*, 2013.

<sup>192</sup> Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 1981, 69.

rooted in a genuine community; it was a model of hardness and wholeness. Or so it seemed.<sup>193</sup>

That occupational exertion (in a world made too comfortable by conveniences) was tantamount to authentic experience and could have salutary effects, this fueled anti-intellectualism too (and even self-loathing amongst some academics), since Platonic pursuits were not physically strenuous. The Arts and Crafts movement picked up on most of this and, against the tidal wave of production efficiencies, campaigned for satisfying labor and humane community.<sup>194</sup>

Knoxville in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century comprised a charged assemblage of many different interests: northerners and southerners; merchants, industrialists, and farmers; “parasites” and “producers.” To think that the issues dividing these segments would not inform the selection of a standard architectural style at the nearby University of Tennessee would be remiss, for it was commonly suspected that America’s and Tennessee’s economies were steeped in exploitation (both domestically and internationally) and that they reinforced a disparity of wealth. In fact, by 1912 a populist groundswell propelled Woodrow Wilson – an academic,

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<sup>193</sup> Lears, *No Place of Grace*, xiv & 60. In “Antimodernist,” I borrow a term from Andrew Jackson Lears, who wrote, “Antimodernists were not primarily powerful businessmen or politicians; they were journalists, academics, ministers, and literati whose circumstances ranged from the wealthy to the moderately comfortable. While they often did not share the world view of businessmen or politicians, they often did share kinship ties, educational background, and sources of income. Old-stock, Protestant, they were the moral and intellectual leaders of the American WASP bourgeoisie...”

<sup>194</sup> Lears, *No Place of Grace*.

financial reformer, Democrat, and Southerner<sup>195</sup> -- to the Presidency over two opponents who were previous Presidents (Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft). Wilson campaigned as a “champion of the people,” appealing particularly to rural southerners and midwesterners, and vowing to stand up for fairness and upward mobility. Surprisingly and tellingly, Wilson handily won the perennially Republican Knox County, and his electoral landslide nationally – in tandem with the 6% of the vote that socialist candidate Eugene Debs received – indicated in the words of Jackson Lears, “...just how far the electorate had swung to the view that monopoly capitalism must somehow be tamed.”<sup>196</sup>

### **Ayres Hall’s Socioeconomic, Architectural Message**

The style of Ayres Hall’s exterior was an idiosyncratic derivative of Elizabethan Revival, which blended architectural elements of Renaissance Classicism and English Gothicism. Both classicism and gothicism had economic connotations in this era.

A standard architectural style for the American Renaissance, and one that projected America’s imperialist parity with Europe, classicism was a favorite of

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<sup>195</sup> Wilson was the first native Southerner *elected* to the Presidency after Tennessean James K. Polk was in 1844 (moreover, the first since the Civil War). Andrew Johnson (also a Tennessean) assumed the Presidency for one term in 1865 upon the assassination of President Lincoln. Johnson was never elected to the office.

<sup>196</sup> Lears, *Rebirth*, 317. In office, Wilson signed into law many hallmarks of the agrarian agenda (lower tariffs, a progressive income tax, the monopoly-busting Clayton Antitrust Act, and public control of currency).

Guilded Age oligarchs and their frequently Beaux-Arts-trained architects. As noted by Mosette Broderick, by studious (i.e Eclectic) and conspicuous reference to European precedent,

...the architect and client would bathe in a brighter light, and show cultural superiority over native-trained, often provincial architects and their clients, who tended to receive watered-down replicas of perhaps slightly out-of-style European precedents.... Such architects could also bring well-off Americans interpretations of older European buildings calculated to give clients a sense of fitting in with the greatness of the past through sophisticated Americanization of a classic moment in European architecture.<sup>197</sup>

