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# The Architecture of Connecticut College

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The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author.

# **The Architecture of Connecticut College**

An Honors Thesis

presented by

Thomas Blake McDonald '10

to

The Department of Architectural Studies

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Bachelor of Arts

Connecticut College

New London, Connecticut

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## Abstract

The Connecticut College campus has changed dramatically in the last century. Originally a women's college design as a series of Gothic quadrangles inspired by the examples of prestigious English universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, development changed course dramatically in the 1920s and 1930s, as inwardly focused designs gave way to a sweeping Campus Green modeled after Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia. While the Green continued to serve as the organizing spine of the campus, by the midcentury the College had introduced Modernist buildings to facilitate both coeducation and expanding curriculums.

This thesis starts from the premise that these changes are meaningful. Each period of expansion tells us not only about the aesthetic vision of the architects who designed the individual buildings, but also about the values of those who commissioned the structures. Thus, the spaces of the Connecticut College campus, as well as the grounds themselves, are a useful medium for understanding the educational, social, and cultural values that informed the school's history.

Based on extensive archival research and on a close reading of the buildings and their relationships to one another, this thesis considers the physical forms of the Connecticut College campus and their role in shaping both student experience and the image the College presented to the world at large. Established well after the first women's colleges of the late 1800s, Connecticut College opened on the eve of a transformative period in women's history. The strict codes of conduct that had governed the Victorian era were beginning to slacken, and women were taking a more active role in the cultural affairs, evident in the battle to win the right to vote. While the original layout, appearance, and amenities of the Connecticut College campus were informed by an understanding of women's needs that emphasized domesticity and sheltering of feminine innocence, perceptions of those needs were in flux throughout the first fifty years of the College's existence, and led to dramatic changes in campus form.

Ultimately, the thesis makes two main arguments. The first is that, for the fifty years that it functioned as an all-women's school, Connecticut College differed from the traditions of gendered higher education established in the Seven Sister schools, but also quickly diverged from models put forth by all-male colleges. After an initial building campaign of monastically-inspired structures meant to safeguard its occupants, the College quickly developed a physical and academic identity based on women's increasingly dynamic role in American society. While still attuned to the how collegiate space for women differed from that for their male counterparts, such as the construction of multiple cooperative, "practice homes," and the adoption of a housefellow system by which professors served as protectors of student propriety from centrally located suites in every dormitory, overall the campus adopted a progressive position reflected in the steady shift towards modern design. The second argument focuses on the more recent periods of development, when, as the College struggled to regain a sense of history, it attempted to return to the notion of the campus as a family-like entity through several building campaigns. In the years directly preceding the College's centennial, a series of structures that look to the schools' earliest era of development in both architectural form and community-centered function confirm an institutional commitment to close-knit

togetherness. Finally, these projects reinforce the extent to which the constructed campus continues to function as a tool with which to shape the character of the College.



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## Introduction

In the spring of 1910, a small group of college-graduated Hartford women, led by high school teacher Elizabeth C. Wright, met to discuss the future of women's higher education in Connecticut. What prompted the meeting was a 1909 decision at nearby Wesleyan University to close its doors to women after forty years as the only co-educational institution in the state. Discontent with the notion that Connecticut was suddenly one of only a few states in New England that did not provide women any educational opportunities beyond that of the public high school system, Wright quickly assembled a committee of influential Connecticut residents to address the issue. By the end of the following year, a new women's college provisionally named Thames College had a hilltop site on the border of the prosperous town of New London, as well as one of the broadest state charters ever granted to a school. A welcome addition to the area, the College garnered several large gifts and opened its doors in September of 1915 to 151 students. That year, the Connecticut College campus consisted of only three permanent structures, New London Hall, Blackstone House, and Plant House, on a series of former farms still partitioned by crumbling stone walls.

The structures symbolized the first steps of a campus master plan laid out by New York firm Ewing and Chappell that would, if fully constructed, accommodate a student body of 1,000. The first in a series of attempts to achieve a single, cohesive design for the College, Ewing and Chappell's initial sketches reveal a historically specific notion of what a liberal arts college, and especially a liberal arts college for women, ought to look like. The master plan that followed varied greatly in form, but still revealed a desire to shape both the perception and the experience of anyone stepping onto the College

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grounds. In subsequent decades, master plans and the individual buildings were adjusted to express the values embraced by the administration, academe, and society at large. Thus the campus represents a rich amalgamation of ideals and beliefs. The following pages will consider the shifting values that shaped both master plans and the as-built campus, from the pre-opening announcement to the latest plans for the College's physical development.

This guidebook is intended as a tool for exploring the rich built environment presented on the Connecticut College campus. To organize a century of activity and growth, the text is divided into chronological sections corresponding to the school's eight periods of physical development. Each section will begin by addressing the formative principles of the era in a brief, overarching paragraph. The interpretative text that follows begins by first looking at the social and political climate of the era described, then how these themes impacted the physical design of colleges and universities, and finally how they were expressed in master plans and building programs on the Connecticut College campus. As a former women's college, Connecticut College was shaped by the evolution of women's role in society. This, as well as the development of other women's schools, plays a central role to the analysis.

Following the interpretative text are entries on each of the buildings constructed during the corresponding era. After considering the building's location, the origin of its name, and information concerning donors, each entry continues with a study of the structure's exterior and interior arrangements as well as its significance within the larger context of the campus. Each entry concludes with information regarding significant alterations to the building since its completion or acquisition.

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This book is not the final word on the architecture of the College, but instead a vehicle to help students, staff, and visitors begin thinking about why space looks and functions as it does. It is my hope that the following pages initiate a larger discourse on the meaning and value of the Connecticut College campus as a constructed space.

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“Fertile in soil and charming in outlook...”<sup>1</sup>

### The Preexisting Campus

1733-1910



*Figure 1. Several homesteads continued to operate on plots adjacent to the campus well after the opening of the school, including as the above-pictured Ewald family orchard, which was bought by the College in 1929.*

*The site of Connecticut College for Women offered many favorable attributes, including beautiful views and nearness to downtown New London. One useful feature of the land rarely cited in early descriptions, however, was the multiple pre-existing structures on the property given for the College. These houses represented almost two hundred years of steady development, beginning with the large farmsteads of the west side of the campus and ending with the new houses built on small lots lining Mohegan Avenue. Each of these buildings, which were altered by the early administrations to serve a variety of purposes, carries with it a history predating that of the College's, but integral to the narrative of how the school came to be.*

In the spring of 1911, Trustee Elizabeth Buell took a tour of the hilltop that would, within a few short years, grow to be the Connecticut College campus. Her

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<sup>1</sup> Connecticut College for Women, Preliminary Announcement. New London, CT, Connecticut College for Women, 1914, 24. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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photographs document a windswept and seemingly vacant landscape, populated only by scraggly pine trees and grazing cows. In many ways, the photos Buell took presented a faithful representation of the future College grounds. The three hundred and forty acres acquired by 1915 were in large part the donated farmland of three, local families; the Alexanders, who gave the northern portion of the campus; the Branch family, who contributed the land on which the first structures were built; and the Egglestons, who provided the land at the southern end of the hilltop. Soon after Buell's visit, the College gained several more properties, including a large plot from the Bolles' family known as "Bolleswood;" the present day arboretum.



*Figure 2. One of Buell's photos, showing a section of south campus with a stone wall in the foreground. Photograph by Elizabeth Buell, 1911.*



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What Buell's photos don't show are the homesteads associated with each of these tracts. At the time that Connecticut College was established, there were at least eight privately owned residences occupying the hilltop. Varying in land holding, age, and architectural style, the locations of these houses indicate several stages of development leading up to 1911. On western edge of the future campus bordering Williams Street lay the older structures belonging to families who had lived in the area for several generations. The nearly 200 year-old Bolles House sat the farthest to the north, once surrounded by family lands that stretched all the way to present-day Quaker Hill. Woodworth House was newer, probably either constructed or wholly renovated in the mid to late nineteenth century. Woodworth House corresponded to a large area of land that, once acquired by the College in the 1920s, allowed for the development of south campus.

The east side of the campus was bordered by a narrow road that few would recognize as the antecedent to present-day Mohegan Avenue, as well as several structures that appear far more recent. The Prentice and Lee Houses stood furthest to the north, with the Ewald residence (now Unity House) only a short distance away. Strickland House, Nichols House, and Bosworth House lay to the south, across from the rapidly developing Riverside neighborhood. These dwellings, while not a great deal smaller than those on the opposite side of the campus, were built on a series of small lots owned by local developer Thames Improvement Company.<sup>2</sup> The company's interest in building on the land may have been directly connected to the early twentieth century addition of a trolley line that linked Mohegan Avenue to downtown New London. In form and decoration, the

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<sup>2</sup> Plot map, 1915. Office of the Vice President, Connecticut College.

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houses along Mohegan Avenue looked to the Shingle and Colonial Revival styles, not widely used until after the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876.



*Figure 3. Buell's photo of the eastern edge of the College's original acreage, with the new trolley tracks evident in the foreground. Photograph by Elizabeth Buell, 1911.*

A few of these preexisting houses were included in the original property given over to the College, and played a considerable role in the early history of the school. The Prentice and Lee Houses were joined by an ell to form the College's first refectory, Thames Hall. For several years, the upper floors of the structure also housed the President, his family, and several members of the faculty. Bolles House served as a faculty cottage, and Bosworth House was, for many years, the College infirmary. By the late 1920s, the President had moved to the former Ewald residence, and both Woodworth and Nichols House had been enlisted as faculty residences.

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*Figure 4. Although Thames Hall (viewed here from Mohegan Avenue) was intended as a provisional refectory in the College's first years, the building was not torn down until 1990.*

Many of the campus master plans discussed in the next section earmark the preexisting houses for demolition in order to achieve a spatially unified and stylistically cohesive College. However, several of the houses remain engaged by the College today. These buildings remind us that, in spite of what Buell's photos may show, the Connecticut College campus did not spring from vacant land, but instead grew piece by piece out of an already inhabited hilltop.

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### **Bolles House**

*John Bolles, 1733, College acquisition in 1911*

**Renovations** *Unknown architect, 1938*

**Additions** *Joseph J. Simpson, North Wing 1963, Rear Room 1966, Theodore E. Mish, Omwake Wing, 1974*



*Figure 5. Photograph, mid 1930s.*

Facing Williams Street just to the north of the College's back entrance, Bolles House is the oldest building on the Connecticut College campus by over a century. The structure is named for its builder, John Bolles, whose father settled in New London as early as 1668. As a child, Bolles witnessed the brutal murder of his mother and siblings, an event that Bolles would later cite when he helped to found the religious sect of the Rogerenes.<sup>3</sup> Religious freedom advocates, the Rogerenes were dissenters from the strict

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<sup>3</sup> Frances Manwaring Caulkins. *History of New London, Connecticut*. (New London: H.D. Utley, 1895) 368-69.

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doctrine of the Congregational Church and lobbied actively for the abolition of slavery.<sup>4</sup>

John Bolles, who constructed his home in 1733, may have chosen the then-secluded property in an effort to disassociate himself from the religious uniformity of the New London Township.<sup>5</sup> The house was passed on to his son, Samuel, and eventually to Samuel's great-granddaughters, Mary Lydia and Anna Hempstead Branch. In 1911, the sisters donated the Bolles farmhouse and property, at the time called "Bolleswood," in response to the campaign to provide land for Connecticut College.<sup>6</sup>

While John Bolles was a progressive in his religious views, his wooden frame house conformed to one of the typical modes of American residential architecture of its time. The original building probably followed a Georgian double pile plan with a central entry into a hallway, and two rooms on either side, repeating this pattern on the second floor. While little of this arrangement is visible in the present structure, remnants of this original doorframe can still be seen below what is now a window in one of the building's front rooms.

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<sup>4</sup> Camille Hanlon, "Dissenters and Community Builders: The Rogers and Bolles Families in Early New London," Talk given at the Rogers Cemetery, Connecticut College, 21 Sept. 1996. Box 2, Folder: Children's School (formerly Nursery School). New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives.

<sup>5</sup> Camille Hanlon, Typescript: "Draft text of historical marker for the Bolles House," 2003. Box 2, Folder: Children's School (formerly Nursery School). New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives.

<sup>6</sup> Fascinatingly, Anna Hempstead Branch was, herself, a successful college graduate. After attending Smith College and the American Academy of the Dramatic Arts, Branch became a well-known poet, publishing multiple volumes in the early twentieth century. 1937. "Anna Hempstead Branch Eulogized at Conn College; Exercises Fittingly Simple." *The New London Day*, Nov. 10.

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First used as a faculty residence, Bolles House was renovated in 1938 for use as a nursery school with the help of financial gifts from the classes of 1928, 1938 and 1940.<sup>7</sup> At the time, many women's colleges advocated curricula in such areas as Home Economics, Hygiene, and Child Development to encourage the correct kind of "womanliness" in their students. During the concurrent presidency of Katherine Blunt, a food, nutrition, and home economics specialist, Connecticut College responded boldly to these interests with the addition of the nursery school to serve as a laboratory where Child Development majors could observe the behavior of children.<sup>8</sup> The program at Bolles House allowed for a hands-on approach where, according to a 1938 issue of *Connecticut College News*, "students of child development have an opportunity to observe in life the complexities of child behavior which they are studying theoretically in the classroom."<sup>9</sup>

In the first year of its use the Nursery School took up only the ground floor, with a faculty apartment still occupying the second floor.<sup>10</sup> According to the *Connecticut College News*, however, by 1946 the "little house" included a kitchen, playroom with a one-way screened observation booth, and office for the teacher on the first floor, while the second floor contained two nap rooms and two playrooms. In her article about the nursery school, Mary Vernon Bundy described the observation booth as "large enough to hold four people comfortably," which allowed Connecticut College students "to watch

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<sup>7</sup> Barbara Morse, editor. *Connecticut College Buildings: A Historical Glance*. The Nursery School. Manuscript. Box 1, Folder: General Information. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>8</sup> Gertrude E. Noyes, *A History of Connecticut College* (New London: Connecticut College, 1982), 97.

<sup>9</sup> 1938. "Nursery School," *Connecticut College News*, 12 Oct.: 1.

<sup>10</sup> Morse, The Nursery School.

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the ‘subjects’ closely without making them nervous or self-conscious.”<sup>11</sup> Inclusions such as the observation booth remind us that while the building housed a functioning nursery school, it also served an academic purpose for Connecticut College students.

Since its original reconditioning in 1938, Bolles House has grown in size to keep pace with increasing interest in child development. By the 1950s, the nursery school was utilized not only by the Home Economics Department, but also the Psychology Department, the Speech Department, and the Art Department for such purposes as personality studies, children’s literature analysis, and sketching from life.<sup>12</sup> In 1963, architect Joseph J. Simpson of Mystic added a north wing to the school in the form of a “white clapboard one-story addition...to repeat the nucleus of the instructional facility.” In 1966, another large room was added to the rear of the original building. Less than ten years later, a new wing was begun to the south of the original structure, an addition that relocated the main entrance of Bolles House to its present position, marking it with a breezeway. The addition, designed by Theodore E. Mish, Sr. of Norwich was made possible through several large donations, including that of recent College graduate and Child Development major Susan Emery. At the request of the donors, the wing was named the Omwake Wing in honor of Miss Eveline B. Omwake, a highly esteemed professor of Child Development and chairman of the department at the time.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 1938. Mary Vernon Bundy, “Nursery School is Lab for Majors in Child Development,” *Connecticut College News*, 30 Oct.

<sup>12</sup> 1951. Allie Wehl, “Blocks and Finger Paintings Characterize Nursery School,” *Connecticut College News*, 14 Nov.

<sup>13</sup> Eveline B. Omwake Wing Dedication Press Release. Connecticut College News Office, 24 Apr. 1974. Box 2, Folder: Children’s School (formerly Nursery School). New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives.

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By the late 2000s, Bolles House was no longer a working nursery school but home to the Education and Human Development Departments at Connecticut College. It has large classrooms in the northern and eastern renovated areas, smaller ones on the first floor of the original section, and offices upstairs and along the long double-loaded corridor of the Omwake Wing. As it has grown, Bolles House has reflected the evolution of the Child Development major from its early days as a training ground for future teachers and mothers, to a large and interdisciplinary field of study, occupying both Bolles House and the later children's center at Holmes Hall. Architecturally, the aesthetic of Bolles House, described as a little, white, clapboard "Cape Cod cottage" at the time of its acquisition, fit the original function perfectly: domestic studies should take place in a residential, homey and welcoming environment.<sup>14</sup> Even in its altered form, Bolles House should serve as a campus heirloom, a nearly three hundred year old monument to the progressive family who first built the house and the generations of students who have used it.

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<sup>14</sup> Morse, *The Nursery School*.



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### **Woodworth House**

*Jeremiah Calvert, Late 19<sup>th</sup> century, College acquisition in 1924*

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

*Figure 6. Photograph, Photograph  
by William Clark, mid 1940s.*

A vertically massed and steeply roofed structure just to the west of Jane Addams House and neighboring Horizons Admissions House, Woodworth House was once part of an estate comprising much of the land that makes up south campus. Built by Jeremiah Calvert, the house remained in the family until its 1924 acquisition.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, in 1912 the original Board of Trustees brought a lawsuit against Jeremiah Calvert, with the grievance that he had inflated the cost of his land to keep the College from purchasing it.<sup>16</sup> Employing eminent domain as a private institution whose “corporate purpose is in its

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<sup>15</sup> Draft of article for *CC News*. Box 15, Folder: Woodworth House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>16</sup> 1912. “Women’s College Trustees Lose Case in Supreme Court.” *The New London Day*, 20 Jul.

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nature governmental,” the College’s case was dismissed.<sup>17</sup> Although the attached farmland was donated to the College a decade later by Calvert’s granddaughter, Grace C. Woodworth, the house remained a private residence until Woodworth’s death in 1934.<sup>18</sup>

Woodworth House’s exterior featured a combination of the Greek revival style as well as the Stick style, both popular for private homes in 19<sup>th</sup>-century New England.<sup>19</sup> Of wood frame construction, the house featured simplified classical elements on its façade, such as the square pillars and a pediment over the front entrance. According to period photographs, the back entrance of the house originally featured an equally unadorned portico below a row of three evenly spaced windows and a gabled roof. Using board-and-batten siding, the builder of Woodworth house employed a pattern of faux half-timbers on the house’s gables and to frame windows. This technique, paired with the house’s broad eaves, refer directly to the Stick Style of home construction.

Although the interior of the house has seen many changes in its time as a Connecticut College facility, the original domestic arrangement is still discernable. At the time of its acquisition, the first floor contained a central hall with a living room on one side, a dining room on the other, and a kitchen, breakfast nook, and lavatory at the rear of the structure. The second floor of the house contained three bedrooms, a dressing room, and bathroom along a single-loaded corridor. The third floor, a space containing one bedroom and one bathroom as of the 1940s, may have at one time served as either an unfinished attic space or the maid’s quarters.

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<sup>17</sup> Connecticut College for Women vs. Calvert, 88 A 633 (1912).

<sup>18</sup> Report on Cottage ‘D.’ 12 Mar. 1945. Box 15, Folder: Woodworth House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>19</sup> Mary Mix Foley, *The American House* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 141.

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In the years after its acquisition by the College, Woodworth House changed functions several times. First, the structure housed the Institute of Professional Women's Relations, an office that functioned much like present-day Alumni Relations, but with a focus on connecting students with alumnae in their area of study.<sup>20</sup> In the 1970s, the Admissions offices moved to Woodworth House. Later still, it held offices for Career Services. After Career Services' 1990s move to its present location in Vinal Cottage, Woodworth House became the administrative home of the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, which it remained into the 2000s.<sup>21</sup>

The changing use of Woodworth House provides a fascinating insight into the offices and student resources valued by the College at different points in its development. Its use as an admissions facility during the 1970s speaks to the national enrollment increases experienced at many schools, as they sought to accommodate the Baby Boom generation. By the time Admissions required a purpose-built structure, the office of Career Services had adopted a much larger role in student life, as young men and women of the 1980s and 1990s considered more carefully how their educations would translate into post-graduate professions. The building's function as home to the interdisciplinary East Asians Studies Department denotes a continuing focus on expanding the academic breadth of the College to embrace non-western curricula on a par with former, Eurocentric systems of study. Perhaps most engaging, however, is the unusual circumstance of Woodworth House's first non-residential use as the home of the Institute of Professional Women's Relations. Under the direction of Mrs. Chase Going

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<sup>20</sup> Report on Cottage 'D.'

<sup>21</sup> Draft text of historical marker for the Woodworth House." Box 15, Folder: Woodworth House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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Woodhouse from 1929 to 1946, Woodworth House took on an important role in broadcasting the College's desired reputation for professional advancement. A congresswoman in the 1930s, Woodhouse rented the house at a small fee from the College to run her Institute of Professional Women's Relations.<sup>22</sup> During her time working alongside the College, Woodhouse published several papers on the importance of the advancement of women's careers, and encouraged students to use the house as a resource for their planning their future, professional careers.<sup>23</sup>

In a reflection of its shifting use, the interior of Woodworth House was re-modeled extensively, in large measure during its time as the Admissions office. The west side of the house was transformed to serve as a large reception room, with offices, workroom, and record rooms across the hallway. The second floor was configured as office space, with a room for interviewing perspective students.<sup>24</sup> When the East Asian Studies Department moved into the house, the third floor was altered to serve as a social area. Although the house's changing owners and College administrators have refitted its interior over the years, its exterior remains an architectural reminder of the days before Connecticut College; when the area was a series of sprawling farms at the farthest border of New London.

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<sup>22</sup> "Woodhouse, Chase Going (1890-1984)" *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, accessed 13 Dec. 2008

<<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=w000714>>

<sup>23</sup> Chase Going Woodhouse to Miss Nora Booth, correspondence. 30 Jun. 1938. Box 15, Folder: Woodworth House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>24</sup> Admissions Moves to New Quarters on West Campus. Press Release. Box 15, Folder: Woodworth House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

**Strickland House**

*Built prior to 1912, College acquisition in 1952*



*Figure 7. Photograph by Ted Hendrickson, 1979.*

168 Mohegan Avenue, known to the Connecticut College community as Strickland House, is another of the properties that Connecticut College acquired from former residents of the campus land. Like the neighboring Prentice and Bolles families, the Strickland lineage stretched back to the founding of New London, with Peter Strickland listed as a town resident in about 1670.<sup>25</sup> With the passing of decades, the family bought and sold a great deal of land in New London, Waterford, and Montville. While the precise date of Strickland House's construction is not clear, by 1912 the New

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<sup>25</sup> Frances Manwaring Caulkins. *History of New London, Connecticut* (New London: H.D. Utley, 1895) 266.

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London Directory lists Frances E. Strickland (daughter of a seventh generation Peter Strickland) as taking boarders in her home at 168 Mohegan Avenue.<sup>26</sup>

Frances Strickland, who served as the principal of the local Harbor School, continued to live in the sizeable Victorian house with her sister Elizabeth into their old age.<sup>27</sup> In 1952, property was bequeathed to the Connecticut College in the will of Francis E. Strickland.<sup>28</sup>

At the time of the College's founding, Strickland House was the most elaborate residential structure along Mohegan Avenue. Positioned with a panoramic view of the Thames River from the second floor bay window, the structure embraced the 19<sup>th</sup> century innovation of balloon framing, through which industrially milled timbers were nailed together to provide the basic structural skeleton, which was sheathed - in this case - with shingles. This method allowed for the mass production of standardized building materials that could be assembled without the employment of highly skilled craftspeople. In aesthetic, Strickland House exemplifies the Edwardian type, a fusion of the Victorian picturesque and neoclassical detailing. The structure featured a glassed-in porch that wrapped around the front façade, as well as an imposing, windowed tower. The house's shingle siding referred to the aesthetic of Colonial New England, while ornate cornices dividing the stories and half-round, Palladian windows in the building's gables were also factory-made, Colonial Revival elements used on elaborate residences of the period.

Between its 1952 acquisition by the College and a 1979 *Connecticut College News* article on the building, the function of Strickland House is not known. It seems likely that the house was used as a faculty residence, given the high number of faculty

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<sup>26</sup> New London Directory, 1912, VOL. XXIII, 284.

<sup>27</sup> New London City Directory, 1905, VOL. XVI, 290.

<sup>28</sup> Connecticut College Land Acquisition Form, Strickland House. Office of the Vice President, Connecticut College.

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living on the southern edge of campus and in the nearby Riverside neighborhood at the time. In the summer of 1979, the interior of the house was completely refurbished to serve as the new home of the College's Development Office. The first floor wall partitions were reconfigured to create ample space for the department's six administrative assistants and secretaries.<sup>29</sup> The second floor was rearranged to house offices designated for Development, Alumni Giving, Government Relations, and a variety of other units involved in representing the College to off-campus constituencies.

The use of Strickland House as an administrative office may indicate a larger need to move the nonacademic operations to the periphery of campus as more classroom space was needed to meet increasing enrollments. The building's reuse may also denote the general lack of construction funding during the difficult financial times of the late 1970s, making the renovation an imperfect but necessary solution. That said, the fact that the building was a bequest to Connecticut College made Strickland House an appropriate location to manage donations, endowments, and alumna philanthropy.

From Mohegan Avenue, more commonly known now as Route 32, the façade of Strickland House provides no indication of the functional modification from its intended purpose as a late 19<sup>th</sup> century residence. Today the former residence houses Connecticut College's Human Relations Department on the first floor and offices for professors emeriti on the second floor. The once-central staircase has been partitioned off and re-routed for exterior access only to the emeriti offices. Within an updated master plan of Connecticut College that includes the construction of several new administrative spaces closer to the core of campus, perhaps one day Strickland House will return to serve as a

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<sup>29</sup> 1979. "Strickland House," *Connecticut College News*.

## The Architecture of Connecticut College

student or faculty residence. Until then however, it will remain home to administrative departments.



## The Architecture of Connecticut College

### **Unity House (Formerly Ewald House)**

*Prentice Co.(?), Built between 1900, College acquisition in 1929*

**Renovations** *Around 1957, 2007*

**Additions** *1991*



*Figure 8. Postcard, mid 1930s.*

Modest in size and nearly hidden among laurel bushes, Unity House is one of the oldest structures on the north section of campus. Unity House was constructed on land purchased from one of the major local development businesses of the early twentieth century, The Thames Improvement Company.<sup>30</sup> Constructed for the Ewald family, the house was situated in a fairly undeveloped area, just to the south of the New London and Waterford town line. A trolley that ran along Mohegan Avenue, however, provided easy access to the city of New London. The Ewald family took advantage of the large plot

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<sup>30</sup> Deed of Sale from Minnie D. Ewald to Connecticut College for Women, 16 Oct. 1929. New London County, Connecticut, Connecticut College Vice President's Office, New London, Connecticut.

