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Standing the test of time

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Standing the test of time

Buildings have never come easily to Emmanuel Missionary College or Andrews University. Student builders inexpertly hammered together the first frame buildings on campus. Later, from 1924 to 1926, students met for chapel in a basement with a temporary roof that leaked because there was no money to continue building the chapel they envisioned. And no one will soon forget the funding drives for ambitious projects of more recent years such as the Science Complex or the renovation and expansion of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.

But few buildings on campus came into existence under greater duress than Griggs Hall, originally the James White Memorial Library. It had to be built...or else. Or else Emmanuel Missionary College would not gain accreditation. It had to be built on the heels of the Great Depression with no funds in hand and little hope of raising money. But the school's very survival depended on it.

The college library had resided in the main college building, or South Hall, since its construction in 1903. By the 1930s it occupied the entire top floor of the building and served the students under the direction of Anna M. Blackney, who would become EMC's first full-time librarian and first with a degree in library science. Her report of 1935 recorded:¹

Books	17,000
Pamphlets	3,175
Pictures	923
Newspaper & magazine clippings	618
Newspapers	5
Secular periodicals	173
Denominational periodicals	31

The growing collection may have impressed the college community, but it was not good enough for the team of evaluators who came to campus on behalf of the North Central Association of Colleges, the accrediting agency that held the future of Emmanuel Missionary College in its hands. The school needed to move from its junior college accreditation to senior college status if it wanted to continue to prepare students for the church's own College of Medical Evangelists (later Loma Linda University) and other professional or graduate programs.

The visitors from NCA had many areas

of concern about the academic fitness of Emmanuel Missionary College: low faculty salaries, lack of preparation among the faculty, and financial precariousness were among the most frequently mentioned. But the teams that visited the campus always came back to one issue—the library. Senior college status had already been denied twice by 1936.

The North Central Association had prodded the college for years to realize that a library should play a central role in a school of senior college status. Because the school was so isolated, they argued, the library had to be even better than it already was, had to purchase more books and “especially periodicals for the intellectual stimulus of the faculty.”² Furthermore, they kept pointing out, the library needed to be housed in a fireproof building.

The third floor of a wooden building was just too risky a location for a library collection, an almost irreplaceable commodity. “One cannot,” observed President Thomas W. Steen, “go out and order a new library collection as one orders a car of coal.”³

Without a new, safe, separate library building, it became clear accreditation would probably not be forthcoming. In spite of the Depression and difficult financial times, the college and its board knew that they would have to make a bold move. They voted to construct a fireproof building that would be “large enough to accommodate at least 150 students at one time....”⁴ They expected to spend around \$36,000 on the brick building.⁵

To vote was easier than to do. Money had to be raised in very difficult economic times. The school launched one of its famous fund-raising campaigns at the chapel service on



James White Memorial Library

Feb. 1, 1935. This time the goal was a rather modest \$4,375.⁶ Money trickled in for almost two years.

The college community gathered to break ground for the new building on Nov. 11, 1936. Footings were put in and the foundations poured.⁷ While construction inched ahead, the board scrambled to come up with more money.⁸ The college board proposed another campaign in the Lake Union churches—a special offering on Sabbath, Jan. 30, 1937, asking for \$1 from each member.⁹ When the accreditation team came for its campus visit, the long promised library was still only a hole in the ground with a few foundations: EMC lost its accreditation and even its probationary status. President Steen lost his job.

Finally, under the new president, Henry J. Klooster, the college completed its new library and first academic brick building

late in the fall of 1937. It was a modest building, constructed “with the least possible expenditure of funds.” L.N. Holm, business manager at the time, remembered, “We bought used brick, used tile that were classed as seconds and in every possible way cut corners to save money.”¹⁰ The color of the brick was “old hickory,” which set the tone for the future of the campus.

The library collection that had made its first move to campus by train and then by a team of horses found a new mode of transportation: students. On a snowy day in December, the 20,000 volumes rode from the top floor of the Administration Building and across the campus to the new building in wooden book troughs—two student carriers to a trough.¹¹

The “pride of E.M.C.,” the James White Memorial Library brought many good things to the campus—including accreditation as a four-year college in the spring of 1939. The feature on the new library in the *Cardinal* of 1939 reads:

A spacious reading room accommodates 108 students. The stacks have a capacity of about forty thousand volumes, and should provide adequate housing for some years to come. Our accessions total 24,260 books at present. Subtracting the books which have been discarded, our actual holdings number about 22,706. The library subscribes to 178 magazines and receives twenty-nine more in gift or exchange subscriptions. In the year 1937–38, 1,951 books were added to the library....The library offers 265 hours of student labor a week, and is open sixty-four hours during the week.