Among many other cities, New York City at this time was adding plenty of buildings whose classical details were meant to elevate the patron's social standing or to improve an institution's bad reputation. The New York Stock Exchange (1903) and the Metropolitan Life Building (1909) were two examples of the latter (both of which appropriated classical branding – with its links to republican virtue – to battle back disrepute in their respective financial sectors).<sup>198</sup>

Amidst the irony that it could represent both republican virtue and capitalist elitism, classical architecture at this time also evoked mass production – much

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<sup>197</sup> Mosette Broderick, *Triumvirate: McKim, Mead, & White: Art, Architecture, Scandal, and Class in America's Guilded Age* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 13. For an interesting discussion of the connotations of various architectural styles in 1920's America -- as viewed through F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* -- see Curtis Dahl, "Fitzgerald's Use of American Architectural Styles in the Great Gatsby," *American Studies* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 91-102.

<sup>198</sup> Lears, *Rebirth*, 277; Nick Yablon, *Untimely Ruins: An Archeaeology of American Urban Modernity, 1819-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). The New York Stock Exchange's temple front and allegorical ornament emphasizing integrity helped to recast Wall Street as a legitimate marketplace after decades of contradictory activity. Likewise, the insurance industry battled a pervasive comparison to casinos, and so Metropolitan Life erected a building resembling Piazza San Marco's campanile in order to impute heft, permanence, and civic concern to its insurance products.

maligned by Antimodernists and the Arts and Crafts movement – not only because it often enshrouded various buildings associated with corporations and their managers, but because to a certain extent, classical architecture utilized mass production. Montgomery Schuyler notes that the formulaic expediency of classical architecture (which has a canon guiding the proportion and arrangement of repetitive elements<sup>199</sup>) benefited large firms designing unprecedentedly large buildings by the 1890s.<sup>200</sup> Likewise, David Handlin notes,

By then the pressures on the practice of architecture had increased radically. Architects no longer had time to design every building and detail afresh. If they wanted their practices to succeed as businesses, they needed a system to make architecture easy.<sup>201</sup>

Perhaps “manageable” is a more apt adjective than “easy”, but regardless, large influential firms like D.H. Burnham and Co. and McKim, Mead, and White – both of which designed from classical precedent – were concerned as much with profit and efficiency as their corporate clientele were, and these firms relied heavily on divisions of labor within their offices and construction sites.<sup>202</sup>

Social critics like John Ruskin had assailed the seemingly rote facture of classical architecture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, proffering gothicism as a superior

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<sup>199</sup> Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, *Classical Architecture: The Poetics of Order* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986).

<sup>200</sup> Montgomery Schuyler, *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph T. Coe (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961).

<sup>201</sup> David P. Handlin, *American Architecture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 135.

<sup>202</sup> Handlin, *American Architecture*, 2004; Broderick, *Triumvirate*, 2010. Firms like Burnham and McKim, Mead, and White employed hundreds each, and divided themselves amongst design, drawing production, engineering, specification writing, construction administration, and firm management.

alternative, both creatively and socially. Ruskin's jeremiads blamed the modern factory system's regimentation on the Renaissance penchant for classical order. Construction workers producing repetitive, "servile" classical details were but corporately subjugated hacks, working only for pay, but those at work on a gothic building were semi-autonomous craftsmen, working passionately on unique ornament.<sup>203</sup> Gothic architecture represented the medievalism so vaunted by antimodernists, Arts and Crafts ideologues, and no doubt agrarians, producers, and isolationists. The Middle Ages, unlike the Renaissance (so it went), were more primitive (allowing for wonder and spontaneity), less intellectual (which could cloud faith), more passionate (creating cathedrals), and more collectively minded. Above all, the Middle Ages prompted a strenuous life – one not numbed by the copious conveniences of a modern, consumer economy.<sup>204</sup>

Given Knoxville's seat in the heart of a region predisposed to antimodern, agrarian, and producer biases, one can begin to see how socioeconomically unbecoming a new Beaux-Arts classical main building at the University of Tennessee would have been in 1919, and how much more appropriate a gothic one would have been. Classicism made too many references to monopoly capitalism (and thus to exploitation and wealth disparity), and so [deftly] Ayres

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<sup>203</sup> John Ruskin, "The Stones of Venice, I (1851) and II (1853)," in *Selected Writings*, edited by Dinah Birch, 28-67 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Ruskin writes on page 50, "Wherever the workman is utterly enslaved, the parts of the building must be absolutely like each other; for the perfection of his execution can only be reached by exercising him in doing one thing, and giving him nothing else to do."