## The Architecture of Connecticut College

offered by this semi-rural location and began an apple orchard that continued to operate until the College purchased the site.<sup>31</sup>

In form, Unity House is definitively Dutch Colonial Revival. Like other early twentieth-century revival styles, the Dutch Colonial evoked North America's colonial past, in this case the architectural practices of the Dutch colonists of New York and New Jersey.<sup>32</sup> These styles paired traditional architectural elements with the latest in comfort and technology, such as central heating and electric lights.<sup>33</sup> One common aspect of these houses is their gambrel roofs, which feature steep slopes at the eaves and shallow incline near the ridge. Unity House also boasts a semicircular Palladian window in each eave, another key feature of colonial revival styles. The exterior's river stone foundation and shingled, wood frame upper stories reflect the style's emphasis on sound construction, while its small size reinforces the Dutch Colonial as the ideal style for quiet and cozy domestic space. The front porch features a set of classically inspired columns, while decorative woodwork surrounding Dutch doors refers to the colonial inspiration for the building's design. A doorbell directly to the right of the door handle is a perfect example of the type of modern equipment installed in houses of this era.

Upon entering through the front door of the house, visitors would have stood in a main hall running the length of the building. Glass doors on either side led into formal front rooms, each with wood paneling and stone fireplaces. Beyond one of the front rooms lay the glassed-in porch - an informal, family space also present in nearby Nichols

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<sup>31</sup> Oral Recollections of Mr. Prentice. Connecticut College, 1 Aug. 2008.

<sup>32</sup> "Colonial Revival: Dutch Colonial," *Antique Home*, accessed 1 Nov. 2008  
< <http://www.antiquehome.org/Architectural-Style/dutch-colonial.htm> >

<sup>33</sup> Foley 244.

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House, Strickland House, and Bosworth House. Toward the rear of the house sat the kitchen and the study, or den.

While a wide staircase dominates the central hall, it is possible that the house originally featured a second, back stairwell leading from the kitchen to second story maid's quarters. This seems likely due to the fact that at the turn of the twentieth century, with labor saving devices such as vacuums and dishwashers still to come, many middle-class families still employed hired help to cook, clean, and care for children. A direct stairwell from the maid's room to the kitchen would keep this service architecturally hidden, giving the illusion of a house that cared for itself.

Acquired by the College during the presidency of Katherine Blunt, the structure served as the President's house for nearly fifty years, until the 1972 purchase of the President's residence at 772 Williams Street.<sup>34</sup> In the 1970s, the building was renamed College House and used as guest rooms and conference space. By the early 1980s these functions were moved to present day College House (also known as Stanwood Harris House) on Benham Avenue and the former Ewald residence became Connecticut College's multicultural center, Unity House.<sup>35</sup>

In considering the multiple functions that Unity House has served since its acquisition, two features continue to play an important role. The first is the structure's now-central position on the College campus. Unlike the isolated location of Nichols House (which served as the president's dwelling throughout the 1920s), the central site of

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<sup>34</sup>Off-campus housing notes of Getrude Noyes. Box 5, Folder: Buildings: Off Campus Houses/ Mohegan Avenue Houses. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>35</sup> 83-84 C Book, Office of Student Life. Box 8. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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the Ewald property made it the ideal place to lodge the school's leader as the campus expanded northward in the 1930s and 40s. As the multicultural center, Unity House's site emphasizes the fundamental importance of recognizing diverse cultural identities on the College campus. Of equal importance is the use of the building's domestic coziness, a quality fundamental to its Dutch Colonial Revival styling, to display care for some part of the Connecticut College community. In the early years of the College, the building provided a gracious residence for presidents and their families. Later, the house was used to accommodate visitors and alums in a homelike setting. Presently, the space serves as an incubator of cultural unity, a place to learn and reflect. Unity House's pleasantly snug rooms and simple adornments lend themselves to these purposes, creating a space that continues to welcome all members of the campus community.

Although Unity House has served a variety of purposes since its 1929 acquisition, the main structure remains virtually unchanged from its original form. A garage built against the back of the house did little to disrupt the original layout, and the only major change to the building's interior was the 1957 renovation to update the bathrooms and kitchen.<sup>36</sup> In the spring of 1991, a large multiuse space called the Pepsico Room was created from the former garage space.<sup>37</sup> This room, dedicated to Connecticut College Trustee Harvey C. Russell, provided space for everything from film screenings and conferences to musical performances and art exhibits, and continues to serve both Unity House functions as well as the greater campus community.

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<sup>36</sup> The Kitchen was renovated again in 2007 by the local firm of Lindsay Liebig Roche.

<sup>37</sup> "Unity Facilities," *Connecticut College*. 20 Mar. 2007, accessed 1 Nov. 2008  
< <http://www.conncoll.edu/diversity/5052.htm> >

**Bosworth House (146 Mohegan Avenue)**

*Built after 1892, College acquisition in 1930*



*Figure 9. Photograph, 1960s[?]*

The most southerly building on the campus, Bosworth House is neither easy to locate nor widely known. However, the structure, which was acquired by the College in 1930, once played a far more prominent role in campus life. The house is first recorded in the 1909 New London Directory, making it one of the last pre-existing structures to be built before the establishment of the College.<sup>38</sup> It is possible that the construction took place at the same time that much of the nearby Riverside neighborhood was being developed. Named for its owner, Frederick Bosworth, the house was one of over twenty

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<sup>38</sup> New London Directory, 1909, VOL. XX, 74.

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boardinghouses commissioned by the College to accommodate students between the years 1919 and 1940.<sup>39</sup>

The house continued to serve as College-contracted, off-campus student accommodation until the end of the 1920s, when it was purchased to serve as the school's infirmary.<sup>40</sup> The location made sense – as the most peripheral structure on the College grounds, the former boardinghouse offered an isolated site where contagious students would be less likely to pass their ailments onto their peers. The House offered beds for eleven students, as well as such advanced features as “lamps for ultra-violet and infra-red therapy,” and a laboratory for “simple chemical tests.” As well as a College physician, the house provided living quarters for two graduate students in nursing, who handled much of the day-to-day running of the infirmary.<sup>41</sup>

Unlike its distinctly Dutch Colonial neighbor Nichols House, the exterior of Bosworth House combines elements of both the Colonial Revival and the Shingle style. The house features a front-gabled roof emphasized by white trim, a narrow eave defining the base of the roof, and a wide front porch supported by classically inspired columns. White window frames and corner pilasters lighten the house's otherwise dark, shingled walls, and small protrusion such as a bay window on the south façade and a side porch on the north face give the rectangular footprint a more irregular appearance. A cross gable at the back of the house speaks to the variable qualities of the Shingle style, while the

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<sup>39</sup> Off-campus housing notes of Gertrude Noyes.

<sup>40</sup> Infirmary notes of Gertrude Noyes. Campus and Buildings Box 15, Folder: Warnshuis Infirmary. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>41</sup> 1931 Connecticut College Handbook, Office of Student Life. C Book Box 4. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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glassed-in porch, and, tall, brick chimneys convey the attention to solid construction and hygienic, semi-outdoor living space valued in Colonial Revival design.<sup>42</sup>

Bosworth House continued to serve as the College infirmary until the 1950 completion of Warnshuis Health Center. Located at the heart of campus and adopting a cantilevered, modern form unlike anything built previous, the new infirmary provided more beds, staff space, and high-tech treatment facilities. It would appear that at this point Bosworth House was refurbished to serve as faculty housing, with its interior divided into several apartments. By the mid 1950s, several other houses in the south section of campus, including Strickland House, the House of Steel, and the Winslow-Ames House were also used as faculty dwellings, creating a small neighborhood for professors on the periphery of the College grounds. As of the late 2000s, however, Bosworth House was the only structure still functioning as a faculty dwelling, making it the last pre-existing house on the campus to retain its residential function.

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<sup>42</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991) 289.

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### **Nichols House**

*Prentice and Co. (?) 1904, College acquisition in 1920*  
**Renovations 1920, 1963**



*Figure 10. Photograph, 1925[?]*

Located on the southwest corner of campus and opposite the intersection of Mohegan Avenue and Deshon Street, Nichols House was built a full decade before Connecticut College opened its doors. The building was built as a rental property, leased from owner and namesake Frank S. Nichols. Nichols, who constructed the house in 1904,<sup>43</sup> was the manager of the New London Trading Stamp Co.<sup>44</sup> Nichols' business printed stamps for merchants, who would offer them as rewards to customers who paid

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<sup>43</sup> Deed of Sale from Thames Improvement Company to Frank S. Nichols, New London County, Connecticut, New London City Courthouse.

<sup>44</sup> New London Directory, 1904, VOL. XV, 157.



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cash for purchases and who could then return collected stamps for gifts. In 1920, the building was leased by the College<sup>45</sup> to provide a free-standing house for President Marshall and his family, who had previously been living in a suite of rooms on the cramped second floor of Thames Hall.

Although Nichols House has changed function multiple times over its lifespan, a few key architectural forms reveal the building's original Dutch Colonial Revival styling. Most notable is the dormered gambrel roof, a staple of Colonial Revival design that echoes the shapes of 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch and English farmhouses. The house's stone foundation and two chimneys add a sense of strength and permanence to the structure while the white wood clapboarding and black shutters evoke Colonial Revival ideals of simplicity and visual order.<sup>46</sup> Originally, a long porch ran the length of the building's south side and featured slender, half columns between sets of windows, driving home the classical motif present throughout the exterior. Both in plan and building material, Nichols house is very similar to Unity House, around the same time for the Ewald family. Beyond the popularity of the Dutch colonial revival style during the period, one reason for the similarity between the two houses may have to do with the fact that a local construction company, Prentice & Co., built many of the houses lining Mohegan Avenue in the early 1900s.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Mr. H. R. Douglas, correspondence. 27 May 1920. Box 9, Folder: Buildings: Off Campus Houses. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>46</sup> Foley 244.

<sup>47</sup> Oral Recollections of Mr. Prentice. 1 Aug. 2008.

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Completely renovated in 1920 when the building was leased to serve as President Marshall's residence,<sup>48</sup> a path leading from Mohegan Avenue guided visitors to the entrance portico of Nichols House. Two pilasters topped with curving supports and a broken pediment surrounded the glass-paned front door, which gave access to a small vestibule and the main hall. The hall housed the main staircase that, in another similarity to Unity House, switched directions at a halfway landing to enhance the privacy of the upstairs bedrooms' privacy by eliminating sightlines from the main hall into the upper floor corridor. French doors led into the dining room on one side of the hall and the living room and porch on the other.<sup>49</sup> At the back of the house sat the kitchen, accessible from both the main hall and through a small pantry at the rear of the dining room.

While the arrangement of Nichols House prior to 1920 is not recorded, the additions and alterations performed by the College speak to a set of values specific to the early twentieth century domestic ideal. For instance, in the days before the patio and backyard became a focus of American family life, sunrooms and glazed porches were popular as semi outdoor, informal spaces for family interaction and relaxation.<sup>50</sup> The generously resized kitchen was large enough to accommodate the latest technologies of the period, ranging from early refrigerators to hand-operated washing machines. After the renovations of the early 1920s (if not earlier), each of the four bedrooms featured spacious, built-in closets, an architectural innovation popularized by a growing, middle class consumerism of the early twentieth century.

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<sup>48</sup> Mr. H. R. Douglas, correspondence.

<sup>49</sup> Site visit by Blake McDonald, 17 July 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Foley 244.

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Nichols House served as the home of the president until 1928, when Unity House was purchased from the Ewald family and converted into the new President's residence. From 1928 onward, the College's use of Nichols House is unclear. Although the house remained in the possession of Willetta B. Nichols until she willed it to the College in 1963, it seems likely that the College continued to lease and use the house due to a 1962 memo on the possible purchase of the house stating that the building was "worth to *keep in the hands of the college* [emphasis added]." <sup>51</sup> It is possible that the house was used as a faculty residence, similarly to the multiple college-leased houses in the Riverside neighborhood. During a student housing crunch in 1993, the Student Government Association put forth a proposal to turn Nichols House and neighboring Strickland House into student dormitories but the proposal was never pursued. <sup>52</sup> Instead, Nichols House was outfitted as the headquarters for offices of Campus Safety, a function that it continued to serve in the late 2000s. <sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Memorandum of Conversation with Mr. Wilde, Correspondence. 2 July 1962. Box 9, Folder: Buildings: Off Campus Houses. Connecticut College Archives.

<sup>52</sup> 1993. "Assembly recommends Strickland and Nichols for student housing." *The College Voice*, February 8<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> Oral Recollections of Stewart Smith. 5 Dec. 2008.

“Nothing is so sheltering...”<sup>54</sup>

1911 – 1920

### The Homelike Campus



*Figure 11. A rendering of the Connecticut College for Women Campus, published in the Preliminary Report of 1914. Rendering by Ewing and Chappell.*

*In its first form, Connecticut College for Women looked to the academic and architectural standards established both by earlier all-women's colleges and exclusive all-male institutions. While the administration embraced a progressive style of education that paired accepted areas of study with technical and vocational training, the forms constructed to accommodate these and other collegiate functions spoke a strictly domestic language as a reminder of the enduring notion that women belonged in the home. The sense of the College as a household was heightened through the role of the early faculty who, by living within the student residences or in the cottages scattered over the campus, assumed a socially and architecturally sustained mode of “in loco parentis.”*

The founding of Connecticut College for Women occurred during a decisive era in the evolution of American higher education. One important factor of the period was

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<sup>54</sup> Campus Plan, Ewing and Chappell, Architects. 17 Dec. 1913. Campus and Buildings, Box 1, Folder: Master Plans – 1986. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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the 1862 signing of the Morrill Land-Grant Act, which provided financial support for the founding of state universities.<sup>55</sup> Unlike the small and elite campuses of the Northeast, the new, largely Midwestern schools catered to middle class, rural Americans. For many, the chief appeal of the land grant colleges was the academic emphasis placed on practical training to prepare students for future occupations. Land grant colleges also pioneered co-education, on the grounds that women's work in the domestic realm would benefit from technical training as much as was true for their employed, male counterparts. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both the land grant colleges' innovative approach to applied learning and acceptance of women as members of the collegiate sphere began to gain footing within the established institutions of the Eastern seaboard, encouraging many schools to rethink their long-standing and continentally inspired educational practices.<sup>56</sup>

The land grant college's support of higher education for women also aided the expansion of all-female institutions that was already well underway in the Northeast. In 1861, Vassar College opened as the first all-women and full curriculum liberal arts college to abandon the label of "women's seminary." The success of Vassar prompted many older seminaries to assume collegiate status, as Mt. Holyoke College did in 1893. Vassar and Mt. Holyoke helped to dispel conventional notions that women were too physically weak and morally corruptible to attend college, while also pushing beyond the limited academic scope of women's seminaries, which had functioned primarily to train teachers. As Vassar and Mount Holyoke produced class after class of educated women, popular images of the hardworking, reliable, and innocent "college girl" began to fill

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<sup>55</sup> Paul Turner, *Campus* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1984) 140.

<sup>56</sup> Christopher J. Lucas, *American Higher Education: A History* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1996) 140-58.

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magazines and newspapers, sanctioning the new role through wholesome imagery.<sup>57</sup> The cultural recognition allowed for a second generation of Northeastern women's colleges, including Smith College, Bryn Mawr College, and Wellesley College, to build upon the foundations established by the initial models, altering them to suit an increasingly open-minded academic atmosphere.

One of the most apparent ways that the progress of women's colleges presented itself was through developments in campus design. The original series of women's colleges focused their development on the "Old Main," a large structure that contained academic space, administrative offices, and residential units for both students and faculty. By housing almost all the functions of the college in a single, sprawling building, administrators could constantly supervise the students, ensuring both their academic progress and social propriety. As these structures aged, their inflexible arrangements, high maintenance costs, and susceptibility to devastating fire aroused the concern of educators and college planners alike. Equally compelling was the fear that housing so many young women in such close and institutional quarters could lead to "unhealthy friendships" or the even more feared "unsexed women," either of which would produce women incapable of or unwilling to pursue their familial duties. In the second generation of women's colleges, these concerns were relieved by the introduction of what would come to be called the cottage system of residence. Pioneered at Smith College and quickly adopted in other schools, the new style of small, detached residences assumed both the architectural language and social arrangements of domesticity through the use of homelike forms to accommodate small groups of students and a faculty "fellow." By

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<sup>57</sup> Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984) 147-178.

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placing students in domestic settings, college planners hoped to preserve what they understood to be the innate qualities of femininity and women's natural role in the home. From a planning perspective, however, the introduction of smaller, dispersed structures greatly expanded the notion of a women's college *campus* as a set of architectural units that represented a unified institution.

Another element that set schools like Smith, Bryn Mawr, and Wellesley apart from earlier women's colleges was the desire for students to be active within the nearby communities. The earliest women's colleges were established suitable distances away from urban life to restrict any negative influences or immoral temptations that might affect the students. Countless rules and regulations paired with a highly structured daily schedule made sure that delicate and corruptible young women would be safeguarded within the "Old Main." The later schools, while still giving the impression of complete rusticity through scenic campus plans, encouraged students to use the social and academic facilities beyond the college property. In order to achieve this, women's colleges were established in greater proximity to towns. Smith went as far as to forestall the construction of a library or chapel so that students would be engaged in the local Northampton community as part of their collegiate experience. The encouragement to participate in town life also produced a slackening of the strict supervision of students. At Smith (and presumably many other women's colleges of the period), the administration's new stance was based on assumptions about class: "most of the students come from refined families and have been well-bred in their home. They have been granted the liberty common to such families. They have been free to walk or ride whenever and

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wherever young women can safely do so without escort.”<sup>58</sup> While the slackening of governance did allow for greater student autonomy, the foundation of feminine decorum held fast and would continue to shape the experience and expectations of female students for decades to come.

The decline of the “Old Main” model, in conjunction with evolving notions of women’s colleges as a facet of the surrounding community, permitted the new standards of spatial development evident even in the initial steps of planning for Connecticut College for Women. In the winter of 1913, the Board of Incorporators hired the firm of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted to draw up a proposal for the future campus. Olmsted’s firm, which by the early twentieth century was run by his two sons, was well known for its campus plans that encouraged site-sensitive development based upon existing topography, picturesque arrangements, and lush plantings between structures. The firm’s recommendations for Connecticut College for Women, presented in an eleven-page letter to Trustee Morton F. Plant, details the hilltop’s “inspiring views” and urges that the natural north south axis should play a central role to any form of physical development. In a general proposal, the letter describes a campus of buildings arranged in a south-facing “L” shape, with administrative and academic structures grouped in the base of the “L,” and student residences forming the vertical leg. Due to the fact that many of the southerly properties now owned by the College were not, at the time of the proposal, acquired, the firm focused less on the specific location of the development. Instead, the Olmsted brothers conclude the letter by describing the ideal composition of each building “based upon [the firm’s] knowledge of other women’s colleges.” The

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<sup>58</sup> Horowitz, *Alma Mater* 80.



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administrative hall, complete with auditorium and faculty offices, would serve as the core of the future campus. To the west of the hall, the letter suggested a group of buildings divided between the study of science and art, with a centrally located library. The residence halls were envisioned as a series of small but attached units stretching to the north of the administrative hall, each containing its own dining facilities. The letter concludes by emphasizing the advantages of a compact layout of structures, which would lend itself to a Collegiate Gothic architectural treatment.<sup>59</sup>

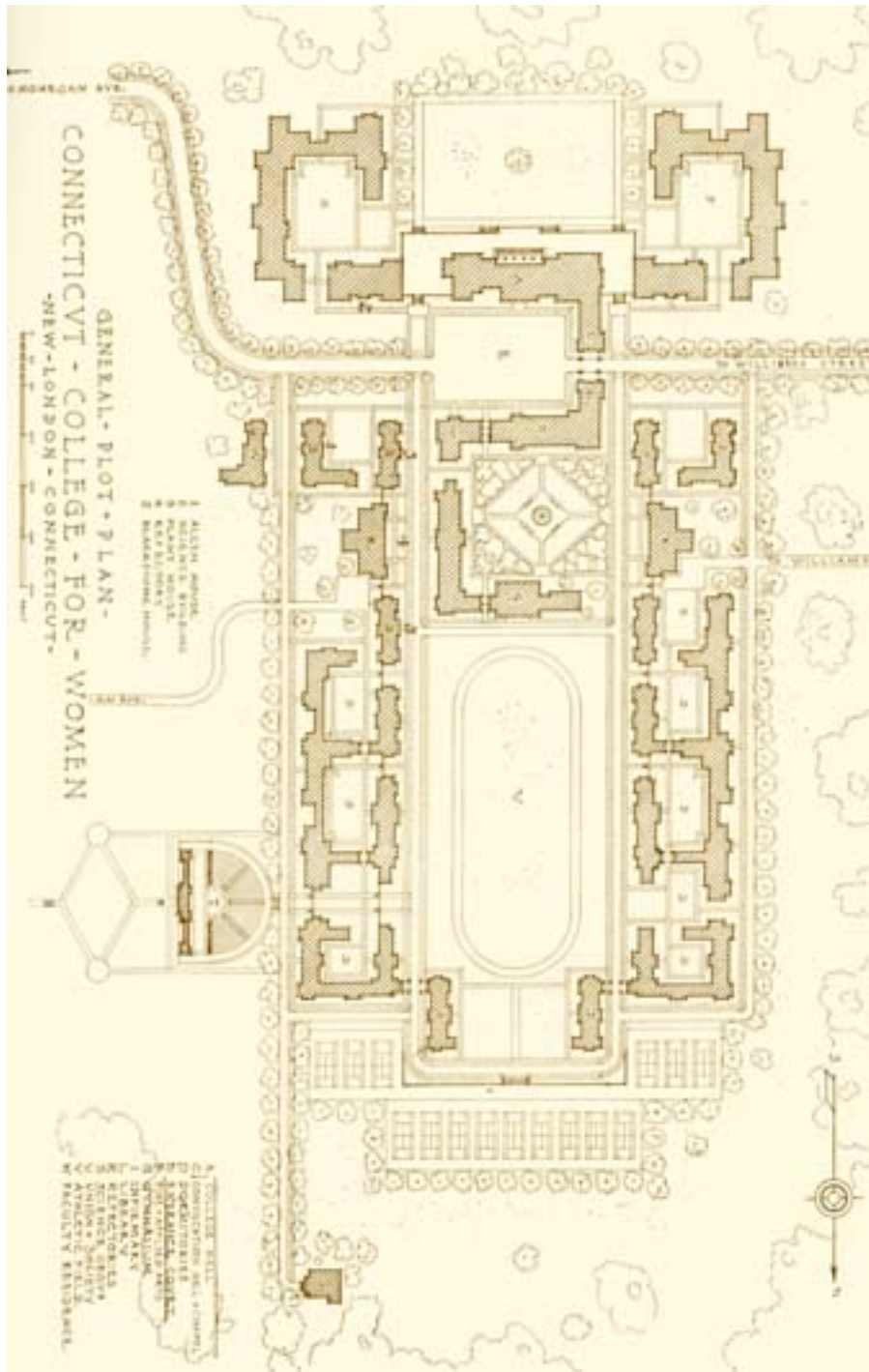
One year after the Olmsted proposal, a general plot plan drawn up by architects Ewing and Chappell gave substance to many of the recommendations made by the Olmsted Brothers. The plan and accompanying description, both published in the 1914 Preliminary Announcement, picture a campus of gothic quadrangles inspired by the “tried and historic value” of such long-established universities as Oxford and Cambridge. In accordance with the Olmsted brothers’ recommendations, the campus centers on a monumental and colonnaded College Hall. Connected to this structure by wide terraces are the two main academic quadrangles; one for the Applied Arts, and the other for Science. Directly to the north of College Hall, a quadrangle of adjacent structures housing a chapel, an assembly room for ceremonies such as graduation, and the student union encircle an Elizabethan garden that defines the shift into the residential half of the campus. Dormitories arranged around small, interior courtyards line either side of a large playing field, with the gymnasium at its northern end. To the far north lies the land

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<sup>59</sup> Olmsted Brothers to Morton F. Plant, correspondence. 20 Jan. 1913. Campus and Buildings, Box 3, Folder: Grounds and Landscaping 1913-24. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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presumably intended for future development, barren except for a row of tennis courts and the College infirmary.



*Figure 12. The Ewing and Chappell Plan for Connecticut College for Women, with Plant House marked as 3, and New London Hall as 2. Rendering by Ewing and Chappell, 1914.*

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The pre-opening plans for Connecticut College speaks to many of the values associated with women's higher education at the time. The use of the Gothic quadrangle as the unifying architectural element may indicate a desire to construct a legacy of academic tradition formerly known only in collegiate settings constructed for men. For instance, the slightly earlier plan for Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, proposed by celebrated architect William Burges, could easily have provided an inspiration for Ewing and Chappell. The design consisted of a series of four, symmetrical quadrangles centered on formally landscaped courtyards. Although unfinished, the design attracted national attention from campus planners who emulated Burges' in countless college campuses that sought to imitate old world distinction and institutional legacy through architecture.

What delineates the Connecticut College master plan from those of Cambridge, Oxford, or Trinity College is the emphasis Ewing and Chappell placed upon the issue of scaling; as the small size of Connecticut College's quadrangles would give a sense of intimacy and physical closeness. Through decreased size, the quadrangles of the future women's college returned to their monastic origins as a sheltering form, protecting their occupants from the outside world. The attached residence halls on either side of the playing field, with unbroken facades facing the streets bordering either side of campus, heighten the sense of inwardly focused spatial intimacy and the need for an architectural barrier between the campus and the outside world. In this way, the use of the quadrangle becomes more than the simple adoption of a traditional and popular collegiate form, but rather is a form altered to suit what the architects and administration viewed as the specific needs of women students.