With a fine, fireproof home at last, the library settled into a period of quiet flourishing. Blackney departed EMC in 1944, “leaving behind her a well-balanced book collection, an efficient system of organization, and a tradition of interested, efficient service....”¹² She was replaced by one of her assistants, Arlene Marks. By 1950, the collection of almost 45,000 books demanded not only a full-time librarian but also two professionally trained assistants: Barbara

Phipps and Dorothy Ferren.¹³ Marks passed the torch of head librarian in 1956 to new assistant Richard W. Schwarz; the position was taken up in 1958 by Phipps, who had grown up on the EMC campus, received her AMLS from the University of Michigan, and worked in the library since 1945.¹⁴

As Phipps and her staff coped with “the problems of the post-war inflation of students and the too rapidly expanding book collection,” the James White Memorial Library found itself on the brink of a new era.¹⁵ The Autumn Council attendees of 1958 voted to merge Potomac University and Emmanuel Missionary College and to locate the new institution in Berrien Springs. The little library that had seemed so spacious 20 years earlier would not be adequate to house an undergraduate and graduate collection.

When the new, large, integrated library rose on the new university mall across campus, the school was equally pleased to put the modest little building to a fresh use, announcing to its constituency and the accrediting board that the building had been “remodeled extensively to make a very satisfactory home” for the religion and modern languages departments.¹⁶ The extra space provided welcome relief for crowded offices as the faculty expanded quickly at the new university.

President Rittenhouse also announced the renaming of the former library, which would for the rest of its life be called Griggs Hall in honor of one of EMC’s most loved presidents, Frederick Griggs (1918–1925). Students of the 60s and onward would always associate the quirky third floor of Griggs Hall not with library stacks but with French, German or Spanish lab. To them the large rooms on the upper floor were not library reading rooms but the religion classrooms where they sat at the feet of Waterhouse, Bacchiocchi, Economou, Richardson and Caesar. Students like **John Gimbel** (BS ’77) have good



Checking books out of the library, 1951

memories of the “old jewel,” remembering how his hair froze as he walked from the swimming pool to class in Griggs and then sat in Joe Greig’s *Understanding the Old Testament*, basking in the sunlight that dried his hair as he listened to the lecture.¹⁷

No, it wasn’t “easy come” ...and isn’t “easy go,” as we celebrate the memories and mourn the passing of special space.

¹ “Need of New Housing Conditions for Growing Library is Explained,” *SM*, 1 February 1935, 2.

² EMC Bd Min, 15 December 1935, 3. Quoting from the Oldfather and Latham Report of the Survey of Emmanuel Missionary College of Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1935.

³ “President Cites Library Needs; New Building to Eliminate Hazard,” *SM*, 1 February 1935, 3.

⁴ EMC Bd Min, 14 August 1934, 1.

⁵ EMC Bd Min, 19 February 1936, 1.

⁶ “Library Drive Is Launched,” *SM*, 1 February 1935, 1.

⁷ “Library Foundations,” *SM*, 9 December 1936, 3.

⁸ EMC Bd Min, 5 November 1936, 2.

⁹ EMC Bd Min, 5 November 1936, 2.

¹⁰ Letter to E.K. Vande Vere, 23 April 1967, 1.

¹¹ Laurence Downing, “Library Occupies New Home,” *SM*, 4 January 1938, 3.

¹² Phipps, 2.

¹³ *SM*, 14 July 1950.

¹⁴ Kirsten Anderson, “Westward Is Their Destination,” *SM*, 1 March 1961, 1.

¹⁵ Mary Jane Mitchell, “Background of the James White Library,” unpublished typescript read at the dedication of the James White Library, 24 October, 1962, 2. AHC, 006730.

¹⁶ “Self-Study Report,” 1963, 8, CAR.

¹⁷ Personal letter, 9 May 2010.

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