<sup>204</sup> Lears, *No Place of Grace*.

Hall's Elizabethan Revival relegates its classical proclivities to the global symmetry of its plan and silhouette. Per Elizabethan custom, Ayres Hall's gothic features overshadow its classical ones, and yet Ayres Hall is not a Collegiate Gothic building either.<sup>205</sup> Such would have been almost as inappropriate for a populist audience, since that level of materiality and craftsmanship would have been prohibitively expensive, and since likely the careful historicism necessary to execute it – as with Beaux-Arts Classicism – could have inconveniently alluded to upper-crust boarding schools and universities in the Northeastern United States (who were more often building in that manner).

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<sup>205</sup> In fact, the *Knoxville Sentinel* wrote on June 7, 1921, "The exterior style of architecture may be termed as an adaptation of the Gothic, though not the true Gothic form."

## CONCLUSION

There are two interdependent stories pertinent to the coming of Ayres Hall: the end of Old College and the genesis of Ayres Hall. They are interdependent because both buildings occupied the same location consecutively, and thus one cannot understand one story without understanding the other.

Old College, the institution's first building atop the Hill, had weathered populist criticism since the days of the Compact of 1806, had survived Civil War destruction, and had endured a curricular sea change, but it was apparently no match for a million-dollar appropriation. Overcrowding had prompted the University's leadership to campaign for more square footage atop the Hill as early as 1914, but they had been coy or unsure about whether Old College would need to be accordingly sacrificed, until 1919. Labeled obsolete and stylistically incompatible – on a piece of land too prominent to tolerate either – its thrifty damnation by the institution went unredeemed by the citizens of the State. In a matter of two years, Old College went from icon to white elephant.

Ayres Hall was thus destined to be demonstratively different from Old College, yet the institution was concerned about continuity with the remaining building stock and about staying within budget. The existing campus was quite farraginous as far as architectural styling, so achieving an equitable medium was a tall order. Also, a contemporary vogue for Eclecticism suggested historical, strict-constructionist styles like Collegiate Gothic or Beaux-Arts classicism, which were

quite expensive to boot. “Elizabethan,” the traditionally gothic-classical hybrid chosen by the Board, had the benefit of being historical, culturally appropriate, and synthetically nebulous, so its selection, considering the circumstances, was aesthetically and monetarily advantageous.

It is ironic, though, that during a period when historical precedent was so revered by architects and clients for new construction, that the University lost its oldest building. Furthermore, in abandoning one history, the University did not seek to appropriate another via a specific style; instead, visual familiarity and latitude were all that was prioritized. Effectively, the institution wanted the character that an historical style could impart, but none of the rules, cost, or ostentation – and never at the expense of functionality.

All told, this episode is important because it involves the University’s two main buildings – its faces – which just so happened to vie for a location that was, for the campus, topographically preeminent and central. In swapping main buildings, the University was reconsidering its identity in the wake of a publicly funded windfall, as it emerged from a polytechnic past-life, sought to appeal to a politically divided state, yet found itself in a region prone to suspicion of higher education. Meanwhile, the most important building on the campus had to occupy the most important place on the campus, which in this case was topographically predetermined. Had Old College not been sitting on the Hill’s pinnacle, and had it been structurally capable of being transplanted, perhaps it would still be standing

today. What replaced it was, given the available resources and considering how the institution was positioning itself, a sensible if pyrrhic solution.

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