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*Figure 13. A proposed dormitory from the Ewing and Chappell Plan for Connecticut College for Women. Rendering by Ewing and Chappell, 1914.*

Ewing and Chappell's description of each residence hall's design and function furthers the notion of architecture to safeguard feminine values. Perhaps most obvious is the use of the word "house" to replace "residence" or "dormitory" when labeling the planned structures, a clear indicator of the desired domestic connotation. Each house was planned to provide accommodation for only forty students, a resident maid, and a faculty "warden" (a title later changed to housefellow), simulating the close-knit family unit sought through the cottage system at other women's colleges. To avoid "a distressingly institutional interior," Ewing and Chappell employed such homelike touches as wide, gracious stairwells, wood paneled reception rooms, and bay windows.<sup>60</sup> The architects cited the "the charm and beauty of fine social life," as the main inspiration for the spaces, implying that female students would acquire the feminine propriety set forth by their living space, even while focused on their studies.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Campus Plan, Ewing and Chappell Architects.

<sup>61</sup> Connecticut College for Women, Preliminary Announcement title page.

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The idealized notion of women was carried through to academics as well, evident in the layout and classification of classroom buildings on the Ewing and Chappell plan. The first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed the increasing popularity of municipal housekeeping, or improving the human condition through the application of domestic theories on a national scale. An interest group led almost entirely by women, municipal housekeeping was built upon the concept that women were imbued with natural compassion and motherly instincts that could be channeled to help others. Focused on recruiting middle and upper class wives and mothers, leaders of the cause believed that women of domestic skill would find themselves inclined to spend their free time helping those less fortunate.<sup>62</sup> Subjects ranging from the scientific study of personal hygiene and public health to domestic architecture and urban beautification were accepted as part of the knowledge base that women, through their experience in the sphere of private housekeeping, would be able to spread to the masses. The popularity of the cause among educated and socially active women led many women's colleges to adapt the design of their curricula to include the topic as a new educational mission. Before long, courses in social service and dietetics were presented as equal in importance to the traditional classes in English, history, and mathematics. Although municipal housekeeping was initially rejected by of the older women's colleges, by 1915, even Vassar featured a series of building dedicated to the domestic sciences.<sup>63</sup> At Connecticut College, imposing academic quadrangles divided equally between the study of science and the fine and applied arts suggest an aspiration to educate women for this type of civic

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<sup>62</sup> John Mack Faragher, Florence Howe, editors. *Women and higher education in American history* (New York: Norton, 1988) 174.

<sup>63</sup> Karen Von Lengen, Lisa Reilly. *Vassar College: The Campus Guide*. (Princeton, NJ, Princeton Architectural Press, 2004) 19.

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responsibility through classes ranging from domestic architecture and urban beautification to physiological chemistry and food preparation.<sup>64</sup>



*Figure 14. Three residence halls, Blackstone House, Plant House, and Branford House, were constructed in keeping with the Ewing and Chappell plan. Postcard, 1920.*

The Ewing and Chappell plan published in the Preliminary Report plan defined the first five years of construction at Connecticut College, shaping the core of the campus. Blackstone House, Plant House, and Branford House were each constructed as planned to form three sides of the first quadrangle. New London Hall, intended to be the first building of the science wing, was completed directly to the south of the houses. The expense of completing the three houses and New London Hall, combined with the sudden shortage of building materials and manpower triggered by the start of World War I, compelled a less elaborate second wave of structures. The shingled Winthrop House, completed in 1916, was the first of the more modest buildings completed soon after the

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<sup>64</sup> “A Canadian President for Connecticut College.” President Files Box 1, Folder: President Sykes General Information. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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school opened its doors to students.<sup>65</sup> Winthrop House was erected to the north of the original three dormitories, yet still along the imagined line of quadrangles laid out in the Ewing and Chappell plan, illustrating a desire to continue building in a pattern that would allow for some form of the design to be achieved. Frame and stucco Hillyer Hall was completed in 1917 just to the north of Blackstone House.<sup>66</sup> This structure, although built of inexpensive materials and intended to be demolished as the campus grew, served as a gymnasium, theater, community hall, and lecture space, anchoring the community both in its function and central location. The even more northerly Lieb Cottage and North Cottage (now known as 360 House and Earth House) were completed in 1917 and 1918, respectively, as residences for faculty members.<sup>67</sup>

The Ewing and Chappell plan suggested, through both written descriptions and rendered images, a campus that echoed then-fashionable collegiate adaptations of the medieval cloister. The constructed result of the plan, however, seemed to curb these original administrative ambitions in order to allow for the expression of a different spatial character. The initial three dormitories, New London Hall, and even the reused farmhouses created an environment based far more upon the suburban ideal than the monastic quadrangles cited in the design. A model established in the peripheral location of the campus in relation to New London and confirmed in the decision to construct separate, domestically scaled structures on rolling lawns, the first set of buildings illustrate a choice of the architects and College administration to create a campus that appeared as a wealthy gated community similar to those appearing all across the nation

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<sup>65</sup> Morse, North Cottage

<sup>66</sup> 1917. "Hillyer Hall," *The Connecticut College News*. 5 Apr.: Vol. 2, No. II.

<sup>67</sup> Morse, North Cottage.

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during the period. To relate the campus to a suburban neighborhood meant a further strengthening of the domestic role of women and the architectural forms of the early campus serve to reinforce an explicit definition of the type of post-graduate life expected of white and middle to upper class student body.



**New London Hall**

*Ewing and Chappell, 1914*

**Renovations** 1966, 1986

**Additions** 1935



*Figure 15. Photograph, 1917*

With the flaming torch of knowledge carved over its entrance, New London Hall stands as a reminder of how far Connecticut College has advanced in a century of operation. Constructed in 1914 as the first academic structure for the College, New London Hall was one of four buildings built in accordance with the Ewing and Chappell master plan for the campus.<sup>68</sup> The structure was made possible by the donations of countless New London citizens who, to encourage the College's rapid development, each gave one day's wage to fund the project. Built for \$135,000 using both regional materials and local labor, New London Hall was named for the local residents who had

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<sup>68</sup> Connecticut College for Women, Preliminary Announcement, title page.

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campaigned so actively to first provide a beautiful site for the future campus, and then the means with which to make that campus a reality.<sup>69</sup>

The original Board of Incorporators had held a design competition to select a firm to present the first master plan for the College campus. Nonetheless, the decision to employ Ewing and Chappell was an obvious one. Although the firm was based at 101 Park Avenue in New York City, Chappell was a native New Londoner, and his father served on the College's Board of Incorporators. Chappell had also received his architectural training at the celebrated Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris.<sup>70</sup> Beaux Arts principles emphasized aesthetic unity in groups of buildings and the hierarchy of spaces shown through architecture, two values crucial to the planning of college campuses. However in the design for New London Hall and the nearby dormitories, Ewing and Chappell did not apply the Beaux-Arts aesthetic patterning, instead looking to the "old-world charm" of the Collegiate Gothic style.<sup>71</sup> New London Hall assumed an I-shaped footprint, with a prominent entrance on the cross gable of both the east and west ends, and a stairwell projecting from the center of the north facade. The building was four stories tall, including a naturally lit basement made possible by the sloping site. True to its Gothic roots, the building revealed its interior arrangements through the use of both stone stringcourses to define the separate floors, as well as banks of windows with finely carved, limestone frames denoting classroom space. With its rough, granite walls, steeply

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<sup>69</sup> Remarks for Acceptance of Pfizer Foundation Gift, Oakes Ames. 24 Jan. 1979. Campus and Buildings, Box 9, Folder: New London Hall Renovations, 1980s. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>70</sup> Plans for Branford House, Connecticut College for Women. Ewing and Chappell Architects, 1914. Campus and Buildings, Box 3, Folder: Branford House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>71</sup> Campus Plan, Ewing and Chappell Architects.

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pitched, slate roof, and arched oak doors, the building referred to the aesthetic traditions of the earliest, medieval universities, but also the natural beauty of the hilltop site. An article in the *New London Telegraph* described the detailing of the structure as “romantic,” and fitting to its environment.<sup>72</sup>

The planned interior of New London Hall was designed to contain three different fields of science, each on its own floor. While the structure’s sloping site offered at-grade entrances on both the basement and ground floors, the central stairwell gave access to corridors that divide the building laterally. The labs occupied the cross-gabled sections of each story, while small lecture halls and storage space filled the core of the structure. On the ground floor, biology classrooms included botany, zoology, microbiology, and physiology. On the floor above housed general chemistry, as well as facilities for studies in organic, qualitative, and physical chemistry. The top floor was devoted to the study of Health and Home Economics, with labs devoted to food preparation, hygiene, dietetics, and physiology.<sup>73</sup> This floor in particular matched the educational ideals of the young College, which sought to teach women to apply modern science to their future roles as managers of their own households.

In its first years of use, however, New London Hall was forced to accommodate more than just the study of science. The basement housed the Art Department and a physics classroom, as well as an always busy lecture hall. Offices and classrooms occupied the floors above, with the President, Dean of the College, and Registrar lodged on the second floor. The third floor housed a library, which by the school’s third year of operation had expanded to the neighboring room. Besides additional faculty offices, the

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<sup>72</sup> 1914. Maude Plossard. *New London Telegraph*.

<sup>73</sup> Connecticut College for Women, Preliminary Announcement 37.

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fourth floor also contained a study and rest lounge for students who commuted to campus, a significant number in the College's early decades.<sup>74</sup>

As Connecticut College grew, the ways in which the function and design of New London Hall evolved provide an engaging outlook on the school's shifting academic and spatial focuses. The rapidly expanding library was the first feature to be moved to its own building, with the 1923 completion of Palmer Library. The new library defined the head of what would soon be the Campus Green, and in doing so also altered the spatial meaning of New London Hall. While originally intended as one side of an academic quadrangle and serving as the southern end of the residential quad, New London Hall became the northernmost building in the row that defined the Campus Green's eastern arm.

During the presidency of Katherine Blunt, who oversaw the construction of seventeen buildings, New London Hall was finally able to assume its original function as the science building. With the 1930 construction of Fanning Hall, the relocation of administrative functions and humanities departments allowed for nearly all of New London Hall to be given over to the study of sciences.<sup>75</sup> In 1935, a \$10,000 grant from the Rockefeller Foundation supplemented by College funds and gifts made possible the construction of a greenhouse and hormone laboratory as a wing on New London Hall.<sup>76</sup> The upgrade marked the construction of nearby Bill Hall, which provided a new home for the Art and Psychology departments, freeing up much of the classroom space in New

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<sup>74</sup> Gertrude E. Noyes, "New London Hall: Proud Mistress of a 64-Year Heritage," Gala to Honor Pfizer Inc. Campus and Buildings, Box 9, Folder: New London Hall. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>75</sup> Noyes 98.

<sup>76</sup> Morse, New London Hall

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London Hall for science courses. Thirty years later, an electron microscope was installed in the Zoology Department.<sup>77</sup> By 1977, however, fundraising began for a complete interior overhaul, something deemed necessary for the College to remain on the cutting edge in terms of the ever-evolving modern sciences. In July of 1979 the Pfizer Foundation contributed \$225,000 to Connecticut College as seed money for the renovations.<sup>78</sup> The laboratories that would allow students and faculty members to stay abreast of the rapid changes in their field were named for the recently deceased Pfizer President John E. McKeen for his contributions to science.<sup>79</sup> Less than a decade later, additional renovations to New London Hall became the first fully-funded campaign objective in a 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary plan for campus improvements focused on widening the breadth of the College's academics.<sup>80</sup>

New London Hall still houses upper level science courses, along with student and faculty research facilities, as well as professors' offices. The addition of nearby Hale Laboratory and Olin Science Center, in 1954 and 1995 respectively, create a "Science Triangle" marked by the graceful, blue "Synergy" sculpture just outside of New London Hall's eastern entrance. Its exterior unchanged save the addition of the greenhouse, New

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<sup>77</sup> Microscope, News From Connecticut College, 5 Mar. 1968. Campus and Buildings, Box 9, Folder: New London Hall. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Feeney to Pfizer Inc., Correspondence. 10 Aug. 1981. Campus and Buildings, Box 9, Folder: New London Hall Renovations, 1980s. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>79</sup> *A Campaign to Complete the Funding of the John E. McKeen Memorial Biology Laboratories*, 1981. Campus and Buildings, Box 9, Folder: New London Hall. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>80</sup> "New London Hall," *Progress*, Vol. 2 no. 1, 1983. Campus and Buildings, Box 9, Folder: New London Hall Renovations, 1980s. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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London Hall provides an important reminder of the College's original architectural intentions, as well as the social and educational values that those forms symbolized.

**Plant House and Blackstone House**

*Ewing & Chappell, 1914*

**Branford House**

*Ewing & Chappell, 1919*



*Figure 16. Photograph, mid 1920s.*

Nearly identical in form and sited in close proximity to one another, Plant House, Blackstone House, and the slightly later Branford House constitute the earliest planned and constructed residential units at Connecticut College. Local resident and College trustee Commodore Morton F. Plant provided \$60,000 for the construction of each structure, which at the time represented the utmost in luxury and efficiency in collegiate design. This careful planning, in conjunction with the versatile role each hall played during the first decades of the College's operation, embodied many of the early twentieth century ideals about women's higher education.

In designing the three houses, Ewing and Chappell continued the pared-down Collegiate Gothic aesthetic established in New London Hall, but with a distinctly

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domestic slant.<sup>81</sup> In exterior appearance, the structures evoke a period in home design when the traditions of the Victorian era converged with the evolving ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement. The outcome was structures that embodied, in location, design, and construction material, the architectural characteristics that Victorian art critic John Ruskin had recommended for domestic buildings where the emphasis was on creating a safe haven from the immorality and facelessness of industrialized urban centers. Exterior elements of Blackstone, Plant, and Branford such as the richly textured granite façades, rough slate tile roofs, and irregular building footprints intended to connect each structure to its hilltop surroundings, embodying the picturesque beauty of nature. As at New London Hall, the projections and recesses of the structures' facades hinted at the range of functions within, while adding to the sense of gradual, irregular, and organic growth. Adjacent to the main entrance of each residence, banks of windows and stone chimneys identified the reception hall, a homelike space that acted as the figural and literal hearth of each house. The heavy oak doors of each house's entry vestibule, carved in the style of a medieval fortress, imbued the structures with a sense of impenetrable security.

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<sup>81</sup> Connecticut College for Women, Preliminary Announcement title page.





*Figure 17. The front entrance of Plant House, with the parlor evident in the bay of windows to the left of the door, and the maid's quarters located to the right of the vestibule. Photograph, 1914.*

The domestic qualities deemed especially appropriate for female students carry through to the interior of Plant, Blackstone, and Branford. Just beyond the front door, a reception room featuring a large fireplace, a long window with built-in seating, and substantial, ornately carved furnishing present a continuation of the exterior ideals of solid construction, traditional materials, and attention to detail. The fine finish of the reception room, which far exceeded the simple plaster walls of the rest of the building, denote the formal nature of a space primarily intended for the entertainment of guests who would not venture any further into the hall. A short flight of steps separated the

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entrance hall of each dorm from the main corridor, providing a distinct spatial division between the public and private space of the ground floor. The housefellow's suite, sited on the landing and directly opposite the main entrance, allowed for supervision of both guests and the comings and goings of the house residents. The wide halls that ran the length of each floor were broken into segments through the use of arches and corners to avoid what Ewing and Chappell labeled "the distressingly institutional interior" of many contemporary college residences. Throughout the halls, irregularly shaped students rooms, many with bay windows, conveyed the sense of an old, rambling house.<sup>82</sup>



*Figure 18. Students socializing in the small, wood-paneled parlor of Branford House. Photograph, 1920.*

The earliest houses of the Connecticut College campus echoed domestic qualities in their social organization as well as their physical attributes. Ewing and Chappell

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<sup>82</sup> Floor plans of Blackstone House. Campus and Buildings Box 2, Folder: Blackstone House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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designed each house to hold only 48 students, a number small enough to inspire family-like intimacy. More specifically, the design and operation of the three houses worked to recreate the very homes familiar to the well-heeled Connecticut natives who made up the first classes at the College. The inclusion of a maid's living quarters just beyond the main entrance allowed for the continuation of a service that many of the students would have been accustomed to at their own homes. Student rooms outfitted in a fashionable and elegant manner by an interior decorator from Hartford would have appeared much like the well-appointed homes of their inhabitants.<sup>83</sup> The attention to these structures suggest an early administrative mindset that, while allowing for students to tolerate cramped and makeshift space for dining, academics, and events, viewed top-rate housing as essential for its female students.

Plant, Blackstone, and Branford House have continued to serve as student residences since their completion, making them the oldest structures on campus to maintain their original function. One important aspect of the houses' early use that has changed is the multifaceted nature of their auxiliary roles. The basement of each house once contained faculty offices, classroom space, and even, at Blackstone House, the student bookstore.<sup>84</sup> As the physical campus grew, these facilities were moved to more appropriate settings, allowing the basement to be converted into student rooms. Beyond this change, however, no significant renovations have altered either the use or forms of Plant, Blackstone, or Branford, an acknowledgement of their substantial construction and enduring design.

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<sup>83</sup> [1917] "College Furnishings Are Being Rapidly Installed." *The New London Day*.

<sup>84</sup> Correspondence to Benjamin T. Marshall. 13 Aug. 1917. Campus and Buildings Box 2, Folder: Blackstone House Bookshop. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College

**Winthrop House**

*Dudley St. Clair Donnelly, 1916*



*Figure 19. Photograph, 1918.*

Constructed at a distance from the four stone buildings making up the historic core of the Connecticut College campus, the shingled Winthrop House commands a prominent position overlooking Mohegan Avenue and the Thames River. Winthrop House was completed in the fall of 1916, only two years after the College officially opened. Built quickly to house forty, incoming first-year students for the 1916-1917 academic term, the project represents the first phase in what would prove to be a nearly thirty-year battle to provide enough on-campus housing for the rapidly growing student body. In fact, the year that Winthrop House opened also marked the establishment of the College boardinghouse community in the nearby Riverside neighborhood, an approach to

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student housing that would flourish through the 1920s and 1930s. Funded by the College, the new student residence was named for John Winthrop Jr., an early governor of Connecticut who founded the town of New London after being granted the land by the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1644.<sup>85</sup>

To design Winthrop House, first President of the College Frederick Sykes employed locally renowned architect Dudley St. Clair Donnelly.<sup>86</sup> Donnelly had designed many prominent commercial and administrative structures in downtown New London, as well as a number of stately homes in the nearby Ocean Beach neighborhood.<sup>87</sup> For Winthrop House, Donnelly drew from a regional, colonial vocabulary to produce the wood-framed and shingled residence hall. With white painted windows and a columned portico, the exterior of Winthrop House was very different from the Collegiate Gothic residences to its south. Many of the choices that Donnelly made when designing Winthrop House may reflect the fact that Colonial Revival forms had become so widespread – especially in residential architecture – in the decades since the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876. While its shingled exterior referenced the Queen Anne style houses Donnelly had constructed in the area, Winthrop House’s vertical proportions and dormered, gambrel roof alluded to Georgian designs of the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>88</sup>

On the interior however, Winthrop House echoed many of qualities evident in Plant, Blackstone, and Branford, with their focus on creating a symbolic home space for the female students. The front entrance featured a vestibule leading into the main hall,

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<sup>85</sup> “John Winthrop Jr.,” *Connecticut State Library Online*, accessed 13 Apr. 2010 <<http://www.cslib.org/gov/winthropj.htm> >

<sup>86</sup> 1916. “Are Getting Bids on New Dormitory,” *The New London Day*, 15 Jun.

<sup>87</sup> 1915. “Dudley St. Clair Donnelly,” *The New London Day*, 11 Mar.

<sup>88</sup> Foley 214.

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similar to that of the earlier houses. A small living room to the right of the entrance featured a large stone fireplace to provide a domestic hearth around which the residents could gather. The centrally located housefellow suite allowed supervision of the entrance, living room, and staircase leading to the upper floor student's rooms. While the hallways lacked the irregular arrangement so valued in the earlier dormitories, varying room sizes and dormered ceilings on the third floor provided an atmosphere similarly to household design.<sup>89</sup>

Built rapidly for an immediate need (divergent from the original Ewing and Chappell campus plan of 1918), Winthrop House was intended as a temporary structure. This point is made clear in a letter to President Sykes where architect Donnelly states that Winthrop House is “must not be considered as a part of the future college group.”<sup>90</sup> This provisional condition had great impact on the structure's design and location. The wooden residence hall was placed far from the prized, stone structures, on a corner of campus already occupied the temporary refectory, Thames Hall. Unlike the earlier houses, Winthrop House turned its main entrance not to the interior of the College grounds, but outward to Mohegan Avenue and the Riverside community. This orientation implied a spatial pattern detached from the planned campus and more associated with the nearby neighborhoods. Design sacrifices, such as foregoing the hygienic balconies of the original plans and installing a diminished electrical system that reduced power to the building at night, reinforce the notion that Winthrop House was not intended for long-

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<sup>89</sup> Floor Plan of Winthrop House. 1916. Box 15, Folder: Winthrop House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>90</sup> Dudley St. Clair Donnelly to President Sykes, correspondence. Box 15, Folder: Winthrop House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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term use as a student residence.<sup>91</sup> Even the choice of a local architect seems to indicate a lesser value of the structure, especially when compared to the prestigious, often New York based firms that were employed to design permanent buildings for the College.

Whatever the original strategy for the Winthrop House may have been, the structure remains in use today. Within five years of its completion, the Colonial Revival style of the structure had replaced Collegiate Gothic as the architectural aesthetic of the campus in a trend that would continue into the 1940s. Winthrop House served as a residence hall until the completion of North Complex in the early 1960s, when the building was altered slightly to suit the needs of the Economics and Sociology departments.<sup>92</sup> Currently, Winthrop House serves as faculty offices, not only for those departments, but History and Gender and Women's Studies as well. Although Winthrop was re-shingled and received new windows in the summer of 2008, the 2000 Master Plan calls for the building's demolition to make way for a section of road to complete the campus vehicular loop. Considered a temporary addition and now one of the oldest College-built structures on the campus, the future of Winthrop House once again lies in question.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Dormitory plans, general remarks. Office of the President, Connecticut College. Box 15, Folder: Winthrop House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>92</sup> Morse, Winthrop House.

<sup>93</sup> Kieran, Timberlake & Harris (Architects and Planners), Rolland/Towers (Site Planners and Landscape Architects). "Comprehensive Master Plan." April 2000. Office of the Vice President for Administration, Connecticut College.



**Tansill Theater (formerly Hillyer Hall)**

*Dudley St. Clair Donnelly, 1917*

**Renovations** *Dubose Associates Architects, 1994-98*



*Figure 20. Photograph, 1919.*

Positioned only steps from the earliest student residences, Tansill Theater appears a simple yet contemporary edifice with sculptural embellishments crowning its tower and an angular bay window defining its southern façade. Nonetheless, the principal structure of the black box theater dates back to 1917, only two years after the College opened.

Originally called Hillyer Hall, the building was put up to serve as an assembly hall, chapel, and in particular a gymnasium. Having spent a bulk of the initial donations on the construction of the nearby New London Hall, Plant House, and Blackstone House, the College was fortunate to receive a gift to fund the structure from trustee Dotha Bushnell Hillyer. Hillyer, a native to the state and wife of bank magnate Appleton Robbins Hillyer,



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would go on to finance the construction of Hartford's Bushnell Theater as well as to provide the funds to begin a school that would later become the University of Hartford.<sup>94</sup>

Given its central function, Hillyer Hall was positioned at the core of campus, between the newly constructed residential quadrangle defined by Plant and Blackstone Houses, and several older structures converted to College use farther to the north. Although local architect Dudley St. Clair Donnelly designed Hillyer Hall at the same time that he was working on nearby Winthrop House, the two buildings appear very dissimilar save for one common characteristic: the use of cross gables to define the lateral ends of both structures.<sup>95</sup> Unlike Winthrop House's wooden siding, Hillyer Hall was executed in a stucco finish with a white stringcourse to define the floor level of the upper story. A simple, metal roof was a break from the use of slate or wooden shingles, adding to the structure's stark appearance. A bank of large windows within the central mass of the building defined the assembly hall within, while small windows on the ground floor denoted the less vital functions of the ground floor, such as offices and locker rooms. Hillyer Hall featured multiple entrances, the most formal of which graced the building's south façade and gave access directly into the assembly hall by way of a wide, outdoor staircase.

The interior layout of Hillyer Hall accommodated a wide range of uses. Showers and dressing rooms for students and faculty, as well as chair storage and offices for the physical education instructors, occupied the lower floor of the building. On the floor above, the large hall included dressing rooms on both sides of the room, and a vestibule

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<sup>94</sup>“Dotha Bushnell Hillyer,” *Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame*, accessed 19 Feb. 2010 < [http://www.cwhf.org/browse\\_hall/hall/people/Hilyer.php](http://www.cwhf.org/browse_hall/hall/people/Hilyer.php) >

<sup>95</sup> Benjamin T. Marshall, *A Modern History of New London County, Connecticut* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1922) 289.

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space with coat check and storage facility. Over the vestibule, a balcony running the width of the hall served at times as a choir loft, and at others as additional seating space. As the apportionment of the space illustrates, the bulk of the building was given over the physical education facilities, and in fact Hillyer Hall was often referred to as the field house.

As at Winthrop House, the location and finish of Hillyer Hall suggests that the College did not intend it as a permanent structure. Although the exterior took on an outline reminiscent of the nearby stone buildings, and was even described as “New London Hall in miniature” in the *Connecticut College News*, inexpensive building materials show a clear choice for economy and speed of construction over long lasting elegance.<sup>96</sup> However, the decision to construct Hillyer Hall reveals the value placed on physical education at an early stage in the College’s development. Even by the late 1910s, it was commonly believed that women might not be strong enough to handle the pressures of college-level academics. Gym classes were made compulsory at nearly all women’s colleges with the assumption being that students who developed healthy bodies would be better able to bear the mental demands of higher education. Equally, physical recreation based on teams provided the familial bond so valued in women’s colleges of the period.<sup>97</sup> In its early construction, the provision of facilities to support a sizeable Physical Education Department, and the building’s nearness to the student residences, fits well into this trend.

Upon the completion of Crozier-Williams Student Center in 1958, Hillyer Hall assumed the role of the College bookstore, post office, and printing shop, functions that

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<sup>96</sup> 1917. “Hillyer Hall,” *The Connecticut College News*.

<sup>97</sup> Lynn Peril. *College Girls* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company Inc. 2006) 235.

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had formerly been housed in the basement of Blackstone House.<sup>98</sup> In the early 1990s, the building received a significant renovation to produce what is now known as Tansill Theater. With the post office and bookstore moved to converted spaces in Crozier Williams, the former assembly hall was transformed into a black box theater, with an ample backstage space. On the floor below, a ticket office and support space occupied the former offices and locker rooms. The stucco finish was replaced by vinyl siding, and the outdoor staircase was removed to make way for a glass prism that defined the new, interior stairwell. Perhaps the most visible aspects of the transformation were the addition of an elevator shaft to the building's northwest corner, and the walling over of the large windows of the upper floor. Allowing for intimate productions that would be unsuited in the vast Palmer Auditorium, Tansill Theater has continued to serve as much-needed additional space for the Theater Department.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Benjamin T. Marshall, correspondence. 13 Aug. 1917. Campus and Buildings Box 2, Folder: Blackstone House Bookshop. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College

<sup>99</sup> 1998. "Intimate performing space takes shape," *The Connecticut College Source*, 23 Nov.: 3.

**360 House (Formerly North Cottage) and Earth House (Formerly Dr. Lieb's Cottage)**

*Dudley St. Clair Donnelly, 1918*

**Renovations** *Graham Creighton, 1935, 1941, 1965*

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

*Figure 21. Photograph, around 1950.*

Seemingly detached from the main campus both in their peripheral location and architectural vocabulary, 360 House and Earth House each feature a long and intertwined history dating back to the first years of the school's operation. While the initial 1915 phase of construction produced much of the present day campus' core, to provide housing and scholastic facilities for the student body, a second, slightly later wave of development on the north end of the campus reveals an early interest in providing on-campus dwellings for faculty members. First, Thames Hall, which provided several rooms for faculty on its upper floors, was fashioned by the joining of two neighboring and pre-existing farmhouses. A year later, the cottage of Chemistry professor Dr. Leib was

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completed just to the north, and finally, in 1918, the faculty house North Cottage was constructed on the neighboring site.<sup>100</sup> This early attention to accommodating faculty, which is paralleled in many women's colleges during the same period, illustrates the tendency on the part of college administrations to see professors as parental figures who were expected to offer support for and represent authority to the students.

North Cottage was constructed on land bought in 1911 from the Thames Improvement Company.<sup>101</sup> The three-story, wood-frame building was designed by local architect Dudley St. Clair Donnelly, who also drew up the plans for Hillyer Hall and Winthrop House.<sup>102</sup> Visually, North Cottage is an example of the shingle style, made popular by architects such as Alexander Oakley and William Hunt during the late nineteenth century. The style combines elements of colonial design, evident in North Cottage's shutters, columned front porch, and decorative balustrades, while also drawing on ideals of traditional, shingled New England homes of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The shingled pillars of North Cottage's kitchen entrance are another trademark of the style and evident in many Shingle style homes.

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<sup>100</sup> Morse, North Cottage.

<sup>101</sup> Deed of sale, Thames Improvement Co. to Connecticut College for Women. 5 Sept. 1911, New London County, Connecticut, Connecticut College Vice President's Office, New London, Connecticut.

<sup>102</sup> Architects of CC buildings. Box 1, Folder: Buildings: General Information & History. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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*Figure 22. North Cottage as it appeared soon after its construction. Photograph, 1920.*

Although North Cottage underwent major renovations in the 1930s and then again in the 1960s, much of the interior arrangement of the original structure remains intact. The main entrance facing Mohegan Avenue consisted of a small front porch, its roof supported by two classically inspired columns and ornamented with a wide architrave crowned by a decorative railing. The front door leads into a small entryway, originally featuring a leaded glass door, which opens into the main hall. To the right of the hall sat a small reception room, while a larger doorway on the opposite side of the hall lead into the formal living space. Beyond the living room, a dining room of equal size featured a large fireplace end and south-facing bay window. The rear of the house contained a small

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kitchen and a room that may have served as a study or maid's quarter. The upper floors contained seven bedrooms and one centrally located, second-floor bathroom.<sup>103</sup>

Since its completion in 1918, North Cottage has changed both its function and name many times over. In 1935, architect Graham Creighton was employed to refurbish and expand the building to serve as a student dorm.<sup>104</sup> The timing of this project indicates the construction trend of the 1930s and 1940s focused on housing all students on campus and eliminating the need for off-campus, rented boardinghouses.<sup>105</sup> During this renovation, the former faculty house was expanded to the north to provide ten more bedrooms to the preexisting seven in the original structure. On the exterior, Creighton succeeded in unifying the two halves of the building by repeating the shingle siding, white trim, and even arched, third story windows. On the interior of the original structure, the kitchen was remodeled into a housefellow suite, consisting of a living room, bathroom, and small bedroom. The former living room and dining room were unchanged but renamed lounges for the use of the dormitory residents.

Six years after the addition was completed, North Cottage was attached to the former home of Dr. Leib (renamed North Cottage Annex) by way of a long hall. The renovated house provided eight more student rooms, while the connecting ell featured a

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<sup>103</sup> Dormitory floor plan – North Cottage. Box 10, Folder: Buildings: Off Campus Housing/Mohegan Avenue Houses (Includes North Cottage). New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>104</sup> Agreement between contractor and owner, Connecticut College for Women and Lewis E. Douglas. 12 Apr. 1935. Box 10, Folder: Buildings: Off Campus Housing/Mohegan Avenue Houses (Includes North Cottage). New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>105</sup> Off-campus housing notes of Getrude Noyes. Box 10, Folder: Buildings: Off Campus Housing/Mohegan Avenue Houses (Includes North Cottage). New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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central entranceway for both structures.<sup>106</sup> Once again, North Cottage's shingle siding and white trim were echoed in the connecting ell, while the new entranceway mirrored the North Cottage's columned front porch.

North Cottage and its annex functioned as student housing until the 1962 completion of the North Complex dorms. These modern dorms completely restructured the north end of campus by providing new rooms for all the residents of Thames Hall, Winthrop House, and North Cottage. Thames Hall and Winthrop House were remodeled to serve as academic buildings, and North Cottage was refurbished as five faculty apartments.<sup>107</sup> During this renovation, the hall connecting North Cottage with its annex was torn down, and the neighboring cottage, originally built for Dr. Lieb was renovated as a single-family faculty home. In a confusing renaming at the end of the renovations, North Cottage was renamed Leib House, in honor of the professor who had lived next door.<sup>108</sup> In the late 1990s, Leib House was renamed 360 House and the six faculty dwellings were converted to student apartments, while the neighboring cottage was converted the environmentally-focused student residence, Earth House, in 1994.<sup>109</sup> As of 2010, both structures serve as integral aspects of the College's thematic student residence options, where students must apply to live for a semester or year.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Dormitory Floor Plan – North Cottage.

<sup>107</sup> Morse, North Cottage.

<sup>108</sup> Press Release from the Office of College Relations, 18 June 1962. Box 10, Folder: Buildings: Off Campus Housing/Mohegan Avenue Houses (Includes North Cottage). New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>109</sup> 94-95 C Book, page 103, Office of Student Life. Box 8. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>110</sup> "Campus Life – Specialty Housing," *Connecticut College*, 2 Apr. 2007, accessed 22 Aug. 2008 < <http://www.conncoll.edu/campuslife/945.htm> >



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Beyond its early construction date, North Cottage is significant within the larger context of Connecticut College's history in many ways. In design, the original North Cottage structure hints at the early twentieth century economic condition of both Connecticut College and the nation. While the College may have opted for wood construction as a low-cost alternative to the expensive stone used in the earliest building, the start of World War I would have greatly limited both building resources and man power for construction projects. The multiple roles that the building has served - as faculty housing, student dormitory, and faculty flats - is indicative of shifting administrative concepts of whom the college should house, and where they should live. Whether through the expansion of the original building to provide more on-campus student rooms, or its closure after the completion of North Complex, 360 House's different incarnations also map the residential development of the rest of campus. Often times, alterations are viewed as damaging to the significance of a building. However, the many physical adaptations of 360 House, and the underlying purposes for these changes, heighten the building's historical importance on the Connecticut College campus.

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"Green Living – Timeline," *Connecticut College*, 8 Jan. 2010, accessed 13 Apr. 2010 <<http://www.conncoll.edu/green/greenliving/8461.htm>>

“No cloister, this college”<sup>111</sup>

## A Welcoming Campus

1920 – 1929



*Figure 23. From the front steps of Knowlton House, the College’s new social center, students were offered a vista of New London and the Long Island sound. Photograph, 1925.*

*The 1920s saw the decline of the ideas that governed the physical development of Connecticut College the decade previous. In the place of the self-contained and familial, the institution invited visitors and encouraged the social development of students on par with academic achievement by constructing spaces where women could express their femininity in a public setting. In part, this shift represented a desire to maintain a sense of domesticity and womanly nature while still allowing for the expression of the emancipated and individualistic “New Woman.” The*

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<sup>111</sup> Katharine T. Floyd, “A New England Zontian in Her College by the Sea.” Presidents Box 2: Folder: Katherine Blunt General and Biographical Information. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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*changes to campus also revealed how the unified image of campus presented in the 1914 Ewing and Chappell Plan yielded to more open-ended style of physical development determined by an active and growing campus population.*

In 1919, the year of Connecticut College's first commencement, New Londoner George S. Palmer gave a monetary gift to the College to be used in the construction of either a chapel or a library. The resulting structure, Palmer Library, was completed four years later and symbolized a break from the architectural framework established in the first decade of the school's operation. While in site selection and footprint the building corresponded to the colonnaded College Hall of the Ewing and Chappell plan, Palmer Library adopted the colonially inspired Georgian style in place of the Collegiate Gothic. Instead of housing the administrative offices planned for College Hall, the building's function elevated academics to the symbolic and literal summit of the institution. The building quickly became iconic of both the expansion of academic life and the growth of the campus itself, establishing a new path of physical development that would characterize construction in the decades to come.

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*Figure 24. Palmer Library, the head of the rapidly forming Campus Green, as viewed from the south end of Knowlton House. Photograph, 1925.*

The shift represented in the completion of Palmer Library occurred during a period of major developments in the role of women in society. World War I shook loose the cultural status quo, and by the summer of 1920, women had won the right to vote. In the years that followed, the emancipated “New Woman” embraced a vigorous, modern lifestyle. Discarding the corsets and gowns of the Victorian period, she bobbed her hair, sported short skirts, and wore rouge on her cheeks. In many ways, the change in fashion tastes reflected a growing public acknowledgement of female sexuality discussed by popular psychotherapists such as Sigmund Freud. Companionate marriage, based upon mutual love and communication, also played a key role in these theories as the ultimate desire of all women. In order for women to achieve this happy union, they had to present themselves as physically attractive and socially engaging individuals. Moreover, women were encouraged to actively seek out male partners, an act that would have received

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wholehearted disapproval in the earlier era of Victorian etiquette. The proliferation of media sources such as film, magazine, and commercial advertisements reinforced the chic, new visions of carefully constructed modern femininity.

Just as strong as the commercial influences, however, was the criticism against the “New Woman.” Fearing that an immoral and hedonistic youth generation would destroy family principles, opponents cited nationally declining birthrates and rising rates of divorce as the first sign of a collapsing cultural decorum.<sup>112</sup> Many traditionalists viewed the rise of the “New Woman” to be a direct result of college education; the popular notion of the hardworking and innocent “college girl” gave way to claims that women’s higher education was the ultimate corrupter. The long-standing fear of “unsexed” women, the same that encouraged the development of Smith’s cottage system, was reawakened. Named *Race Suicide* and cited by parties ranging from eugenicists to President Roosevelt, the commonly held belief asserted that higher education would dissuade women from pursuing a natural calling to family life, turning them instead to spinsterhood or even each other, and leading to an irreversible decline in American population. Inherent to the concern, however, was the anxiety that influx of immigrants to the country would, if paired with a loss of American domestic models, lead to a country where white, native-born citizens were in the minority. By the late 1920s, a national agenda to reassert women’s role in the home sought to reverse the independent and indulgent mindset surrounding the decadent flapper image. Demands for instruction focusing on women’s natural vocation as wives and mothers gave direction to the

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<sup>112</sup> Sara Evans, *Born For Liberty* (New York, NY, Simon & Schulster Inc., 1997) 147-196.

## The Architecture of Connecticut College

movement, and many colleges were forced to adapt their curriculums to remain viable under the volley of condemnation.<sup>113</sup>

Even with the increase in colleges supporting education related to family life, many students of the 1920s were more engaged by the new social opportunities available to them than schoolwork. Demanding more freedom from authority, paired with a higher level of personal privacy, students at women's colleges petitioned enthusiastically for matters such as later curfews and looser restrictions on male guests. Bryn Mawr shocked sister schools in 1925 by lifting its ban on smoking.<sup>114</sup> In many schools, exclusive sorority clubs formed as outlets for students to flaunt their style and social refinement. The orientation of college life towards the attributes and skills of the individual, especially in reference to seeking male companions, signified a shift away from "gang spirit" and close-knit community that characterized prewar women's colleges. Equally important to college life in the 1920s was the simple fact that more women were pursuing higher education. The swell in enrollment changed the nature of the student body considerably. No longer was higher education seen as something only for the brave or strong-headed woman, but instead compulsory next step after high school for many middle and upper class young adults. That the daughters of the privileged were especially impelled to attend helped to fuel the social hierarchy that rapidly replaced the student clubs and associations with sororities and social cliques.<sup>115</sup>

The changing social structure of women's colleges prompted new architectural forms that, like the earliest planned housing quadrangles at Connecticut College, expressed as

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<sup>113</sup> Nancy F. Cott, *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States* (New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2000) 425-435.

<sup>114</sup> Cott 435.

<sup>115</sup> Horowitz, *Alma Mater* 279-294.

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much about the ideals and concerns of authority figures as of the changing needs of the students. Due to the period focus on the development of homemakers over intellectuals, the most prominent changes were introduced in the design of the collegiate home-away-from-home: student residences. At Connecticut College for Women, the construction of two student dwellings addressed the apprehension surrounding college women in a manner parallel to many contemporary women's schools.



*Figure 25. A rendering of Vinal Cottage, which was designed by Delbert K. Perry in the style of a charming English country house. Photograph, 1922.*

The first of the two structures, Vinal Cottage, was completed in 1922. Funded through donation, Vinal Cottage was designed as the domestic laboratory for the newly minted Home Economics department. As part of the cottage's function as "an experiment

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in cooperative living,” residents cooked, cleaned, and studied methods of household rationalization, all under the watchful eye of the resident instructor.<sup>116</sup> Set within the picturesque Caroline Black Gardens, Vinal Cottage was built across Mohegan Avenue and remote from the rest of campus. Its position on the border between the College campus and the neighborhood lining the Thames River helps to communicate a function differing from the earlier student residences and more associated with the nearby homes. The cottage’s street front location shows a highly visible commitment to the domestic arts on the part of the College. Vinal Cottage responded to fears that college women would lose their interest in home life by providing an architecturally comparable space to practice for their future calling. The construction of Vinal Cottage reflected a national interest in cooperative housing at women’s colleges, evident in similar facilities at Smith, Wellesley, and Scripps Colleges.<sup>117</sup> The popularity gave form to an ideological shift from the principles of municipal housekeeping in the previous decade, when President Sykes sought to train women for “all kinds of social service and civic activities,” to an individualistic approach where a woman devoted her full energy towards finding a mate and preparing herself for married life.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Noyes 76.

<sup>117</sup> Kathryn McHale and Francis Valiant Speck. *Housing College Students* (Washington, DC, American Association of University Women, 1934) 77-87.

<sup>118</sup> “A Canadian President for Connecticut College.”



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*Figure 26. As both a student residence and social center, Knowlton House formed the first arm of the future Campus Green. Photograph possibly by Mildred White, 1925.*

Knowlton House, completed in 1925, focused not on the technical aspects of domesticity like Vinal Cottage, but instead presented a new approach to the homelike spaces for socialization established in the reception rooms of Plant, Blackstone, and Branford.<sup>119</sup> The residence, which at the time it was built, doubled as the College's social center, was planned around a series of spaces for the gracious entertainment of gentlemen callers and other visitors. Knowlton's principal façade faced onto towards the city of New London, offering views of the neighborhoods surrounding the College. This exposed site, paired with a grandly scaled and colonnaded portico evoked the public buildings such as libraries or train stations to give an impression of openness inconsistent with the earlier quadrangle plans. On the interior, the sense of welcome is carried through in a ground floor entirely devoted to social spaces. The use of the Georgian revival forms in both the

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<sup>119</sup> Contrary to popular belief, Knowlton was not built as a hotel for men visiting campus.

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building's design and furnishing evoked wholesome values of colonial America and reinforced concepts of pedigree and tradition during a time of social upheaval. Knowlton featured separate rooms designated for specific types of interaction ranging from small and intimate "date rooms" to a mirror-lined ballroom that occupied half of the building's footprint. Upstairs however, a double loaded corridor of identical, small study-bedrooms gave an institutional atmosphere that contrasted with the well-appointed ground floor. In a possible expression of the period fears of Race Suicide, the diminutive proportions and lack of finish in these spaces may have meant to deter private interactions between students and funnel all social activity into the easily supervised public rooms below. The design of Knowlton, with its hitherto unseen focus on space for social functions, supported the carefully constructed appearance of the modern woman motivated by the pursuit of heterosexual courtship and marriage.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Horowitz, *Alma Mater* 307-318.

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*Figure 27. Knowlton House Salon occupied half of the building's ground floor, and served as the largest event space on the campus until the 1950s. Photograph, 1925.*

By 1928, Connecticut College had five hundred and sixty-nine enrolled students, an increase of over three hundred since 1917. Even with the addition of Knowlton House and Vinal Cottage, the growing student body far surpassed available housing. Starting in 1919, Connecticut College began to rent out entire boardinghouses to provide additional accommodations. Many of these boardinghouses were located in the Riverside neighborhood, adjacent to campus land between Mohegan Avenue and the Thames River. By the late 1920s, over twenty boardinghouses in the area served Connecticut College students. So great was the number of students living off-campus, that in 1928 Holmes Hall was constructed as an off-campus dining hall. Holmes Hall underlines the extent to which Connecticut College attempted to maintain control over this unintended extension

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of campus. College handbooks from the period go as far as to list which Riverside tea-rooms and cafes students were permitted to visit.<sup>121</sup> The Riverside boardinghouses, which remained in use until the 1940 completion of Smith dormitory, illustrate the frequent gulf between comprehensive planning and the reality of how the campus developed.

Although there is no record of a campus plan between the years 1914 and 1931, the acquisition of two large tracts of land south of New London Hall (as recommended in the 1913 Olmsted Brothers letter) allowed for a new arrangement of campus to evolve. The gently sloping series of fields, with Palmer Library at its peak, became the space around which both student residence halls and academic buildings would grow in the following decades. The placement of Knowlton House represented the first step in defining what is now known as the Campus Green. The site for Fanning Hall, the new administrative headquarters begun opposite Knowlton House in 1929, provided the third side of what is now known as Tempel Green, the first of three tiered playing fields that constitute the central common space to this day.

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<sup>121</sup> *Connecticut College "C" Book, 1925-1926*. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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*Figure 28. The College as it appeared in 1930, with the first tier of the Campus Green already clearly defined. Photograph, 1930.*

The new pattern of physical development at Connecticut College during the 1920s was not without precedent. The notion of a lawn capped by a library and lined by residences and academic facilities adapts the much earlier plan for the University of Virginia drawn up by Thomas Jefferson. The inspiration for Jefferson's design, an "academical village" where education infused all aspects of student life, matched well to Connecticut College's ideals of creating women of "character" who would take their learning beyond the College grounds. Moreover, the increasing popularity of neoclassical design in early twentieth century collegiate planning, paired with a highly publicized Stanford White designed reconstruction of the University's Rotunda following a devastating fire in 1895, had revived interest in Jefferson's plans on a national level and made the plans a widely circulated resource. Although the arrangement of structures lining the Green at Connecticut College served many purposes, such as centrally located

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playing fields and long vistas towards Long Island Sound, the indication that its planning referenced the physical and ideological structure of Jefferson's plan seem highly likely.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Turner 87.

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### **Blaustein Humanities Center (formerly Palmer Library)**

*Charles A. Platt, 1923*

**Additions** *Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, 1941*

**Renovations** *Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, 1961, Graham Gund, 1985*



*Figure 29. Photograph, 1923.*

Blaustein Humanities Center occupies a commanding position atop the Connecticut College Green, giving spectacular views of New London and the Long Island Sound. Although today it houses state-of-the-art classrooms for the study of languages, religion, and philosophy, Blaustein served for many years as Connecticut College's Palmer Library. Before the 1923 completion of Palmer Library, the College's collection of books was housed in a small room on the third floor of New London Hall, a space far too small for the quickly growing school. Fortunately, in 1922 New London native and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, George S. Palmer, donated funds for a



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detached library structure that would exceed the requirements of the College in order to manage future growth of the stacks.<sup>123</sup> Although Palmer originally debated between donating towards a chapel or a library, students expressed their preference during one of his visits to campus by squeezing into the single-floor library in New London Hall to demonstrate its inadequacies. The plan worked, and Palmer quickly made his decision.<sup>124</sup>

Charles A. Platt, the architect of Palmer Library who also designed Fanning Hall and the Lyman Allyn Art Museum, was the first in a line of prominent architects to design buildings for the Connecticut College campus.<sup>125</sup> Although primarily associated with the country homes and landscaped gardens for affluent clients including the Carnegies and the Astors, Platt also built a prolific number of institutional structures. At the time he was working on Palmer Library, Platt had just completed the Freer Gallery in Washington D.C., and was employed in the redesign of the Phillips Andover Academy, the University of Illinois at Urbana, and an addition to the Corcoran Gallery.<sup>126</sup> While much of Platt's inspiration drew from his travels in Italy, which led to him to publish *Italian Gardens* in 1894, the architect also made frequent use the Georgian architectural

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<sup>123</sup> Barbara Morse, Palmer Library

<sup>124</sup> Minor Myers, Jr., "George S. Palmer: The Collector as Benefactor," *Connecticut College Bulletin*, Fall 1978, Box 12, Folder: Buildings: Palmer Library. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College. Barbara Morse, Palmer Library.

<sup>125</sup> Noyes 66.

<sup>126</sup> "Charles Adams Platt," *Department of Drawings and Archives, Columbia University Museums*, accessed 7 Jan. 2010 <

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/avery/da/platt.html> >

"Frank Gehry, Architect: Designs for Museums," *Corcoran Gallery*, accessed 7 Jan. 2010 <[http://www.corcoran.org/exhibitions/press\\_item\\_detail.asp?Item\\_ID=15](http://www.corcoran.org/exhibitions/press_item_detail.asp?Item_ID=15)>

Susan J., Montgomery, *Phillips Academy: Andover an architectural tour* (New York: Princeton Architectural, 2000)



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motifs that shaped Palmer Library.<sup>127</sup> Elements of the three story, limestone and granite structure - such as the two, symmetrical gables, dormer windows, and a raised front entrance with applied classical ornament - all speak to Georgian tradition. The aesthetic may also have reflected the fact that the donor was a collector of colonial American artifacts, many of which would grace the interior of the structure. The symmetrical gables, although designed by Platt in 1923 and executed to his specifications, were not added to the structure until the early 1940s. Therefore, the original structure would have appeared with a relatively flat façade of only six window bays, two qualities that further confirmed the Georgian aesthetic.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> “Charles Adams Platt.”

<sup>128</sup> “New Library Wings of Connecticut College Library,” *Library Journal*, Box 12, Folder: Buildings: Palmer Library. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.



*Figure 30. The main reading room in Palmer Library occupied an entire floor of the structure. Photograph, 1925.*

Departing from the Georgian standard, however, was the original configuration of the library's interior. While the arrangement of windows on the building's facades suggest an equally symmetrical division of space within, in fact the two upper floors featured sprawling open plan interiors, interrupted only by supporting columns. The ground floor featured a more regular division of space, and held a seminar room, faculty lounge, and mechanical closets.<sup>129</sup> As period photographs show, both the communal nature of the reading areas as well as the hard, straight-backed chairs would have afforded little in the way of comfort or solitude. In an era before private carrels were the

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<sup>129</sup> 1952. Betty Fussel. "Space, Books, and Architecture," *Connecticut College Alumnae News*, 6 March.

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norm in collegiate libraries, the design of Palmer Library intended to maximize usable space through the elimination of interior partitions.

With the completion of Palmer Library, Connecticut College found itself facing a new direction, both physically and conceptually. Sited perpendicular to Plant, Blackstone, Branford, and New London Hall, with projecting wings and an outwardly oriented entry façade, Palmer Library refocused the campus towards the south. The shift represented the first step in the development of a Campus Green, capped with a library and defined laterally by academic and residential structures. Palmer Library broke the inwardly focused pattern of planning that inspired the first campus buildings, instead acknowledging the suburban development surrounding the campus and the close proximity of downtown New London (a connection that was strengthened by a city residence lending policy begun as early as 1935).

Palmer Library's Georgian exterior, a branch of the colonial revival popular during the period, also spoke an architectural language different from its Collegiate Gothic neighbors. Instead of triggering mental associations to far-off Oxford or Cambridge, Palmer Library recalled the way of life and moral principles of early Americans. Palmer Library aided in establishing the young College as belonging to its surroundings through an architecture that echoed regional construction both historic and revived.



*Figure 31. The original drawings for Palmer Library show the building with two lateral wings, which were completed in the 1940s by College architects Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon. Rendering by Charles Platt, 1920.*

Palmer Library's history of use describes well the speed with which an institution can outgrow its physical resources. After only a decade, the collections in Palmer Library far exceeded the available stacks. With a second gift from George S. Palmer, the two wings originally planned by Platt as well as a third stack wing projecting from the north end of the central structure and designed by Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, were constructed in 1941.<sup>130</sup> These wings, of which only the lateral two were finished (the northern section served solely as storage space), allowed for the collection to continue growing but did little to provide additional study space.<sup>131</sup> Even by the time that the interior of north wing was completed in 1961, discussion was already underway on how Palmer Library could be further expanded. After several proposals, the decision was

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<sup>130</sup> "New Library Wings of Connecticut College Library."

<sup>131</sup> News from Connecticut College, 2 Jan. 1962. Box 12, Folder: Buildings: Palmer Library. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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made to construct a new facility, Charles E. Shain Library, which opened in 1974.<sup>132</sup> The former library sat largely vacant for ten years before a renovation in 1985 produced Blaustein Humanities Center, a structure that houses both academic functions and attractive event space.<sup>133</sup> The project entailed a complete reconfiguration of the interior space, dividing the once open-plan reading areas and stacks into faculty offices on the upper floor, sizeable classrooms on the second story, and a dining facility, lounge, and language lab (each named for former College Professors) on the ground floor. By the late 2000s, the classrooms within Blaustein Humanities Center, with their large windows and spacious layout, are some of the most highly sought after spaces on the Connecticut College campus.

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<sup>132</sup> An Addition to the Connecticut College Library, prepared for the United States Steel Foundation, March 1966. Box 12, Folder: Shain Library – Planning Correspondence 1960-69. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>133</sup> Address to The Newcomen Society, Dr. Oakes Ames. 1 Aug. 1986. President's Files Box 5, Folder Oakes Ames General Information. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

**Vinal Cottage**

*Delbert K. Perry, 1922*



*Figure 32. Photograph, mid 1920s.*

The first College structure visible to those approaching the main entrance on Mohegan Avenue, the modest, half-timbered Vinal Cottage introduced a new function to the Connecticut College campus. Constructed in 1922, Vinal Cottage provided a “living laboratory” for Home Economics students, who could reduce the rate of their room and board by performing much of their own cooking and housework under the guidance of a resident Home Economics professor.<sup>134</sup> Philanthropist Mrs. M. Aurelia H. Vinal, who had

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<sup>134</sup> Morse, Vinal Cottage.

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worked closely with the Board of Trustees to identify means through which needy students would be able to attend the rapidly expanding College, financed the building.<sup>135</sup>

Architect Delbert K. Perry of New Britain designed Vinal Cottage, which was completed for just over \$13,000. An architect well known throughout the state, Perry had worked on projects ranging from municipal structures to churches and high schools. The decision to use his services may also have been influenced by his then-recent work on several additions to the University of Connecticut.<sup>136</sup> Perry drew heavily on “the typical English suburban home” as a pattern for Vinal Cottage, evident in the stucco and shingled exterior and multiple porches. Like the earlier Plant, Blackstone, and Branford Houses, Vinal Cottage appeared long and narrow, with an off-centered entryway marked by a small vestibule. Also like the earlier three residences, banks of casement windows denote the common spaces of the ground floor, while smaller, irregularly placed windows on the upper two floors mark student rooms.

A spacious foyer just beyond the front door anchored the interior arrangement of Vinal Cottage. To the left of the foyer, a reception room provided a place for students to entertain guests. The reception room connected to a bedroom suite for the faculty housefellow, allowing for the visual supervision of students familiar from the designs of Branford, Plant, and Blackstone. To the right of the foyer, a living room with a large,

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<sup>135</sup> Mrs. M. Aurelia H. Vinal to Connecticut College for Women, correspondence. Campus and Buildings Box 14, Folder: Buildings: Vinal Cottage. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>135</sup> Morse, Vinal Cottage Trustees minutes. Campus and Buildings Box 14, Folder: Buildings: Vinal Cottage. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>136</sup> “Full Text of ‘The Annual Report of the Connecticut Historical Society,’” *Internet Archive*, accessed 10 Jan. 2010 <

[http://www.archive.org/stream/annualreportofco17conn/annualreportofco17conn\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/annualreportofco17conn/annualreportofco17conn_djvu.txt)

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brick and granite fireplace gave way to a dining room overlooking the Thames River. Both the living and dining room opened onto the living porch, which ran the length of the southern façade. Throughout the ground floor, honey colored plaster and rough-hewn, exposed posts and beams supporting the floor above gave the space a sense of solidity and aged coziness. The prominence of the hearth, an established familial symbol evident in both the commanding fireplace and the centrality of the chimney on the front façade, emphasized the home-like intentions of the structure. The upper two floors of Vinal Cottage housed fourteen students in seven double rooms; and while featuring a lower degree of finish than the ground floor, they included ample closet space as well as modern lavatories.<sup>137</sup>

Vinal Cottage, while mirroring both traditional and contemporary ideals in residential design, provided a setting in which women could learn the modern skills they would need in their future roles. A step-saving kitchen, championed by efficiency experts and architects alike, represented the application of technology to update and streamline women's work in the home. The inclusion of a step-saving kitchen indicates the rise of the servantless middle-class house, where women were suddenly expected to both perform motherly duties while also cooking and cleaning. The kitchen was paired with a laundry on the basement level, which served as the secondary practice space for the residents.

While the previous decade's designs of Plant, Blackstone, and Branford Houses may have indicated the social expectations of the female college student, both the function and design of Vinal Cottage supported a notion that women's college academics,

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<sup>137</sup> 1922. "New Dormitory for Connecticut College is Attractive and Unique in Design in Many Ways." *The New London Day*.



## The Architecture of Connecticut College

too, ought to aspire to a domestic ideal. While the 1920s would prove a landmark decade in the empowerment of women, in 1922 many of the students of Connecticut College would still have looked upon marriage and family life as their most likely future, a point illustrated in the function of Vinal Cottage. Moreover, the construction of Vinal Cottage corresponded to larger cultural concerns that higher education and the liberated social standards were causing women to lose interest in the domestic sphere and that a reinstatement of feminine ideals should take center stage in collegiate settings.

Vinal Cottage's site, detached from the main section of campus, underlined its home-like role by associating it more closely to the Riverside neighborhood than the hilltop campus. Due to the fact that Connecticut College did not yet own the land south of New London Hall, the construction of Vinal Cottage across Mohegan Avenue may also represent a short-lived initiative to develop the college in a lateral, east to west composition. Whatever the original incentive, the relative isolation of Vinal Cottage caused the building to alter its function multiple times as its facilities moved onto the expanding main campus. After the dissolution of the Home Economics Department in the 1950s, the structure served as a freshman dormitory for French Majors. With the 1962 completion of North Complex, Vinal Cottage returned to its original use as a cooperative residence.<sup>138</sup> In 1974, the structure was converted once again, this time to serve as Unity House, the multicultural center serving the influx of minority students recruited in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>139</sup> After Unity House was relocated to its current location in the

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<sup>138</sup> Morse, Vinal Cottage.

<sup>139</sup> Notes of Gertrude Noyes. Campus and Buildings Box 14, Folder: Buildings: Vinal Cottage. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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1980s, Vinal Cottage assumed its role as the offices for Career Enhancing Life Skills (CELS).

**Knowlton House (Originally Colonial House)**

*Loud and Lyons, 1925*

**Renovations** *Shreve, Harmon, & Lamb 1959, Noyes Vogt Architects 2008*



*Figure 33. Photograph, 1925.*

The first in what would soon be a row of residential halls aligned along the west side of The Green, Colonial House was begun in June of 1924.<sup>140</sup> Dedicated on October 24, 1925, the much-needed new building was made possible with a \$200,000 gift from Charles Clark Knowlton, a resident of Windham County.<sup>141</sup> Knowlton was the retired president of H.K.H Silk Company, which had mills throughout the state of Connecticut, including one in New London.<sup>142</sup> A resident of Windham County, Knowlton became

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<sup>140</sup> Keats Speed for *The Sun*, Correspondence, 12 June 1924.

<sup>141</sup> Dedication of Colonial House and Meeting Citizens' Committee Launching Endowment Report. Program, 24 Oct. 1925. Campus and Buildings, Box 7, Folder: Buildings: Knowlton House (Colonial House.) New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>142</sup> James W. Scannell, "H.K.H Silk Company Records," *University of Connecticut*, 2005, accessed 25 Feb. 2008 <

[http://www.lib.uconn.edu/online/research/specilib/ASC/findaids/HKH\\_Silk/MSS19990066.html](http://www.lib.uconn.edu/online/research/specilib/ASC/findaids/HKH_Silk/MSS19990066.html) >

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interested in Connecticut College through the Windham House Association, which, through a door-to-door canvas of every citizen in the county sought to raise the funds to construct a residence hall. While Knowlton originally offered to fund a wing of the proposed structure, he grew impatient with the progress of the Association, and decided instead to fund a separate residence hall on his own.

Knowlton both chose the architect, Herbert R. Loud of the New York firm Loud & Lyons, and also demanded involvement in all aspects of planning.<sup>143</sup> From the start, he intended for the building to house some dorm rooms, but to serve primarily as the social center of the campus.<sup>144</sup> This would relieve some of the pressure on the cramped Hillyer Hall, which was used not only for physical education, but also academic and social purposes. On the exterior of the Knowlton House, this community function is evident in the wooden columns and pediment that create an easily identifiable and formal entrance space. The building's public role is also defined by the raised front entrance and the inclusion of a bronze coat of arms, featuring two unicorns holding open textbooks over the Connecticut College seal. Other aspects of the Colonial House's exterior however, such as the granite facing and semi-circular attic dormers echo elements of the nearby and newly finished Palmer Library.<sup>145</sup>

Perhaps it was Knowlton's hand in the design of the structure that gave its interior a character unlike any of the other buildings on campus. The front hall typified the

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<sup>143</sup> The gift of Knowlton House to Connecticut College. Campus and Buildings, Box 7, Folder: Buildings: Knowlton House (Colonial House.) Connecticut College Archives.

<sup>144</sup> Memorandum to President Park. 19 Mar. 1959. Campus and Buildings, Box 7, Folder: Buildings: Knowlton House (Colonial House.) New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>145</sup> Knowlton House, Description. Campus and Buildings, Box 7, Folder: Buildings: Knowlton House (Colonial House.) New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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conservative styling evoked in the name Colonial House. A wide wooden staircase led to a landing and then branched gracefully to either side, leading up to the twenty-four student rooms on the second floor.<sup>146</sup> South of the entrance hall was the Knowlton Salon, which occupied one entire half of the first floor. Sparsely furnished and lined on two sides with alternating mirrors and windows, Knowlton Salon was designed as a venue for dances, concerts, lectures, faculty events, and senior exams. To the north of the entrance hall, a corridor gave access to a two-room parlor and the first in-house dining hall for the exclusive use of the students.<sup>147</sup> Even the furnishings followed the Colonial Revival style, with a grandfather clock in the front hall, Windsor chairs in the dining room, and braided rugs gracing the parlors.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> 1924. "Colonial House to Be New Dormitory and Social Center at the Connecticut College." *The Evening Day*, 17 May.

<sup>147</sup> Knowlton House, Description.

<sup>148</sup> Lyda Lyman Chatfield to her mother, correspondence 22 Sept. 1925. Campus and Buildings, Box 7, Folder: Knowlton House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.



*Figure 34. The front hall of Knowlton House, with the door to the housefellow's suite visible to the right. Photograph, 1925.*

Knowlton House was designed to bridge the gap between the new social freedoms allowed of women following World War I and the preservation of the home as the women's sphere. In contrast to Branford, Plant, Blackstone, Knowlton was, in the words of a contemporary report, "especially adapted for entertaining," implicitly the entertaining of male guests.<sup>149</sup> The series of social rooms on the ground floor, which ranged from the formal and group-oriented salon to the small and intimate parlors,

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<sup>149</sup> "Colonial House to be New Dormitory and Social Center at the Connecticut College."

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supported interaction between students and guests in a way that the earlier residences had not. Nonetheless, the layout and decoration of Knowlton House reinforced a homelike atmosphere encapsulated in a student's comment to her mother that the interior "looks like a sheet from *House Beautiful*."<sup>150</sup> If the nearly contemporary Vinal Cottage sought to teach students the skills demanded of a married woman, than Knowlton sought to encourage a social atmosphere that would lead to marriage.

While much of Colonial House has remained true to its original plan, increased enrollment mandated the 1958 conversion of Knowlton Salon into eleven student rooms, a bathroom, and a common room (now also used as a student room.) Since Charles C. Knowlton had asked that the building be arranged "in such a manner that it can be redesigned at a minimum of cost," this renovation was relatively uncomplicated.<sup>151</sup> A template for room size and built-in wardrobes, established in the concurrent construction of Larrabee House, further streamlined the restructuring. The College was able to sacrifice the salon due to the recent construction of Crozier Williams Center, which provided multiple community spaces.<sup>152</sup> Other minor renovations include the 1934 addition of a back entrance and foyer, coinciding with the construction of a campus perimeter road that passed directly behind Knowlton.<sup>153</sup> It is interesting to note that the

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<sup>150</sup> Lyda Lyman Chatfield to her mother, correspondence.

<sup>151</sup> Memorandum to President Park. 19 Mar. 1959. Campus and Buildings, Box 7, Folder: Buildings: Knowlton House (Colonial House.) New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>152</sup> Noyes 162.

<sup>153</sup> Shreve, Lamb, & Harmon, correspondence. 8 June 1934. Campus and Buildings, Box 7, Folder: Buildings: Knowlton House (Colonial House.) New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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1938 hurricane, which devastated the New London community, tore most of the metal roofing off of Knowlton (repairs on the building, however, took only a month).<sup>154</sup>

Starting in 1972, the Connecticut College's student handbook began listing Knowlton dormitory as the international house, which it remains into the late 2000s.<sup>155</sup> The dining hall serves breakfast and lunch (making it the oldest functioning dining hall on campus) and is known as the language dining hall, with a different language spoken at each table. The furnishing in the dining room remains much the same as when the dorm was built and the great fireplace of Knowlton Salon now adorns the first floor freshman suite. The first dorm on campus where students of all class years would live together with their own dining hall, Knowlton set a precedent for future dorm design at Connecticut College.

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<sup>154</sup> Katherine Blunt, correspondence. 3 Oct. 1938. Campus and Buildings, Box 7, Folder: Buildings: Knowlton House (Colonial House.) New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>155</sup> 72-73 C Book, Office of Student Life. C Book 1969-1983, Box 6. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.



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### **Holmes Hall**

*Graham Creighton, 1928*

**Renovations** *Graham Creighton 1936, 1940; Unknown 1975;  
Lindsay Liebig Roche 1996*



*Figure 35. Photograph, 1928.*

At the corner of Nameaug Avenue and Deshon Street, Holmes Hall sits low to the ground, blending well into its residential surroundings. Now the home of the Children's Center, Holmes Hall played a central role in the early history of Connecticut College. Until the completion of Smith House and East House (now Burdick) in 1940, over half of the women attending Connecticut College lived in boardinghouses surrounding the campus. The Riverside neighborhood, which extended from Mohegan Avenue to the Thames River, included over twenty houses that rented rooms to students.<sup>156</sup> While some were full service, offering meals and laundry facilities, others offered only beds. In order

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<sup>156</sup>Notes on Holmes Hall by Getrude Noyes. Campus and Buildings Box 5 Folder: Buildings: Off-Campus Houses/Mohegan Avenue Houses. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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to provide three meals a day to the large number of off-campus residents, Holmes Hall refectory was built in 1928.<sup>157</sup> The building was named in memory of Mary Elizabeth Holmes (1870-1927), the first professor of chemistry at Connecticut College and supervisor of all off-campus housing in the early years of the College.<sup>158</sup>

Designed by Graham Creighton, an architect who would continue to work with the College into the 1930s, Holmes Hall was built into the side of a hill to allow for at-grade entry on two floors.<sup>159</sup> Holmes Hall characterizes the early twentieth century Colonial Revival style also used in Knowlton House. Modest in decoration, with white clapboard siding, double hung windows, and massive, stone chimneys on both ends of the building, Holmes Hall produced an image of visual order, sound construction, and moral convention particularly prized during times of social or economic turbulence.<sup>160</sup> The use of exterior elements both traditional and commonly found in domestic design, such as the decorative black shutters and window boxes, help to fulfill a goal evident in many of the early campus buildings, namely, to preserve a homelike atmosphere for the female students.

The main entrance of Holmes Hall, which faces onto Nameaug Avenue, once lead into a vestibule and corridor separating the facility's two dining halls.<sup>161</sup> Presumably, this space also contained the stairwell that lead down to the basement kitchen and up to a

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<sup>157</sup> Morse, Holmes Hall.

<sup>158</sup> [1927] Prof. Mary Holmes Dies At Connecticut College. [*The New London Day*] Morse, Holmes Hall

<sup>159</sup> Agreement between contractor and owner between Connecticut College for Women and Lewis E. Douglas. 12 Apr. 1935. Folder: Buildings: Off Campus Housing/Mohegan Avenue Houses (Includes North Cottage). New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>160</sup> Foley 214.

<sup>161</sup> 1931. *Connecticut College Alumnae News*, Vol. 8, No. 4.

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small, second-floor apartment.<sup>162</sup> By dividing the dining space into two distinct rooms, each featuring a large, river stone fireplace, the domestic tone of the building's exterior was carried through to the interior.<sup>163</sup> Both spaces, in their small size and layout, mirrored the qualities of a comfortable home, not an institutional establishment.

Holmes Hall operated exclusively as an off-campus dining hall until 1936, the year that Jane Addams House was completed on south campus. This new dorm, with its large number of student rooms and its dining facility, reduced the need for off-campus services such as Holmes Hall. Instead of selling the recently constructed building, the administration decided to refurbish the interior of Holmes Hall into a new home for the music department. Another renovation in 1940 completed the relocation of the department with the overhaul of the south dining room and the basement space into classrooms and practice spaces.<sup>164</sup> With the 1969 construction of Cummings Art Center, Holmes Hall took on yet another function as the home of the Connecticut College Children's Program.<sup>165</sup> Sponsored by the Psychology and Human Development departments, the Children's Program centered on teaching children with special needs. The occupation of Holmes Hall by the Children's Program reflects the massive growth of the Human Development major in the 1960s and 1970s, a point emphasized by the doubling in size of the College's nursery school only four years later in 1973.<sup>166</sup> Holmes Hall continues to house the Connecticut College Children's Program, which has

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<sup>162</sup> Memorandum to Katherine Blunt. 24 June 1936. Box 7, Folder: Buildings: Holmes Hall. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>163</sup> *Connecticut College Alumnae News*.

<sup>164</sup> Memorandum to Katherine Blunt.

<sup>165</sup> Notes on Holmes Hall by Gertrude Noyes.

<sup>166</sup> 1973. Children's School to be Enlarged to Accommodate Dramatic Growth in Child Development Department. *Connecticut College News*.

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broadened its focus to include children of “diverse backgrounds and abilities and their families.” Although the interior of the building was extensively renovated in 1996, the exterior of Holmes Hall remains essentially unchanged from its days as an off-campus dining hall, a reminder of early student life at the College.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Plan of Children’s School, Lindsay Liebig Roche, New London. 1996. Connecticut College Physical Plant.

**Fanning Hall**

*Charles A. Platt, 1930*



*Figure 36. Photograph, Around 1930.*

Beside its imposing, four-story east façade facing Mohegan Avenue, Fanning Hall also addresses the Campus Green, where a central, tree-lined walk and towering chimneystacks hint at the building's vital function. Fanning Hall was completed in 1930 as the academic and administrative heart of campus, containing a large lecture hall, thirteen classrooms, numerous faculty offices, and the office of the President. Fanning Hall relieved the congestion of New London Hall, the only other purpose-built classroom building on campus, while also helping to consolidate departments that had previously been spread throughout the campus. The structure was a by-product of the Windham County fundraising campaign, which brought Connecticut College to the attention of corset manufacturer David F. Fanning. Fanning's bequest to the College totaled \$200,000

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at the time of his death in 1926, and provided all the funds necessary to construct the building.<sup>168</sup>

Eminent architect Charles A. Platt, who had completed Palmer Library (now Blaustein Humanities Center) only five years before, submitted the first renderings of Fanning Hall in 1928.<sup>169</sup> In form, the building incorporated many of the neo Georgian architectural elements present in Palmer Library, including the raised main entrance, and symmetrical, gabled-roofed wings. Like many contemporary Georgian revival structures designed by Platt and others, Fanning Hall presents a broad and relatively flat front façade, especially when compared to the irregular elevations of the earlier Collegiate Gothic structures on the campus. The tall chimneys, dormer windows, and vertical massing, all trademarks of the neo Georgian style as well, convey a sense of both authority and autonomy, appropriate for a structure containing the administrative offices. The building's seriousness of purpose is summarized in its iconography; the thistles and cacti carved above the main entrance may refer to the donor's Scottish heritage, but are commonly believed to represent "the thorny path that leads to education."<sup>170</sup>

Fanning Hall was carefully sited in order that the north façade would align to the south face of Blackstone House to maintain a spatial association to the earlier structures.<sup>171</sup> Like the older residential halls, Platt also designed Fanning Hall with an entrance on each façade, and wide halls that ran the length of the building. In conjunction

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<sup>168</sup> 1928. "Administration Hall for Conn. College." *The Hartford Daily Times*, 14 Oct.

<sup>169</sup> Rendering of Fanning Hall by Charles A. Platt. Campus and Buildings Box 5, Folder: Buildings: Fanning. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>170</sup> Oral Recollections of Miss Elizabeth C. Wright to Anne Taylor, 1957 – 1958. Campus and Buildings Box 5, Folder: Buildings: Fanning. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>171</sup> 1928. \$275,000 Building for Conn. College. *Special to The Hartford Times*.

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with three separate stairwells, this feature assured the efficient passage of large numbers of students and faculty through the building. In almost all other ways, however, Fanning Hall represents a break with the architectural conventions established the decade before. The third structure on campus to adopt a Colonial Revival motif, Fanning Hall – and especially its exterior forms - speaks to the moral values and work ethic of early America far more than the academic traditions of Europe. Although aligned with Blackstone House, Fanning Hall's position opposite Knowlton House and perpendicular to Palmer Library defines the first section of an open-plan lawn, reminiscent of Thomas Jefferson's plan for the University of Virginia.

The construction of Fanning Hall marked a turning point in Connecticut College's development as an academic institution rivaling more established women's colleges and all-men's schools alike. By alleviating the cramped conditions of New London Hall, the Science departments were able to expand their facilities and course offerings. The increase in office space within the new structure also allowed for hiring of additional faculty. Perhaps most importantly however, Fanning Hall was constructed to house the Humanities and Social Sciences, fields of study not even represented in the original campus master plan a decade before.<sup>172</sup> Although Connecticut College's embrace of academic areas considered specific to the needs and expectations of women would continue into 1960s, Fanning Hall was the first structure to break with the original proposal of educating women in science, art, and their vocational (read: domestic) applications.

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<sup>172</sup> Morse, Fanning Hall  
Campus Plan, Ewings and Chappell Architects.

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The completion of Fanning Hall in 1930 coincided with the inauguration of Katherine Blunt, a president who would continue to expand the academic and physical breadth of the College. Although over thirteen new buildings had been built by the eve of World War II, Blunt retained her offices on the second floor of Fanning Hall. Today, those same offices house the College President, with much of the rest of the structure also used as it was designed to function. Fanning Hall stands as a testament to the enduring importance placed on the study of humanities at Connecticut College, as well as the community spirit within a space shared between students, faculty, and staff.



**“Practical Approaches to the Problems of Citizenship”<sup>173</sup>**

**The College Finds Form**

**1929-1942**

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

*Figure 37. From atop Frederick Bill Hall, built in 1939, these students looked out over a rapidly growing campus, with the newly constructed Harkness Chapel, Windham House, and expanded Palmer Library visible behind them. Photograph, 1945.*

*Through considerable expansion of the campus during the 1930s and early 1940s, Connecticut College developed as a center for innovative academics in a beautiful and well-equipped environment. While the College’s physical development was not hampered by the financial woes of the Great Depression, the changing cultural perception of women’s capability associated with the period impacted just how the College chose to grow. The self-reliance that many women had achieved to survive the difficult period, as well as the rise of often female-led recovery programs in the 1930s, strengthened the national recognition of*

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<sup>173</sup> Nineteenth Annual Catalogue of Connecticut College. New London, CT, 30 Mar. 1933, p. 79 (insert). New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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*women's higher education as valuable in producing leaders and professionals. While the previous decade's attention to spaces for the development of social poise in the student body continued, the gradual introduction of modern architectural forms hinted at changing cultural values.*

The year 1929 at Connecticut College marked not only the groundbreaking for Fanning Hall, but also the inauguration of the school's first female president, Katherine Blunt. Educated at Vassar, Blunt saw a need to continue developing the intellectual reputation of the College to provide a scholastic experience on a par with men's schools. However, Blunt upheld many areas of study still considered particular to women's education, and as the former chairwoman of the American Home Economics Association, arrived at the College with the aim to develop "research in the application of natural and social sciences to the household." In order to achieve her multifaceted goals for the College, Blunt would use the new Fanning Hall offices as her headquarters to construct thirteen more buildings as well as establish plans for numerous projects that were not completed until after her retirement. Like her academic policy, Blunt's buildings differed in both form and function from their campus predecessors to suit the changing demands of the era.<sup>174</sup>

Blunt began her work at Connecticut College on the eve of the Great Depression, an era that had an immense impact on women's role in society. The frivolous behavior of the 1920s became too expensive for many, and the decade was widely criticized for its no-longer-applicable carefree gaiety. The onset of the financial decline strengthened the cry for women to return to the domestic sphere, where they could aid their struggling families. The sudden need for a woman to work both laboriously and cost-consciously to

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<sup>174</sup> Katherine Blunt – Biographical Material, 4. Presidents Box 2, Folder: Blunt, General Information. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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make ends meet for her husband and children reinforced the popularity of home economics and scientific management as a necessary area of study. Nonetheless, many women, some abandoned by their jobless husbands, were still pressed to join the workforce. Those who were successful in finding employment were often blamed for taking men's jobs, even though gendering of the labor market upheld separate types of occupation for each. Both in household affairs and in searching for jobs, women were encouraged to become self-reliant. It was, after all, essential as a means to make ends meet.

With the 1932 elections, American women gained a champion in first lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Unlike many contemporaries, Roosevelt encouraged women to join the workforce. She hosted radio programs through which she addressed homemakers, stressing attention to one's own family and giving money-saving tips. The first lady, who had worked in settlement houses in the early twentieth century, revived the notion of municipal housekeeping and individual volunteer work as a means by which the nation could regain its footing. In the words of historian Sarah Evans, Roosevelt "sought to redefine government as a maternal commonwealth providing protections for the weak and assistance to those in need." The 1934 Works Progress Administration realized many of her goals, employing thousands of women both in its planning, but also in its policies. The self-reliance that women had drawn on to pull through the darkest period of the Depression did not disappear, but instead set a benchmark of independence that would strengthen in the decades to come.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Evans 210.

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Even during the Great Depression, colleges and universities nationwide saw a considerable increase in female enrollment. To a degree, this is because the middle and upper-class women most compelled to pursue higher education were not those standing in the breadlines. Although these women may have been aware of hardship around them and cut back their own spending in minor ways, their families were still able to afford college tuitions. After the introduction of the National Youth Administration (NYA), a New Deal Agency that funneled students away from the overcrowded job market and into the academic sphere, women of more varied backgrounds were able to attend college. By 1937, almost fifty percent of the scholarships awarded by the NYA went to female students. Many of these women entered college to study for careers such as retail management, secretarial assistance, and other full time positions that remained firmly feminine in nature. Strong interests in home economics continued throughout the decade, and was often paired with newer academic programs in child development and psychology. Roosevelt's encouragements for women to give their assistance to society found voice in widespread additions of civics, social work, and government to curriculums.<sup>176</sup>

At co-educational and all-female schools, the increased enrollment of women was marked by revisions to campus planning standards. Co-educational schools with predominantly male enrollments found it necessary to develop areas of campus, separate grounds, or even entirely new colleges to house their female students. These spaces defined themselves architecturally by adopting the domestic styles, such as Tudor and Georgian, popularized at women's Colleges the decade before. Marietta College and

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<sup>176</sup> Cott 201.

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Colby College both erected women's unions alongside their newly built all-female residence halls, stating that "this arrangement will allow each division to be undisturbed in its living and playing activities." The construction of separate residences and student unions underlined the still very present gulf between the sexes, within the Collegiate as well as the professional world. The different spaces also illustrate a widespread interest in making sure that students received a housing most appropriate for their gendered requirements. This concern compelled many schools to construct new dormitories in order to house all students on the campus, instead of in the dispersed and unregulated boardinghouses surrounding the college grounds.<sup>177</sup>

At Connecticut College, too, Katherine Blunt focused much of her building energy during the 1930s on accommodating all students in attractive and comfortable residences. Before embarking upon her construction campaign, however, Blunt contracted two plans for campus development. The plans, both of which were outlined in the first four years of her presidency, proposed devoting the entire western portion of campus to residential development. The Cutler Plan, submitted in 1931, illustrates a fully articulated and open-ended quadrangle surrounding the tree-lined Campus Green. Four, large residence halls, connected into pairs by L-shaped colonnades, appear directly to the south of Knowlton House. To the west, a residence matching the footprint of Knowlton is arranged next to two more attached halls on the current site of Harkness Chapel. The shape and placement of the planned halls, each carefully aligned to one another on a north/south axis, create a series of small, semi-enclosed outdoor spaces adjacent to the Campus Green. Opposite the halls lie a row of academic structures aligned with the west

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<sup>177</sup> Jens Frederick Larson, Archie MacInnes Palmer. *Architectural Planning of the American College* (New York, NY, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.) 64.

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façade of New London Hall, labeled “New Science,” “Home Economics,” “New Auditorium,” and “Classrooms.” The plan includes a new gymnasium on a site across Mohegan Avenue and near Vinal Cottage, where a development of faculty dwellings is also illustrated.



*Figure 38. The Cutler Plan of 1931, with Blaustein Humanities Center pictured at the top of the tree-lined Campus Green. Rendering by James Cutler.*

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Two years later, a plan put forth by the New York firm of Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon featured campus development based on structures grouped by function. Most obvious was the addition of a large chapel capping the south end of the Campus Green and facing Palmer Library to complete the architectural delineation of the central playing fields. A “Dormitory Group” proposed along the west side of the Green consisted of four “C” shaped structures, two on either side of Knowlton. Imposing in scale, each residence focused on a central courtyard with its entryway set at an angle to the Green. A smaller and fully quadrangular “Academic Group,” is defined by two structures added opposite Fanning Hall and another facing the broad side of New London Hall. The plan also illustrated a large and prominently placed faculty apartment complex standing at the edge of a picturesque development of faculty houses, just southeast of the proposed chapel.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon Plan. 1931. Campus and Buildings Box 9: Folder: Master Plans. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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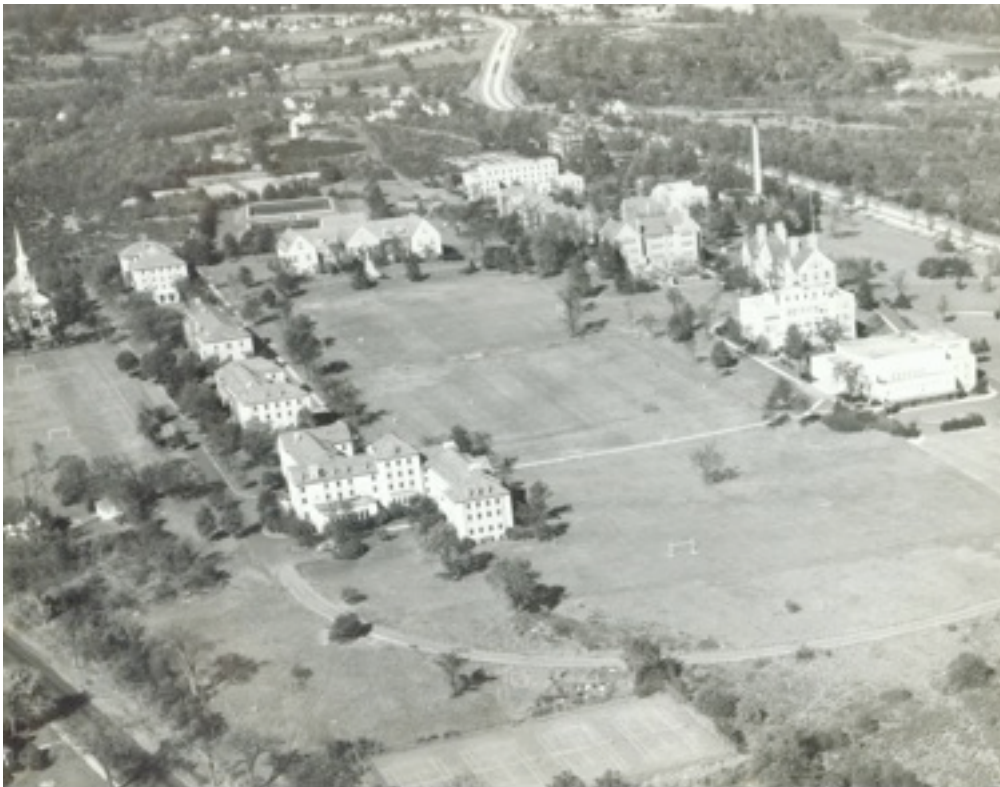
*Figure 39. The Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon campus plan, with the chapel visible in the foreground, and the student residences at the upper left.. The development of faculty housing appears at the bottom of the rendering. Rendering by Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, 1931.*

The two plans illustrate similar prospects for the College's growth that were, in program and fundamental arrangement, largely realized. Within five years of the Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon plan, the west side of the Campus Green was defined by a line of four dormitories, Windham House, Harkness House, Jane Addams House, and 1937 House, later renamed Freeman House. Maintaining largely Georgian exteriors, each dormitory featured a range of well-appointed spaces; like the dormitories built in the 1920s they included rooms for entertaining visitors, to which was added upper floor reading lounges that offered students a more private and informal setting. Following the standard set by Knowlton House, each of the new residences included its own dining room, encouraging



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house loyalty in its residents and establishing a space where both table etiquette and nutrition could be learned first-hand. The multiple amenities offered within each dormitory's construction, ranging from thermostats to a buzzer system that connected each room to the building's reception desk, exhibited an embrace of timesaving technology as part of modern routine. The four dormitories expressed the era's value on women's colleges as "the ideal preparation for complete living," where well-designed housing would engender social civility as well as encourage a contemporary approach to physical wellbeing.<sup>179</sup>



*Figure 40. The campus as it appeared in the early 1940s, with the row of student residences featured on the left and the Palmer Auditorium at the center right. Photograph, 1940.*

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<sup>179</sup> Kathryn McHale, Francis Valiant Speck. *Housing College Students* (Washington, DC, American Association of University Women, 1934) 6.

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The doubling of space available for academics, another important aspect of both master plans, was achieved with equal rapidity. Fanning Hall, the first building completed under President Blunt's administration, provided ample classroom space, as well as administrative offices that freed up much of New London Hall. The 1939 construction of Frederick Bill Hall, neighboring Fanning Hall, corresponds to a planned structure of similar orientation labeled on the Cutler Plan as "New Science." Although the quadrangle form of the "Academic Group" was never fully realized, the positioning of Bill Hall does create a three-sided quadrangle recessed from the Campus Green, an arrangement similar to that pictured in the Cutler Plan. Bill Hall also became the home of the College observatory, an addition noted in both campus plans. By the end of the 1930s, construction was also under way to double the size of Palmer Library, an improvement to the academic atmosphere of the College promoted in both plans.

President Blunt campaigned for "education related to real life" and as a result, the departments supported in these new structures were largely geared away from the theoretical and towards the vocational or domestic application of skills. Political and Social Sciences, which made up two separate majors, demonstrated increased roles for women in public affairs.<sup>180</sup> The formation of the Connecticut College Arboretum in 1931, an addition to the College grounds suggested as far back as the Olmsted Brothers' initial site visit, provided a laboratory for practical study in the expanding departments of Botany, Ecology, and Biology.<sup>181</sup> Although the Home Economics building featured on the Cutler Plan was never constructed, the department was strengthened by the addition of Emily Abbey House in 1939, a second cooperative residence constructed near to Vinal

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<sup>180</sup> Katherine Blunt – Biographical Material.

<sup>181</sup> Olmsted Brother to Morton F. Plant, correspondence.

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Cottage. Even four years before Abbey House was completed, fourteen courses were offered within the Home Economics major, including “The Problems of Marriage and Family Life,” and “Home-making Problems.”<sup>182</sup> In 1938, the departments of Education, Psychology, and Home Economics opened a nursery school in Bolles House to facilitate the study of child development. The increase in scientific study, paired with offerings of independent study and summer tutorials appealed to the newfound self-direction fostered in many women of the time.

A final aspect of both plans that reached a high degree of completion was the addition of faculty housing bordering the College grounds. Previously, faculty had lived within the residence halls, in the College-owned cottages scattered across the campus, or alongside students in the Riverside boardinghouses. With the introduction of a program through which the College provided small leases for faculty hoping to build their own houses on the far north end of campus, as well as the construction of houses and apartment units along Winchester Road in the following decades, many professors moved out of spaces shared with students. While this exodus could be viewed as a result of students beginning to identify the College grounds as their own domain, the move corresponds to a larger trend in national professorial affairs. Before the late 1930s, the careers of many professors were dependant on their standing with the college or university president, creating an unstable professional environment. This factor, combined with low wages that caused many professors to take second jobs, made home ownership or even prolonged renting economically unfeasible. Faculty often lived in

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<sup>182</sup> Twenty-Second Annual Catalogue of Connecticut College. New London, Connecticut 30 Dec. 1935, 94-95. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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whatever space was available on the campus. In 1940, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) issued a Statement of Principles that demanded, alongside academic freedom from administrative censorship, economic security through tenure and a living wage. The AAUP's statement was accepted by most schools, and provided faculty both the means and occupational security to settle with the assurance that they would not be uprooted with a change in administration. In architectural terms, it allowed for the rise of permanent, self-sufficient, and physically removed faculty dwellings.<sup>183</sup>

By the end of the 1930s, the New York firm of Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon were the official architects of Connecticut College. Popular for previous collegiate structures and their design of the Empire State Building, the firm was able to continue in the decidedly Georgian styling of the structures built in the 1920s, while paring down decorative forms to suit a new and simplified aesthetic that was gaining popularity as architects and their clients became more aware of European Modernism. A 1931 document comparing the advantages of several potential architects for the College affirms that Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon were “exponents of the modern building idea but not extremists” and “would probably tend to give a more modern 20<sup>th</sup> century touch,” illustrating a cautious acceptance of contemporary design as allowable for a women's college.<sup>184</sup> The transition from the highly classicized entrance porticos of Knowlton and Windham Houses to the understated doorways and streamlined stone fluting of the Harkness and Jane Addams House facades was the initial step in this direction. Bill Hall, with its uninterrupted, horizontal windows sets, ashlar facing, and flat roof set a new

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<sup>183</sup> Lucas 200-202.

<sup>184</sup> Memorandum on Architects. Campus and Buildings Box 3: Folder: CC Development Plans 1931-38. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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degree of simplification. While each building of the period referenced the Moderne styling present in Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon's design for the Empire State Building, the 1939 completion of Palmer Auditorium, with its curving façade, geometric window grilles, and colorful, streamlined interior space, represented the height of this minimal yet still classically oriented aesthetic.



*Figure 41. The streamlined façade of Palmer Auditorium: a key building in Connecticut College's shift from a Colonial Revival campus to one that embraced the modern aesthetic. Photograph, 1940.*

President Blunt's enlargement of the main campus grounds concluded with the 1940 construction of Grace Smith House. Although less outwardly contemporary than Palmer Auditorium, the physical qualities, function, and location of Smith House represented an important transition between the old building forms of campus and the increasing value

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placed on modern design. In some ways, most notably the rusticated stone exterior, Smith adopted the Collegiate Gothic vocabulary of its closest neighbor, Branford House. The residence also embraced the curving, classically ornamented dining hall façade used only three years before in the designs for Freeman House and Jane Addams House. Unlike any other residence on the Connecticut College campus, however, Grace Smith House employed a flat roof. A primary characteristic of the Modernist Style, and a feature already present on Bill Hall and Palmer Auditorium, the flat roof lent a sense of horizontality to the residence that was emphasized through the addition of a simple stringcourse and cornice. Perhaps most significant to the future growth of the Connecticut College campus was the site selection for Grace Smith House. The residence was constructed to enclose the northern end of the first and only completed quadrangle from the 1914 plan. The intention was not to realign the campus with earlier educational and institutional values, but instead to create a pathway for the northward expansion of the campus as it was expressed in the earliest designs. The completion of Grace Smith House represented both a physical pathway for future development of the north campus as well as a symbolic conclusion of the classical traditions in campus architecture, paving the way for a new generation of structures that would embrace the avant-garde in all respects.

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### **Powerhouse**

*American Chimney Corporation, 1930*

**Additions** *Shreve, Lamb and Harmon, 1938, Graham Creighton, 1960*

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*Figure 42. Photograph, 1939.*

Despite its central location, the powerhouse is not easy to find. On a plot directly opposite the Athletic Complex driveway and tucked behind Hillyer Hall, the only clearly visible part of the structure is its towering smokestack. From this hidden location, however, nearly every building on campus is supplied with the electricity needed to run its heating, cooling, and plumbing systems. Originally planned for a site neighboring the Thames River and adjacent to the Vermont Central Railway tracks for the easy delivery

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of coal, the powerhouse was located on the main campus to reduce the costs and difficulty of transporting electricity, heat, and water the nearly half mile uphill from the train tracks to the campus.<sup>185</sup>

The current powerhouse represents a replacement of the original, wooden structure designed by Ewing and Chappell in 1914. The small building housed a single coal-burning boiler to generate electricity, pump well water, and heat steam for both space heaters and hot water faucets. To meet the energy demands of the expanding College, a large square structure was built to replace the original structure in 1930. With exterior walls of masonry and ceramic tile, a waist-high stringcourse of vertically set brick, and a similar pattern producing a crowning cornice, the structure was clearly meant as a more permanent facility. Four double story, steel-framed windows lit the interior workspace. The large windows and decorative brickwork feature “an emphasis on volume and regularity in massing,” bringing to mind turn-of-the-century industrial architecture of German and the United States.<sup>186</sup>

On the interior, the new powerhouse featured three boilers to provide ample steam heating for the campus. The lower story housed equipment controls, a bathroom, and two turbines to provide electricity to the College. The upper story contained a director’s office and large workroom (the only part of the building that survives in its original form).<sup>187</sup>

The flat roof of the Powerhouse was primarily of wood construction, with one large, steel support beam running the length of the building. The colossal, masonry chimney,

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<sup>185</sup> Connecticut College for Women, Preliminary Announcement 25, 30.

<sup>186</sup> Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works: the Industrial Architecture of the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 244.

<sup>187</sup> “Diesel-Steam Combination Provides Heat and Power Balance at Connecticut College,” *Baldwin Southwick Corporation Magazine*, Third Quarter 1939.



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constructed at a height that would prevent expelled smoke from drifting onto the campus, stood adjacent to the building on the Mohegan Avenue façade.

Although a necessary part of any self-sufficient institution and often near the middle of a campus to minimize energy loss through long distance transfer, a powerhouse is seldom shown on campus tours. Many such structures feature large, flat and windowless facades, built as simply as possible to reflect their industrial function. At Connecticut College, the Powerhouse occupies a similar role to the service building at the far south end of campus: necessary, but purposefully concealed. This is apparent even the original structure, which was long, low, and built into the sloping site so as to be almost invisible from the windows of Blackstone House. What truly disguises the bulk of the powerhouse, both in its earliest form and today, is the location of Hillyer Hall. Built in 1917 as a temporary structure, the positioning of Hillyer Hall so effectively obscures the powerhouse from the eyes and minds of students, visitors, and faculty that it would seem that its placement was intended to do just that.

On September 21, 1938, the New England coast was struck by a catastrophic hurricane, which devastated New London and many of the surrounding communities. Connecticut College, too, suffered its fair share of damage, including the near total destruction of the powerhouse after the collapse of the smokestack.<sup>188</sup> As the community cleaned up after the storm, plans were drawn to rebuild the building with a stronger smokestack and updated machinery. During the reconstruction the interior arrangement was reorganized, with a small addition built at the southeast corner. The new machines provided a more reliable source of power for the increasing number of campus structures,

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<sup>188</sup> “Diesel-Steam Combination.”

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as well as enough output for future expansions. In the 1960s, a new diesel generator and boiler were installed to again meet the increased energy demands of the College. This revision necessitated an addition on the north side of the building. During the 1970s, as oil became a cheaper source of energy than coal, three new oil burners were installed and the former coal room was converted into an oil pump room. A decade later, when it became clear that off-site electricity was a less expensive option, the 1930s diesel-electric turbines were removed and a high voltage transformer was installed in its place.

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*Figure 43. The ruins of the power plant following  
the 1938 Hurricane. Photograph, 1939.*

As an industrial structure both in function and aesthetic, the powerhouse is a unique aspect of Connecticut College. Even with its decorative brickwork, the building

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stresses function over form in a manner avoided on essentially all other campus structures. As neighboring Hillyer Hall shows, however, many times it is the structures thought most temporary or inharmonious with the campus environment that last the longest. So it goes with the powerhouse: anonymous to many but valuable to the fabric of the College.

**Windham House**

*Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, 1933*

**Renovations** *Gregg & Wies Architects, 1987, Noyes Vogt Architects, 2008*



*Figure 44. Photograph, 1933.*

From its hillside position on the northwestern edge of the Campus Green, Windham House appears firmly rooted to its surroundings. In truth however, Windham House represents the product of a fundraising campaign that took over two decades. A year before Connecticut College opened, trustee and Norwich resident Louise C. Howe suggested the creation of a fund through which a Connecticut county could raise money to endow a residential hall on the new campus. The residents of Windham County accepted the proposal, and the Windham House Association took form on July 29, 1914. In order to raise the \$50,000 needed to begin construction, town branches of the Association undertook events ranging from theater productions and pageants to bridge

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parties and “lawn fetes,” with the proceeds going towards the building fund.<sup>189</sup> World War I greatly hampered the operation, and by the mid 1920s the desired amount had doubled to \$100,000.<sup>190</sup> Balking at the slow progress of the campaign, which by that point had resorted to door-to-door canvassing, donors Charles C. Knowlton and David F. Fanning both chose to resign from the campaign and fund buildings of their own, Knowlton House (initially known as Colonial House), and Fanning Hall. Finally, at the height of the Great Depression and with campus housing shortages crippling admissions prospects, President Katherine Blunt ordered that the fund be put to use. Construction on Windham House began in 1933.<sup>191</sup>

In the earliest outlines, Windham House was to be designed by Ewing and Chappell to match Branford, Plant, and Blackstone.<sup>192</sup> In a mid 1920s rendering by Herbert R. Loud, Windham House appears very similar to his design for Knowlton House, with a columned entrance portico and low, hipped roof. Finally, on a day that “all the banks in the United States were closed,” President Blunt signed a contract with the New York firm of Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, who would serve as the College architects from 1933 until the mid 1960s.<sup>193</sup> Although the firm was chosen for their ability to execute a restrained yet modern aesthetic, in their designs for Windham House, however,

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<sup>189</sup> The History of Windham House. Campus and Building Box 15, Folder: Windham House – Histories and Events. New London: Linda Lear for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>190</sup> Help Build Windham House, June 1924. Pamphlet. Box 15, Folder: Windham House – Building Campaign, Donor List, and Brochures. New London: Linda Lear for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>191</sup> Windham House Association for Connecticut College. Campus and Building Box 15, Folder: Windham House – Building Campaign, Donor List, and Brochures. New London: Linda Lear for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>192</sup> Help Build Windham House.

<sup>193</sup> The History of Windham House.

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Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon exhibited little in the way of modernity.<sup>194</sup> Although Windham House was the first residential hall to employ fireproof construction techniques, its granite facing, classical entrance colonnades, and double-hung windows of white-painted wood echoed the Georgian styles of neighboring Knowlton House and Palmer Library.

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
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*Figure 45. The formal living room in Windham House, an elegant place where students could entertain guests or gather before dinner. Photograph by Richard A. Smith, 1933.*

Not long after Windham House was completed, Blunt revealed her student housing ideals in a speech titled “What is an ideal dormitory?” Blunt cited “a place to stretch one’s mind and help it grow...A place to make friendships that will last...A place for play and for happy fun...A place, in short, to make happy and worthy members of the college community,” all values that she found supported in the design of Windham

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<sup>194</sup> Memorandum on Architects.

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House. Where the furnishings of Knowlton House salon and parlors were elegant yet minimal, Windham House offered its residents books, a Victrola, radios, board games, and brightly patterned wallpaper to enliven the residential experience.<sup>195</sup> The entire basement level was devoted to carefully decorated social spaces, including a formal living room, a sitting room, a game room, and a dining room. On the floors above, kitchenettes and study lounges provided casual gathering spaces for the residents of each floor. Unlike Knowlton House, Windham House was geared equally towards entertaining guests and improving each student's personal experience. Beyond the common rooms, the ratio of single to double rooms, about thirteen to one, exhibits Blunt's particular desire to house all students in their own rooms. While characteristic of the increasingly individualistic student mindset, the arrangement also acknowledges continuing fears that housing college women together might lead to a loss of sexuality and the formation of "unhealthy friendships."

As with many of the other residential halls on campus, the only significant changes to the design of Windham House took place when the social spaces were renovated to serve as student rooms in the mid 1970s. To accommodate these changes a large bathroom was added to the basement level in 1987, accentuated by a curving wall of glass blocks.<sup>196</sup> The former living room was renovated in 2008 as part of an initiative that saw the transformation of several common spaces into rooms for Freshmen

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<sup>195</sup> President's Remarks at Windham. Saturday, 25 Nov. 1933. Campus and Building Box 15, Folder: Windham House. Linda Lear for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>196</sup> Plumbing and Fire Protection Plan of Windham House Basement. Gregg & Wies Architects, New Haven, CT. Helenski & Zimmer, Inc., Mechanical Engineers, Wethersfield, CT. Connecticut College Physical Plant.

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Seminars, in an effort to carry education beyond the traditional classroom and emphasize the importance of academics in all aspects of campus life.



**Mary Harkness House**

*Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, 1934*

**Renovations** *1976(?)*, Tom Grippin for Noyes Vogt Architects, 2008

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
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*Figure 46. Photograph, 1934.*

When constructed in 1934, Mary Harkness House appeared to stand remote from the rest of campus. Thanks to subsequent developments, the student residence now occupies a central position on the Connecticut College Green. Mary H. Harkness, wife of oil baron and philanthropist Edward Harkness and summer resident of nearby Enola Estate (now Waterford Park), donated the funds for Harkness House. Surpassing the recently completed Windham House in size, Harkness House represented the product of years of discussion between President Katherine Blunt and Mary Harkness, a period during which the two became close friends. For years after the dormitory was opened,

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Mary Harkness would make an annual visit to the dormitory, receiving guests beneath a large portrait of her that hung above the dining room fireplace.<sup>197</sup>

Unlike the hands-on approach to design taken by the donor of the neighboring Knowlton House, Mary Harkness gave President Blunt the liberty to hire any architect she found satisfactory.<sup>198</sup> Blunt returned to Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, who drafted a proposal that in many ways reflected an enlarged version of their design for Windham House. Harkness House featured the same central mass with projecting, symmetrical wings. A low, hipped roof of slate with limestone facing on the walls below drew directly from Windham House as well. Like Knowlton House, Harkness House turned its main entrance and raised patio towards the Campus Green, an indication that the administration intended the structure to aid in defining the sloping lawn as the new focus of the campus. In detail and ornament however, Harkness House deviates from the established visual vocabulary. Light colored granite blocks, carved into graceful fluting surrounded both entrances to the dormitory, adding a decidedly modern touch to the otherwise Georgian Revival structure. The decoration evoked the Art Deco fashions of the period as well as Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon's earlier work on New York skyscrapers including the Empire State Building.

If the exterior of Harkness House only hinted at contemporary design, the dormitory's interior gave a resounding confirmation that modern forms had found a new home on the Connecticut College campus. The ground floor provided many of the same offerings as Windham House: an entrance hall, gracious living room, intimate parlor,

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<sup>197</sup> Morse, Harkness House.

<sup>198</sup> Mary Harkness to Katherine Blunt, correspondence. 10 Nov. 1933. Campus and Buildings Box 6, Folder: Buildings: Harkness House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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cozy library, and large dining room. In furniture and fittings, however, Harkness House abandoned colonial era reproductions in favor of curved metal frames, glass tabletops, and geometrically patterned upholstery. The dormitory's modern furnishings were conveniently raised above an easy-to-clean linoleum tile floor, a desirable arrangement in an age when germ theory gained a fixed place in the public conscience. The ornament of the exterior was carried through the ground floor, where bands of raised fluting ran along the walls and ceilings. Just within the entrance, a small, student-operated reception room featured a telephone booth and state-of-the-art buzzer system by which any room could be called with the touch of a button. On the three floors of student rooms above, each common room featured an attached tea pantry and ironing room complete with stainless steel counters, electric irons, and trash chutes.

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
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*Figure 47. With linoleum flooring and metal frame furniture, the living room of Harkness House embodied the concepts of cleanliness and modern convenience evident throughout the residence. Photograph by Richard A. Smith, 1934.*

Contemporary newspaper reports seem to struggle in defining the architectural style of Harkness House. While one labels it “simple” and another describes its design as “somewhat in the modern motif,” all articles agree that the dormitory provided a “program for creating the ideal living conditions for its students.”<sup>199</sup> Although President Blunt pushed the academic spirit of the College well beyond the realm of homemaking and social finishing, residential space was still viewed as a valuable means of forming sociable, polite, and well-adjusted students. Harkness House offered an important

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<sup>199</sup> 1933. “Hartford Firm Awarded Contract for Harkness House at Conn. College,” *The New London Day*.

1934. “Mrs. E.S. Harkness to Present Key to Dr. Blunt Tomorrow,” *The New London Day*.

1934. “New Harkness House Formally Dedicated,” *The New York Times*.

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combination of traditional functions to encourage civility and hospitality with the modern technologies to guarantee hygiene and the development of healthy residents. While Harkness House does not assume the directly domestic appearance of some of the earlier residential halls on campus, many aspects of its design aimed to produce graduates with a fully formed sense of how a well-run and modern home ought to appear.

Like many other dormitories, Harkness House lost much of its original furnishing. The buzzer system became obsolete with the addition of room telephones, and the room containing the reception desk was, by the 1990s, used to store cleaning supplies. In 2008, the former living room of Harkness House was altered to serve as a seminar classroom in the same initiative to bring learning space into the student residences that saw the overhaul of the Windham House living room. The project included the transformation of the former reception area into a handicap accessible restroom. Beyond these changes, however, much of Harkness House retains its original form.

**Jane Addams House**

*Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, 1936*

**Renovations**

*Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, 1968, Tom Grippin for Noyes & Voigt, 2008*

**Freeman House**

*Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, 1937*

**Renovations**

*Mid 1970s, Tom Grippin for Noyes & Vogt Architects, 2008*



*Figure 48. Rendering by Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon. 1936.*

Defining the southwestern corner of the Campus Green, Jane Addams House and attached Harrison B. Freeman House complete the line of residential halls running the length the playing fields. The two structures, built only a year apart, signified the third and fourth buildings - completed in as many years - by President Katherine Blunt.<sup>200</sup> Unlike the earlier campus buildings, the funds for Jane Addams House came almost entirely from the College's own finances and loan initiatives. Neighboring Freeman House, originally called 1937 House to commemorate the date of its completion, was paid for in part by the people of Hartford County. Following the lead of the Windham County Campaign, the organizers of the fundraising project hoped for the new residence

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<sup>200</sup> 1937. "Ground Broken for Dormitory at Connecticut College; Earth Turned by Dr. Blunt, C.S. Buell, Class Presidents," *The New London Day*.

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to be named Hartford House in honor of their contributions.<sup>201</sup> In the end, the availability of College funds and the immediate need for a new structure to house the growing student body took priority over the Hartford County campaign, which was refocused so that specific rooms within the residence were named after generous donors.<sup>202</sup>

In name, the two residences drew from very different sources. Jane Addams, the first woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize, inspired the name of the earlier structure. The founder of Chicago's Hull House and a leader of the Settlement House Movement in the United States, Addams' work focused on offering vocational training, childcare, and many other services sought to alleviate the urban poverty especially pertinent in era during the Great Depression and the New Deal.<sup>203</sup> The attached 1937 House did not gain its permanent name until 1942, when the death of Chairman of the Board of Trustees Harrison B. Freeman occasioned the change. Freeman, a Hartford resident who had donated a large sum during the short-lived Hartford House campaign, was remembered for helping the College to gain secure financial footing in its early days and for his particular attention to increases in both faculty salaries and student scholarship funds.<sup>204</sup> The naming set a standard of designating new construction in honor of well-liked and influential members of the College community, a valuable model as the school began to fund much more of its physical development without sizeable donations.

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<sup>201</sup> 1936. "Plans Approved for Connecticut College New Dormitory Which May Be Named Hartford House to Recognize Aid," *The New London Day*.

<sup>202</sup> 1937. "College Dormitory Rooms Named for Hartford Persons," *The New London Day*.

<sup>203</sup> "Jane Addams – Biography," *The Nobel Peace Prize 1931*, accessed 28 Feb. 2010. <[http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1931/addams-bio.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1931/addams-bio.html)>

<sup>204</sup> Morse, Freeman House.

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*Figure 49. Jane Addams House as viewed from the southeast, a year before the addition of Freeman House. Photograph, 1936.*

Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, who were, by 1937, the official architects of the College, provided the plans for both residences. The combination of revival and modern elements, so unfamiliar to reporters at the dedication of Mary Harkness House in 1934, was defined with ease in a piece on the plans for 1937 House as “a modified modern type which harmonizes with the classic lines of the older buildings on campus.” Using the same granite facing with limestone trim and hipped roofs with dormer windows, the new halls fit well into the aesthetic vocabulary of the rest of the structures facing the Campus Green. Like Harkness House and Windham House, the two new residences offered the array of ground floor social spaces, student lounges, and technological innovations by



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that time standard to women's dormitory design. In Freeman House, Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon introduced the use of "acoustical correction," an early variety of sound insulating interior finish, in the dining room, lounges, and student rooms to ensure a peaceful living environment.<sup>205</sup>



*Figure 50. The construction of Freeman House, pictured above in its early stages, caps the line of student residences defining the west side of the Campus Green. Photograph, 1937.*

What sets Jane Addams House and Freeman House apart from their campus predecessors was the architects' decision to attach the two structures. Unlike the neatly symmetrical masses of the earlier residence halls, the fusion of Jane Addams and Freeman created a rambling and irregular composition with a footprint reminiscent of Victorian design. Although never stated outright, the pairing was clearly an effort to save

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<sup>205</sup> "Plans Approved for Connecticut College New Dormitory."

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money by joining the two house's dining rooms through a shared kitchen. Although this space, run by staff and outside of the student's sphere, was considered appropriate for consolidation, the social rooms and hallways of the two houses were kept distinct. While the furnishing of student rooms of both houses followed a standard of simple, stained wood pieces, differences in the décor of the ground floor rooms emphasized the separate identity of each house. This division of the two houses allowed for a greater degree of supervision by the faculty housefellow, whose job still centered on the parental role of keeping her female residents courteous and hardworking. Like the College's first halls, Jane Addams and Freeman Houses were specifically home-like residences not just in design and decoration, but in social structure as well.

In February of 1968 a fire destroyed the fourth floor of Jane Addams, an event that fortuitously occurred in the middle of a weekday, when students were in class. Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon designed both the reconstruction of the building's roof and affected floors, as well as a renovation of the entire dormitory.<sup>206</sup> Beyond this repair, the standard refiguring of the ground floor social spaces into student rooms in the 1970s to allow for greater enrollment comprise the only major change to the two structures. Both dining halls continue to function, and, as of 2008, the refurbished common rooms serve as a Freshman Seminar classrooms as part of the dorm integrated learning space initiative. Their views of the Campus Green and Long Island Sound and their proximity to academic buildings make these residences favorites, yet many students still cite the

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<sup>206</sup> News From Connecticut College. 1968. Campus and Buildings Box 6, Folder: Jane Addams – 1968 Fire. New London: The Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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antique and homey atmosphere of the rooms a the basis of their choice, a modern understanding of the architect's aspiration.

**Buck Lodge**

*Graham Creighton, 1938*

**Renovations 2008**



*Figure 51. Photograph, 1938.*

With walls of river stone piers and rough-hewn logs, Buck Lodge blends well to its setting in the Connecticut College Arboretum. Located in close proximity to an area that was once the College's ski-run and a large pond originally intended for ice-skating, Buck Lodge was built to serve as a student recreation space. The building is named for donor Nelson L. Buck of Evanston, Illinois, whose daughter, Frances, graduated from the College in 1932. Upon her commencement, Frances was awarded a gift of \$2,000 (for remaining true to her promise not to smoke while at school), which she generously contributed to the College to make possible the excavation of the Arboretum

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amphitheater. So pleased was the Buck Family with the outdoor event space, that they gave a second gift five years later to facilitate the construction of Buck Lodge.

Local architect Graham Creighton, who worked on many small projects for the College including Holmes Hall, the expansion of North Cottage, and the refurbishment of the power plant, designed Buck Lodge. The recreation building was arranged with two levels on a steeply sloped site so that each floor could have entrances at grade. The lodge's course stone construction prompted a reporter from *The Day* to describe the structure as "of the same substance as the great rocks and boulders around it," while on the south face a wide veranda was "supported by rough logs, shaggy with bark."<sup>207</sup> The simple building, which at the time of its construction did not feature electricity or running water, was raised by members of the National Youth Administration, the Depression era New Deal program aimed at providing short-term employment for out-of-work young people.<sup>208</sup>

The interior of Buck Lodge was characterized by large and multifunctional spaces. The upper floor was a single room, with a substantial stone fireplace and a small stage where troupes using the nearby amphitheater could rehearse. Glass doors opened onto the veranda, with its views of the pond and forest beyond. On the floor below, a second large fireplace graced a student recreation room, with two storage closets adjacent. While the original plans illustrate a small kitchen and washroom in the lodge, it would appear that these proposed additions were never built.

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<sup>207</sup> 1938. "New Lodge At Conn. College to Be Put to Many Uses," *The New London Day*, 20 Apr.: sec. 2: 1.

<sup>208</sup> "National Youth Administration," *The Roosevelt Parks Papers Project*, accessed 13 Apr. 2010 < <http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/teaching/glossary/nya.cfm> >

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As the only public structure in the Arboretum, Buck Lodge served a variety of functions. The Botany and Zoology departments used the lodge as a field museum, with displays showing the native flora and fauna of each season. The lodge was a convenient place for the storage of both lighting equipment for outdoor dramatic productions in the amphitheater as well as landscaping tools for the Arboretum caretakers. The Lodge was also a way for the school to encourage student activities and organizations. The lodge served as a meeting place for student groups ranging from the Outing Club to the Religious Council.<sup>209</sup> For a small fee, even New London groups could use Buck Lodge, and in 1939 alone the structure hosted such groups as the Mystic Garden Club, local astronomy clubs, and five separate Girl Scout troops.<sup>210</sup>

Completed only seven years after the Arboretum was officially dedicated, the construction and use of Buck Lodge highlights the highly valued role that the wilderness area has played in the history of the College. The core of the natural area is made up of two tracts originally belonging to the Bolles family, who had farmed the land for several generations. In the early days of the College, the land was viewed as a secure, nearby location where students could venture without faculty supervision to picnic and enjoy the picturesque beauty of the craggy cliffs and overgrown fields. In 1931, the land was titled “The Connecticut Arboretum,” and landscape architect A.F. Brinckerhoff was hired to design the Washington Entrance on Williams Street as well as the Lural Walk. The 1930s also saw the establishment of a plant nursery run by the Botany Department just beyond the main entrance in the first of many academic functions that the Arboretum

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<sup>209</sup> "New Lodge At Conn. College to Be Put to Many Uses."

<sup>210</sup> Uses of Buck Lodge During the College Year, 1939-1940. Box 2, Folder: Buck Lodge. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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would serve in the coming decades.<sup>211</sup> By the late 1940s, the pond and surrounding marshland were indispensable aspects of several science departments that were expanded rapidly under the guidance of President Katherine Blunt. Long-range research of vegetation change and bird populations in the Arboretum began in the early 1950s, heralding the rise of the Human Ecology Department in the following decade, which was soon after renamed Environmental Studies. In 1996, the value of the Arboretum as a teaching space was underlined when the boundaries were expanded to incorporate the entire College campus, with a wealth of interpretive materials, plant labels, and educational programs included in the project that continue to this day.<sup>212</sup> The construction of Buck Lodge in the earliest years of the Arboretum provided the simple facilities necessary to establish the landscape as a key component of the College's academic and social identity.

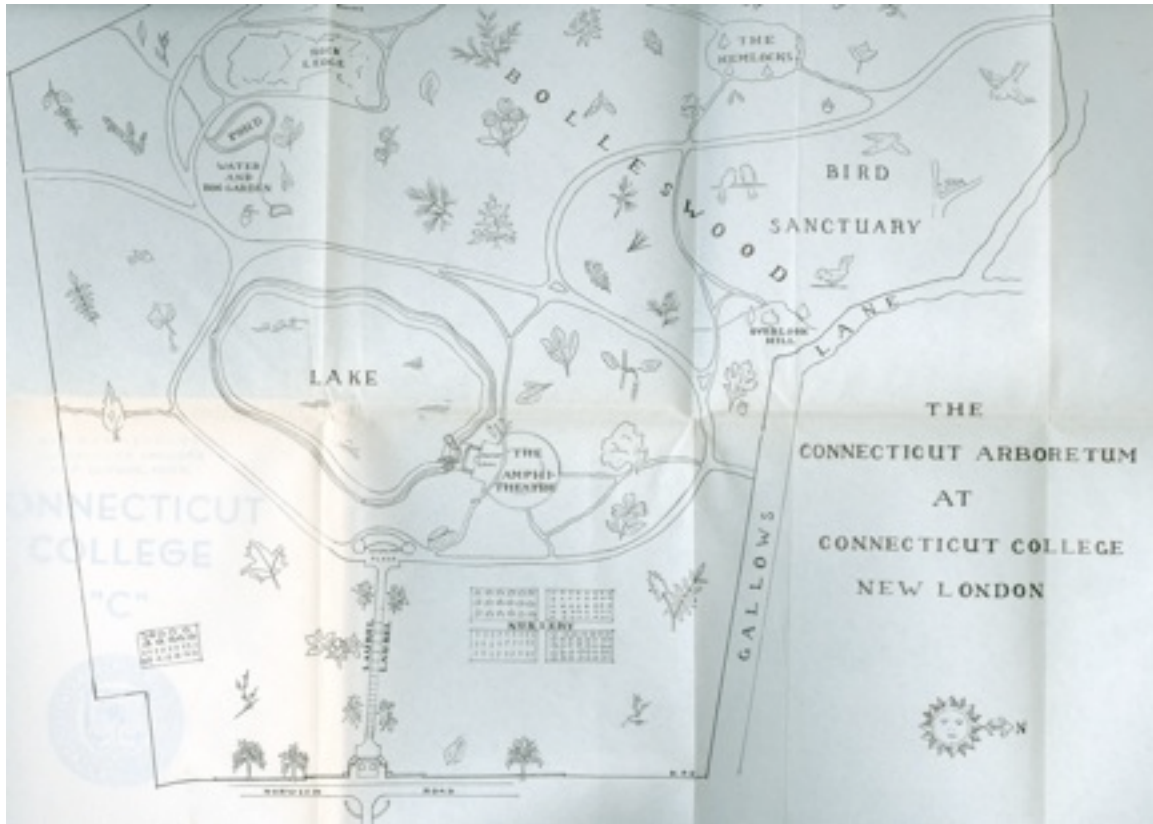
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<sup>211</sup> Richard H. Goodwin. *The Connecticut College Arboretum: Its 6<sup>th</sup> Decade and a Detailed History of its Land* (New London, CT: Connecticut College Arboretum, 1991) 14.

<sup>212</sup> "History of the Arboretum," *Connecticut College*, accessed 10 Mar. 2010 <<http://www.conncoll.edu/green/arbo/8583.htm>>



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*Figure 52. A map of the Arboretum from the year that it opened to the public, showing such areas as a bird sanctuary, plant nursery, and bog garden. 'C' Book Map, 1931.*

In 1990, the College received a gift from the Norcross Wildlife Foundation that allowed for the construction of a large maintenance garage and storage area. With much of its function relegated to this new facility, Buck Lodge was given over to the storage space of canoes and theater equipment. In 2008, the Nelson family donated funds to replace the veranda of the lodge in honor of their graduating son, Winslow Robinson '08. Through this renovation, which included many small repairs to keep the structure useable, Buck Lodge will continue to provide members of the College community a useful and attractive gathering place at the heart of the original Connecticut College Arboretum.



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### **Stanwood Harris House**

*John Barnes, 1938*

Facing Benham Avenue on the far north end of campus, the brick and shingle Stanwood Harris House stands as one of the first purpose-built faculty residences on the Connecticut College campus. Constructed on land sold by the school at a discounted rate, the house was built for the two female faculty members who give the building its name: Elizabeth Holden Harris and Ruth Stanwood.<sup>213</sup> As members of the first generation of faculty, both Harris and Stanwood helped shape the early years of the College, especially in the area of student health and wellness. Elizabeth Holden Harris (1889-1982) served as both Head Dietitian and Director of Residence from 1920 until 1956, establishing the system of small dining halls within many of the dorms that persists to this day.<sup>214</sup> Just five years after her retirement, the new refectory in North Complex was named in Harris' honor and in acknowledgement of her longstanding commitment to dining services. Ruth Stanwood (1893-1977), Chairwomen of the Physical Education Department, is credited for modernizing the College's approach to student fitness while also serving as the strongest advocate for the construction of Crozier Williams as a recreation center.<sup>215</sup><sup>216</sup>

Completed in 1939 by Boston-based architect John Barnes, the design of the Stanwood Harris House communicates the continuing popularity of the Colonial Revival style for residential structures.<sup>217</sup> The shuttered, double hung windows, steeply pitched roof, the use of brick as the primary building material references the style's attention to

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<sup>213</sup> Morse, Elizabeth Holden Harris, Ruth Stanwood.

<sup>214</sup> 1982. Obituaries – Elizabeth Harris, retired Dietitian at Conn College. *The New London Day*. 18. Nov.

<sup>215</sup> 1977. Ruth Stanwood; formerly with Connecticut College. *The New London Day*. 5 Dec.

Morse, Elizabeth Holden Harris.

<sup>217</sup> New London Directory, 1939. Pp. 421

## The Architecture of Connecticut College

solid construction and quaint detailing.<sup>218</sup> In addition, the Stanwood Harris House embraces its site in a way that none of the, later, surrounding residences do. This is evident in the half sunken garage story, as well as the angled positioning of the house to follow the contours of the land around it.

Although the prefabricated faculty dwellings surrounding the Stanwood Harris House likely had set interior arrangements, the floor plans of the Stanwood Harris House suggests that its residents played a large role in the house's design. The arrangement of space within the Stanwood Harris House gives insight into the specific needs of the two women who lived there, as well as the multi-faceted nature of its use. The impressively sized living room, directly to the left of the foyer, includes a classically ornamented fireplace, curved ceiling, and French doors leading onto a flagstone patio. The patio is also accessible via the spacious dining room by way of a matching set of French doors. The formality and flow of living room and dining room suggest that the Ms. Stanwood and Ms. Harris may have entertained guests in their home, an impression reinforced by an College newsletter from 1958 which states that the women "welcome alumnae visitors."<sup>219</sup> Upstairs, the residents' involvement in the design process is most apparent in the identical bedroom suites on the second floor. The matching bedrooms are each accessed through a closet space connecting to a shared vestibule off of the main hall. Both bedrooms also feature their own bathroom. The most significant aspect of this arrangement is that the two suites have identical dimensions, disregarding the traditions of master bedrooms, establishing a spatial equality between the two women.

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<sup>218</sup> Site visit by Blake McDonald, 7/1/2008.

<sup>219</sup> 1958. "The Faculty," *Connecticut College Alumnae News*, May: 3.

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Many spaces within the Stanwood Harris House also allude to the specific requirements of the unmarried and highly qualified workingwomen, a title still emerging in the late 1930s. A wood-paneled study, accessed through a heavy door just to the right of the front vestibule, represents the first of these spaces. The inclusion of a study in a house built for two women may have seemed unusual, given the room's traditionally masculine implication, and yet its function helped to confirm both women's educated and professional status. The kitchen and attached butler's pantry, located at the back of the house, also contained features unusual to a regular home of the period. A small stairwell leading to a third floor maid's room, implies that a live-in domestic worker was available both to guests as well as the two residents. The kitchen featured a buzzer system by which Miss Stanwood and Miss Harris could call the maid from their rooms.<sup>220</sup> In a post Depression era where domestic help was unheard of outside of the wealthiest strata of society, the inclusion of a maid's room implies that Miss Stanwood and Miss Harris neither cooked nor cleaned due to their occupation-focused and unmarried status and reflects mid century notions of domesticity as something based around family life, but not considered necessary for single men or women.

As of 2010, the Stanwood Harris House had undergone no renovations or significant alterations, a testament to the high level of craftsmanship in its construction. The residence continues to serve as a guesthouse for alums and visitors, as well as a venue for both student events and faculty functions. Moreover, the house stands as the physical narrative, reflecting more strongly than any other faculty house on campus the lives of its residents.

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<sup>220</sup> Site visit by Blake McDonald, 7/1/2008.

**Emily Abbey House**

*Shreve, Lamb and Harmon, 1939*

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

*Figure 53. Photograph, 1939.*

Just to the south of the College's first cooperative residence, Vinal Cottage, Emily Abbey House is set back from Mohegan Avenue on a site adjacent to the Caroline Black Gardens. Constructed in 1939, the structure characterized Connecticut College's continuing interest in living arrangements that served to train students in the values and skills of cooking, cleaning, and home finances. Similar to the earlier cooperative "practice house" at Vinal Cottage, Abbey House was designed with the needs of economically disadvantaged students, who could reduce their room and board rates significantly through participation in the student-run houses. Abbey House replaced in function Mosier House, a cooperative dormitory begun in 1933 following the popularity and success of Vinal Cottage. As a converted two-family house in the Riverside neighborhood, Mosier was both distant from campus and lacking in the modern teaching facilities desired by the Home Economics Department. An annuity-based gift of women's

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college benefactress Emily Abbey Gill of Springfield, Massachusetts, answered the need, allowing for construction to begin on the structure almost immediately.<sup>221</sup>

Like Vinal Cottage, Abbey House was sited away from the main section of campus, close to the Riverside community, a location that reinforced the structure's functional association with middle-class homes. The design executed by College architects Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon maximizes the effect. Abbey House was constructed as a three-story, frame building sided in white, wooden clapboards, popular in Colonial Revival architecture in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Aligned rows of windows pronounce the structure's two stories, with a single, lower window above the front door identifying the location of the interior stairwell's landing. On the west façade, a large gable with a round window marked the classically ornamented entry vestibule. The oculus window over the front door was echoed in two, semi-circular attic dormers, again a pattern familiar in Colonial Revival designs. The circular windows, white siding, and stylized vestibule all refer in particular to the Greek revival aesthetic, a common type for houses in both the Riverside neighborhood as well as downtown New London. The use of this style allowed Abbey House to blend with its surroundings, again reflecting its domestic purpose as well as the architectural history of the region.

On the interior, Abbey House offered both the streamlined workspaces required of a cooperative dormitory and the social areas that characterized the student residences of the period. Housing twenty-six students on the upper two floors, the sloping site allowed for a full-windowed, half-basement ground floor with a range of common areas. A large kitchen and dining room connected by a serving pantry composed the main workspace of

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<sup>221</sup> "Abbey Hall," *Colby-Sawyer College*, accessed 10 Mar. 2010 < [http://www.colby-sawyer.edu/campus-life/residential\\_ed/corridor/abbey\\_hall.html](http://www.colby-sawyer.edu/campus-life/residential_ed/corridor/abbey_hall.html) >

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the house, while a living room, recreation room, and smoking lounge occupied the rest of the floor. The presence of a men's bathroom located just off of the main stair hall implies that entertainment of guests was a key element of the structures design, a sense reinforced by the inclusion of a reception room just within the main entrance on the second floor.<sup>222</sup>

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
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*Figure 54. Students living in Abbey House and studying in the Home Economics department learned such skills as the sterile canning procedure shown here. Photograph by William M. Ritasse, 1940.*

While the earlier Vinal Cottage replicated the forms of a single-family house, may, Abbey House combined domestic training facilities (including an industrial-scale kitchen), with the social rooms found in the other student residences of the period.

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<sup>222</sup> "Floor plan of Emily Abbey House." Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, New York City. Connecticut College Physical Plant.

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Constructed just before World War II, just as national trends began to push the independent-minded women of the 1920s and 1930s back into home-focused family life, Abbey House provides a setting that is devoted equally to learning how to operate a home and finding the husband to provide that space. In layout, the central stair hall of the ground floor lies at the boundary between these two functions. Features such as a kitchen and service area organized around efficient movement, cleanliness, and time-saving technology reflect a continuation of the Vinal Cottage approach, and fall on one side of the hall. On the other side of the hall lay the social rooms, allowing guests to be led from the front door directly into the living room or recreation room without necessarily being aware of the house's Home Economics attributes. Unlike earlier residences, the housefellow's suite is located on the second floor, out of sight of the main entrance or social spaces in an arrangement that gave the students a greater degree of privacy with their callers. A resident's comment, reprinted in *The New London Day* soon after the residence opened, reveals the extent to which students valued their Abbey House experience as training for married life when she declared, "The lucky men that get us!"

Unlike Vinal Cottage, Abbey House continues to serve as a student residence. In the winter of 1983, the College considered discontinuing Abbey House as part of a series of budget cuts that led to the closure of many of the house dining halls around campus. After an outcry from students, faculty, and alums, President Ames decided to maintain Abbey House as a functioning dormitory. In 2008, the structure was re-sided, returning it to its original, pristine appearance. In large measure, the interior functions according to its original arrangement, with the only significant change being the conversion of the second floor reception room into a student bedroom. With the recent increase of student

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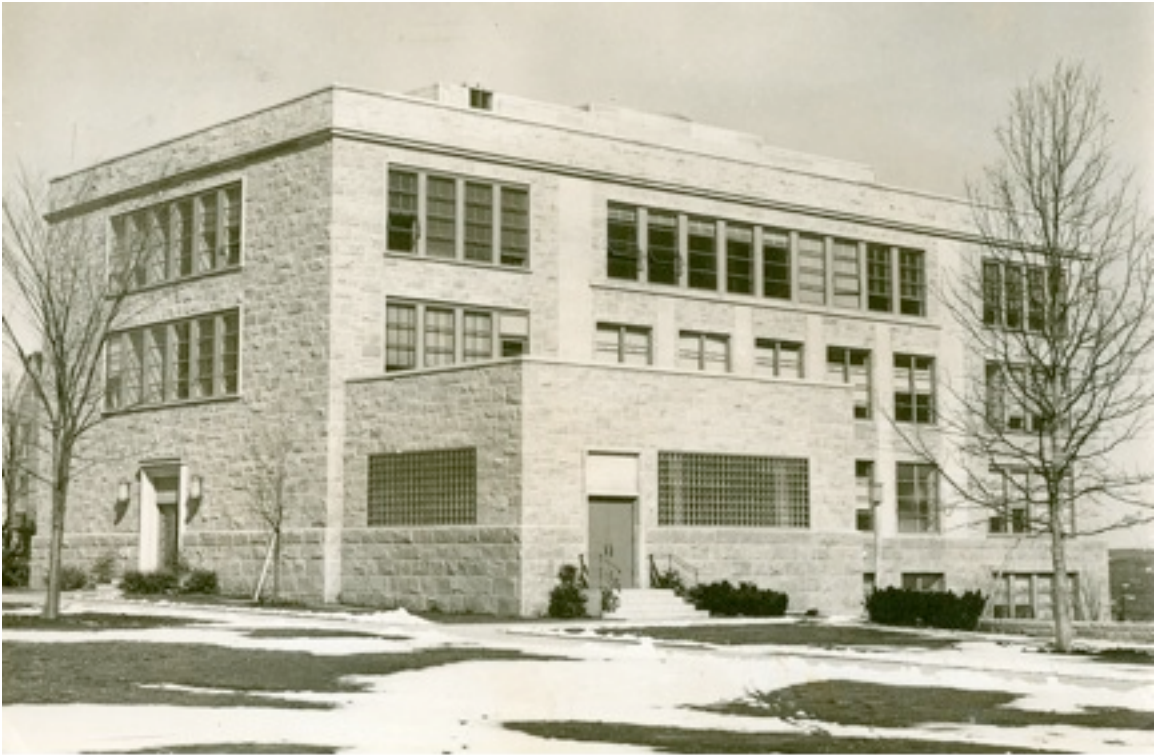
interest in specialty housing and independent living, Abbey House is now as popular as it was upon its completion.



**Frederick Bill Hall**

*Shreve, Lamb and Harmon, 1939*

**Renovations** 1986, 2008



*Figure 55. Photograph, 1939.*

Facing the Green and on a site adjacent to Fanning Hall, Frederick Bill Hall forms the third side of Connecticut College's only academic quadrangle. Completed in 1939 on a site to the north of the just opened Palmer Auditorium, Bill Hall provided a new home for the Fine Arts, Psychology, and Physics departments, each of which had previously been squeezed into the overcrowded New London and Fanning Halls. As was the case with many other campus structures built during the Katherine Blunt presidency, funding for Bill Hall came both from donations and the College's own budget. A sizeable bequest from the Bill family of Groton provided much of the support needed to construct the new academic structure, with the College paying for much of the furniture and fittings for the space's interior. The bequest was given by the daughter of Frederick Bill to honor of her

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father, a schoolteacher turned linen manufacturer who fifty years before had donated both finances and many of his own books to create Bill Memorial Library on the summit of Groton Heights.<sup>223</sup>

Just as Fanning Hall stood in visual contrast to the Collegiate Gothic New London Hall, Bill Hall too represented an architectural departure from its neighbors to the north. Although faced with the granite and limestone characteristic of the buildings surrounding the Campus Green, Bill Hall introduced reinforced concrete and cement block construction to campus, two undeniably modern materials suited to the structure's up-to-date appearance. Bill Hall used many of the same contemporary references as Palmer Auditorium, such as a flat roof and stylized pilasters along its northern façade. The bands of simple, steel framed windows and use of tempered glass bricks in the lecture hall extending from the building's primary mass set a modern tone to the exterior not yet seen on the Connecticut College campus.

In another key gesture towards modern design, the arrangement of windows on the exterior of Bill Hall related directly to the spaces that lay within. Each floor of Bill Hall was given over to a specific academic area, with Fine Arts occupying the well-lit fourth floor, Physics and Astronomy sharing the third floor, and Psychology on the second floor, which opened onto the Campus Green. Due to the fact that the structure was built on a slope, a ground floor used for storage also opened on grade to the campus ring road that ran behind the building. Like Fanning Hall, the interior of Bill Hall centered on corridors running the length of the structure and capped by stairwells to enable efficient

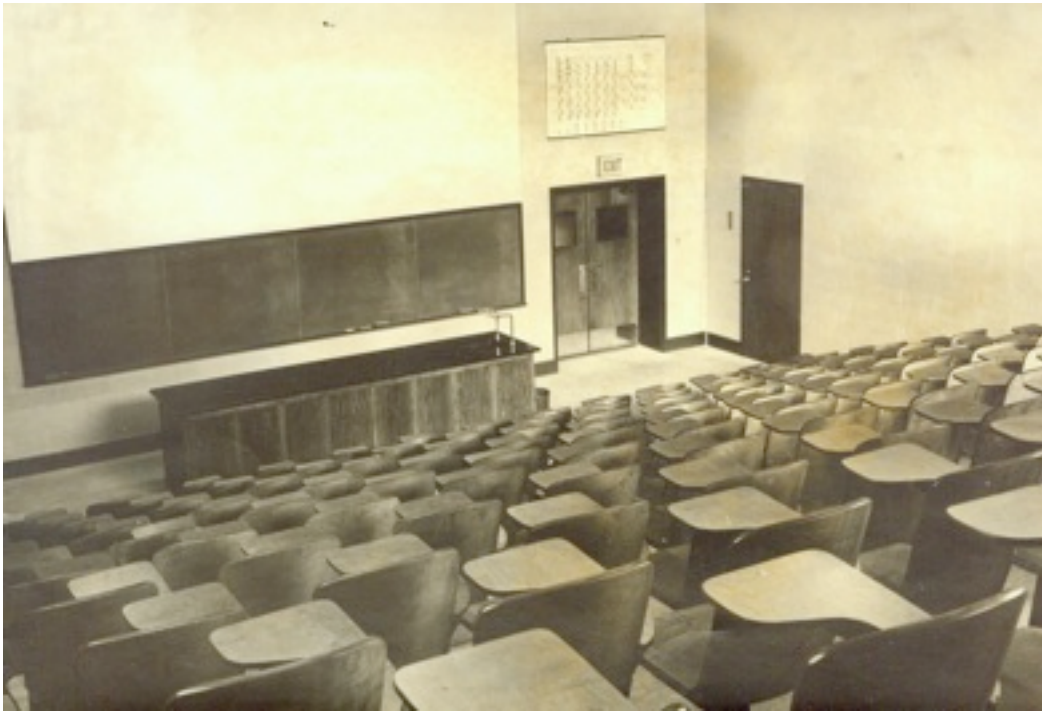
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<sup>223</sup> "About the Bill," *Bill Memorial Library*, accessed 1 Mar. 2010 <  
<http://www.billmemorial.org/about.htm> >

"Bill Cemetery," *Town of Groton, Connecticut*, accessed 1 Mar. 2010 <  
<http://www.town.groton.ct.us/history/detail.asp?bibid=883> >

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movement of many students through the structure. The modern aesthetic of Bill Hall's exterior was carried through to the classroom space, where soundproofing, refrigeration units, and direct current switchboards allowed for state-of-the-art academics. Perhaps the gem of the new building was the lecture room protruding from the second floor. With seating for 150, the space featured a "sound projection machine, silver screen, and other equipment for visual education and demonstration purposes."<sup>224</sup>



*Figure 56. The inclusion of a lecture auditorium in Bill Hall indicated the expanding size of the Connecticut College student body during the Blunt years. Photograph, 1940.*

The completion of Bill Hall restructured the physical composition of academics on the Connecticut College campus, while also illustrating the rise of studies specific to the period. That the Psychology department itself mandated a floor of its own within the new structure spoke to a shift from the earlier focus on Biology and Chemistry - which

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<sup>224</sup> 1940. "New Conn. College Academic Building Open to Public," *The New London Evening Day*, 21 Feb.

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were viewed as directly applicable to women's work in the home - to an area equally pertinent to childrearing as to a number of human relation-based professions. The interior of Bill Hall provided private research cubicles for students and faculty within the psychology and physics departments. The attention on space devoted to independent work referred to an increase of self-guided study noted by President Blunt in her 1939 annual address. Astronomy too was given ample space, telling of its individually managed procedures and direct application to the global Space Race quickly taking center stage in the nation's public conscience. As a large and well-appointed science building, Bill Hall signified the new role of women's higher education in an era when society increasingly asked women to enter the skilled workforce alongside the college-educated men that had for so long dominated the technical professions.<sup>225</sup>

Frederick Bill Hall continued to meet the needs of the Psychology department through the second half of the twentieth century. When Cummings Art Center opened in 1969, the top floor studios were freed to allow for greater expansion of the departments on floors below. Although the telescope planned for the rooftop penthouse at Bill Hall was never carried out, the 1995 completion of Olin Science Center provided provisions for both the Astronomy and Physics departments. As part of the College's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary campaign to ensure the strength of all academic areas, much of the interior of Bill Hall was renovated, while still maintaining its original configuration.<sup>226</sup> Sadly, in 2008, the building lost its distinctive tempered glass bricks in a renovation of the lecture

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<sup>225</sup> 1939. "President Blunt Cites Striking Development, In Annual Statement." *The New London Day*, 12 June.

<sup>226</sup> David G. Fenton to Mrs. Robert C. Allanach, correspondence. 14 May 1986. Campus and Buildings Box 1, Folders: Buildings: Frederic Bill Hall. New London: The Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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hall. Otherwise however, the exterior of Frederick Bill Hall appears much the same as when it was constructed, a decisive step in the evolution of modern architecture at Connecticut College.

**Frank Loomis Palmer Auditorium**

*Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, 1939*

**Renovations 1981**



*Figure 57. Photograph, 1939.*

With an entry façade distinguished by the geometrically patterned metal grilles over large windows, Palmer Auditorium represents the height of the Art Deco-inspired Moderne aesthetic at Connecticut College. The auditorium provided much needed performance space, evident in the crowded conditions of Hillyer Hall and the popularity of the Knowlton House Salon, the only two venues on the campus suitable for large events.<sup>227</sup> A large donation from the Misses Virginia and Theodora Palmer to honor their father, Frank Loomis Palmer, funded the project. In addition to the \$500,000 given for the initial construction, the gift also incorporated a \$125,000 endowment for the

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<sup>227</sup> Noyes 110.

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furnishing and ongoing upkeep of the building.<sup>228</sup> That the funds sourced from the Palmer family comes as little surprise given their history of generosity towards the College. Nearly twenty years before, Palmer's uncle, George S. Palmer, donated both financial support as well as his own literary collections to construct Palmer Library.<sup>229</sup> Before that, the family had also given money for purchase of the tract of land that now makes up South Campus.<sup>230</sup>

In choosing a site for the new auditorium, the Board of Trustees and architects Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon settled on a plot next to the recently completed Frederick Bill Hall.<sup>231</sup> In addition to preserving views of Long Island Sound from Palmer Library, once completed Palmer Auditorium would also visually balance the line of new dormitories on the opposite side of the green. Palmer Auditorium was to be built out of native granite and limestone, to match the other buildings looking onto the Campus Green.<sup>232</sup> The front façade, however, was actually faced with sandstone, presumably for financial reasons. Although the tall dormer windows lining the sides of Palmer Auditorium referenced the more traditional architecture of the campus buildings surrounding it, both the interior and

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<sup>228</sup> The Frank Loomis Palmer Auditorium, Material for Campus Guides, 1938-39. Campus and Buildings, Box 11, Folder: Buildings: Building Palmer Auditorium – Construction and Dedication. New London: The Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>229</sup> “Department of Special Collections Master List,” *Charles E. Chain Library, Connecticut College*, 7 Nov. 2006, accessed 1 Mar. 2008 < <http://www.conncoll.edu/is/info-resources/special-collections/masterlist.html> > Albert Nelson Marquis, Editor. *Who's Who in New England* (Chicago, IL: A.N. Marquis & Co., 1909) 711.

<sup>230</sup> Palmer auditorium at conn college 25 yrs. old. Press release, 29 Oct. 1964. Campus and Buildings, Box 11, Folder: Buildings: Building Palmer Auditorium – Construction and Dedication. New London: The Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>231</sup> The Frank Loomis Palmer Auditorium, Material for Campus Guides, 1938-39.

<sup>232</sup> [1938.] “College Selects Auditorium Site.” *The Hartford Times*.



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exterior of the building were designed in what then was called a “modern” style, but would currently be described as Art Deco.<sup>233</sup> This aesthetic is most evident in the auditorium’s flat roof and simple, streamlined interior fixtures. Construction began in 1938, but was disrupted when the great hurricane of that year destroyed the northern section of the building, toppling a crane as well as much of the support scaffolding.<sup>234</sup>

The auditorium was planned in such a way there were two entrances on grade; one looking onto the Campus Green, and another that faced the parking lot on the basement level. Used primarily by the College, the entrance facing the Campus Green featured five sections of glass, three of which were doors, with decorative metal ironwork over them. The abstract ornamentation of the grilles supports the modern characteristics of the space, and stripped-down versions of classical pilasters between each section of glass continue the building’s decidedly contemporary appearance.<sup>235</sup> Beyond the doors, a narrow vestibule opened into a lobby that gave access to the auditorium’s balcony level. On the floor below, amenities included a large rehearsal space with attached professor’s office, library, scene shop, and prop room.

Upon entering from the parking lot, a visitor would pass underneath the metal marquee and into the lobby. A hallway to the east led to offices, bathrooms, and the green room. Beyond the lobby was a foyer that ran the length of the building and provided the main entrances to the auditorium. With seating for 1,334, the auditorium featured both a

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<sup>233</sup> 1939. “New Connecticut College Auditorium.” *New York Herald Tribune*, 29 Oct.

<sup>234</sup> Oral recollections of Miss Elizabeth C. Wright to Anne Taylor, 1957-1958. Campus and Buildings, Box 11, Folder: Buildings: Building Palmer Auditorium – Construction and Dedication. New London: The Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>235</sup> “New Connecticut College Auditorium.”



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Hammond organ as well as a film projection room.<sup>236</sup> The sidewalls of the auditorium curved towards the stage, enhancing acoustics while concealing stairwells leading to the third floor offices. Also located on the third floor were the innovative, sound proofed listening rooms where, according to newspaper reports of the dedication, “students can listen to their favorite classical records, without disturbing people around them.”<sup>237</sup>

In arranging his bequest, Palmer’s daughters made clear their father’s desire for the auditorium, like the library built by his uncle, to serve not only the Connecticut College community, but the people of New London County.<sup>238</sup> In its early years, Palmer Auditorium hosted high school commencements, community theater practices and performances, New London Garden Club meetings, and even religious services.<sup>239</sup> Public access to the site was achieved by adding a road off of Mohegan Avenue which led directly to the auditorium and a 209-car parking lot on the present site of Cummings Art Center. Unlike other structures on the campus, Palmer Auditorium bore its signage on the façade facing Mohegan Avenue, readily visible to visitors. However, even with features promoting it as a space available to the wider public, Palmer Auditorium seems to maintain a sense of separate spheres for town and gown. The entrance facing the Campus Green is clearly intended for the use of students, with no marquee or box office, but

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<sup>236</sup> The Frank Loomis Palmer Auditorium, Material for Campus Guides, 1938-39.

<sup>237</sup> March 1940. “Connecticut College Auditorium.” *Architectural Forum*: 157-160.  
1939. “Palmer Auditorium Appropriately Dedicated.” *The New London Evening Day*, 3 Nov.

<sup>238</sup> The Frank Loomis Palmer Auditorium, Material for Campus Guides, 1938-39.

<sup>239</sup> H. G. Westcott, correspondence. 12 Mar. 1945. Campus and Buildings, Box 11, Folder: Buildings: Palmer Auditorium – Building Uses. New London: The Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

Dorothy Schaffter, correspondence. 19 Mar. 1945. Campus and Buildings, Box 11, Folder: Buildings: Palmer Auditorium – Building Uses. New London: The Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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offering direct access to the classrooms. Separate restroom facilities on each floor meant that the public using the ground floor would have little reason to venture to the level above. In essence, the auditorium promotes public use, while also drawing a boundary between the College and the outside world.

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*Figure 58. The interior of Palmer Auditorium featured rippled sidewalls and a multi-layered ceiling to improve acoustics. Photograph by Gottscho-Schleisner, 1939.*

Palmer Auditorium has undergone few significant changes over its lifetime. In 1965, in preparation for a performance by the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, a new acoustic shell consisting of fiberglass panels resting on an aluminum frame was installed

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on the ceiling and walls of the auditorium.<sup>240</sup> With the 1968 construction of Cummings Art Center, the carriage entrance was enclosed into what is now Castle Court.<sup>241</sup>

Alterations notwithstanding, Palmer Auditorium has hosted such luminaries as Frank Lloyd Wright, Eleanor Roosevelt, Robert Frost, and Hillary Clinton.<sup>242</sup> The auditorium space and teaching facilities continue to serve the College community as the largest venue on campus and as home to the theater department.<sup>243</sup> Finally, in keeping with the Palmer family's request, the auditorium continues to be used by the New London community for theater camps, concerts, and conferences.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> 1965. "College's New Acoustical Shell Making First Appearance Tonight," *The New London Day*, 10 Nov.

<sup>241</sup> Noyes 200.

<sup>242</sup> 1964. "Palmer Auditorium at 25: Service to the Community," *The New London Day*, 31 Oct.

<sup>243</sup> "Connecticut College – Theater," *Connecticut College*, 7 Nov. 2006, accessed 1 Mar. 2008 < <http://www.conncoll.edu/academics/departments/theater/facilities.html> >

<sup>244</sup> Robert A. Richter, "FW: Palmer Auditorium Rental History." Email describing current rentals of auditorium. 27 Feb. 2008.

**Winthrop Annex**

1940

**Renovations** 1968, early 2000s

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

*Figure 59. Photograph by Phillip A. Biscuti, 1968.*

A simple, one-story building just to the north of Winthrop House, Winthrop Annex has served a wide range of purposes since its construction. First appearing on a 1942 campus map and labeled “Carpenter’s Shop,” the structure may have been built to replace a workshop torn down to make way for Smith and Burdick Houses, which were begun in 1940.<sup>245</sup> The space served as a workshop until the late 1960s, when it was refurbished as the language laboratory.<sup>246</sup> This facility offered students the opportunity to practice their listening comprehension skills through the use of individual audio units, an

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<sup>245</sup> 1938, 1942 Connecticut College Handbook, Office of Student Life. C Book Box 4. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>246</sup> 1968. “Conn Fire System Nears Completion,” *ConnCensus*, 24 Sept.: 3.

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advanced feature at the time. The building functioned as the language lab until the mid 1980s, when the total renovation of the former Palmer Library into Blaustein Humanities Center consolidated the language departments and provided a new space for the laboratory.<sup>247</sup> At this point, the annex took on its role as a seminar space and workshop for the computer science department, a function it continued to serve through the late 2000s.

While the architect of the annex is unknown, the structure's simple form and inconsequential original function suggest that the space was built without the use of professional design expertise. Rectangular in footprint, with a low, hipped roof, the annex seems to have been designed to be as inconspicuous as possible. While now featuring double-hung windows and asphalt shingles, the original workshop presumably featured a simple metal roof and wide, barn doors to allow for large objects to be moved into the space with ease. Currently, the interior is divided into two large rooms on either end of the building, with an office, corridor, and mechanical room occupying the space at the center of the annex.

In the maps of the 1940s, the annex represents one of the most northerly buildings of the College, a zone shared by such service structures as the stables and storage sheds. Its changing use speaks to the expansion of campus in multiple ways. With the nearby construction of Katherine Blunt House, Crozier Williams Center, and North Complex, the annex assumed a role more befitting for its increasingly central position.

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<sup>247</sup> Address to The Newcomen Society by Dr. Oakes Ames. 1 Aug. 1986. President's Files Box 5, Folder Oakes Ames General Information. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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The building's use as an academic facility from the late 1960s onward speaks to the growth of the College's academics to meet the demands of the increased mid-century enrollments, when many spaces were pressed into service to avoid unnecessary construction. The building's change in use also parallels the provision of expanded facilities required for College's Physical Plant department, which by 1968 had moved to a larger structure on the south end of the campus.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> "Conn Fire System Nears Completion."

**Grace Smith House and Alverna Burdick House (Originally called East House)**

*1940, Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon*

**Renovations**

*Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon 1942, 1967, Noyes Vogt Architects 1992, 1996, 2008*



*Figure 60. Rendering by Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, 1939.*

The 1940 completion of attached Grace Smith House and Alverna Burdick House was a monumental step in the development of Connecticut College. From the time the College had opened its doors, housing the ever-growing number of students had proved an administrative dilemma. Boardinghouses sprung up in the neighborhoods surrounding the school, especially in the Riverside community directly across Mohegan Avenue, to profit from the yearly overflow. By the mid 1920s, the College had agreements with over twenty such establishments to house both students and faculty alike.<sup>249</sup> President Katherine Blunt, who felt strongly that unregulated and off-campus housing weakened both the sense of College community and the health of its students, made the construction of student accommodations her top priority, overseeing the erection of seven residences

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<sup>249</sup> Off-campus housing notes of Getrude Noyes.

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during her tenure. Completing the drive to house every fulltime student in a College-owned and operated structure within the bounds of the campus, Smith House and Burdick House marked the end of the boardinghouse era.<sup>250</sup>

The residences were made possible through donations from a wide range of sources as well as through College funds. Mrs. Grace Ellis Smith left a large sum that allowed for the completion of the building that bears her name. A group of women from Fairfield, prompted by the completion of Windham House in 1933, organized an operation to collect money for a residence named after their own county. Like the Windham House Association, the group held teas, lectures, and socials to raise funds. Also like the Windham County campaign, the fund grew at an unexpectedly slow pace. Both the county and the association fared poorly in the 1938 Hurricane, which ravaged the Connecticut coastline and caused the death of one of the group's founders, Mrs. Helen Edwards Lewis.<sup>251</sup> By 1940, the fund totaled only \$2,500, but the desire to complete the housing necessary to end the off-campus issue prompted Katherine Blunt to forge ahead.<sup>252</sup>

Forming the north side of the original Collegiate Gothic quadrangle, Smith House and Burdick House were built to provide accommodations for first-year students.<sup>253</sup> At the time of their construction, the design for the structures represented the most austere work done by Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon for the College. Although built in the native

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<sup>250</sup> 1940. "College Dormitory Ground is Broken in New London," *The Hartford Times*, April.

<sup>251</sup> 1938. "Memorial Planned for Mrs. H.L. Lewis," *The New London Day*.

<sup>252</sup> Fairfield County Dormitory Fund. 15 Apr. 1940. Campus and Buildings Box 5, Folder: Fairfield House: A Proposed Dormitory. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>253</sup> "College Dormitory Ground is Broken in New London."



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granite used in previous building, the structure employed little in the way of exterior ornament beyond a simple, stone stringcourse and capping entablature. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the project was elimination of the steeply pitched and slate-tiled roofs that distinguished all earlier student residences. The use of a flat roof, in conjunction with the configuration of two-story wings joined by a central, four-story mass, gave the building a contemporary appearance of rectangular blocks that had been joined to create several levels of space. Beyond the granite facing however, other traditional elements such as the curving wooden bay window to denote the dining hall and raised entrance indicated that, while simple in looks, the new residences still fell under the umbrella of Georgian architectural styling.

The relatively unadorned aesthetic was equally apparent in the structure's interior. Unlike the earlier Blunt-era residences, Smith House and Burdick House featured only two living rooms and a shared dining room on the ground floor. The basement of the structure was designed to contain an array of facilities completely unrelated to its residential purpose, including a dance studio in the space beneath the dining hall and a snack shop beneath Burdick House. The multifunctional approach to Smith House and Burdick House marks the first and only instance in which the College combined purpose-built residences and academic and recreational spaces. Two years after the completion of Smith and Burdick Houses, a wing added to the north end of Burdick House provided a faculty dining room and lounge, furthering the multi-function nature of the space.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Morse, Grace Smith House and Alverna Burdick House. "Plan of Burdick Basement." Campus and Buildings Box 2, Folder: Burdick House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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The design and early use of Smith House and Burdick House indicates an important shift in the role of student residences. Whereas the earliest accommodations sought to appear as distinguished homes, and the structures lining the west side of the Campus Green attempted to instill students with social grace and appreciation of beauty through attractive and numerous public spaces, the construction of Smith and Burdick placed the value on accommodating as many students as possible. The ground floors of both houses were largely devoted to single rooms, and a shared dining room allowed for even more space for lodging. That much of the basement, which would have been dedicated to parlors and game rooms in the earlier structures, was given over to non-residential functions underlines the need to provide space to enhance the overall development of College facilities. The amenities included in Smith House and Burdick House illustrate that the administration saw the two dormitories as essential not only to provide students with on-campus housing but also to improve the College's image with hopes of increasing enrollments.

By the late 2000s, Smith and Burdick Houses sustain an even wider range of activities than it did at the time of their construction. Due to a renovation to the kitchen in the late 1960s, the main dining room survived the budget cuts that closed many of the other campus dining facilities, and still serves breakfast and lunch to residents of central campus.<sup>255</sup> What was once the faculty lounge now houses the Gay, Lesbian, Transsexual, Queer, and Questioning Resource Center, while the neighboring faculty dining room was converted to the Architectural Studies design studio. The former dance studio in the

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<sup>255</sup> News from Connecticut College. 26 Dec. 1967. Campus and Buildings Box 2, Folder: Burdick House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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basement serves as the Women's Center, opened to serve as a meeting space for the feminist clubs on campus. Given these many student-run functions, combined with the 2008 renovation of both living rooms as part of the integrated learning space initiative, Smith and Burdick Houses serves as a model for the multiuse dormitory model now popular in collegiate planning.

**Mary Harkness Chapel**

*James Gamble Rogers 1940*

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

*Figure 61. Photograph by S.B. Smith, 1940*

Built on a site where it would be visible from every structure on the rapidly expanding campus, Mary Harkness Chapel played an integral role in President Katherine Blunt's work to enrich the non-academic aspects of student life at Connecticut College.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> 1938. "Mrs. Harkness Presents Chapel to College," *The New London Day*. 13 June. Katherine Blunt – Biographical Material. Presidents Box 2, Folder: Blunt, General Information. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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Completed at the end of the 1939-1940 academic term, Harkness Chapel crowned a year of construction that included Palmer Auditorium, Frederic Bill Hall, and Emily Abbey House.<sup>257</sup> The Chapel represented the second outcome of the friendship between President Katherine Blunt and Mary Stillman Harkness. Harkness, who had responded to the student-housing crisis by donating the funds for Harkness House only six years before, found the construction of a chapel to be equally crucial in the troubled political atmosphere of the years directly before World War II. Her belief that students needed a place to express their faith is succinctly summed up in a large inscription engraved directly over the front entrance: “Built through the generous gift of Mary Stillman Harkness to express her belief in the importance of religion to college students.”

While her gift of funds for the construction of Harkness House invited President Blunt to employ whichever firm presented the most suitable plans, Harkness supplied her own architect to design the chapel.<sup>258</sup> Her choice of James Gamble Rogers represented a temporary hiatus from the College’s otherwise sole use of Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon between 1930 and 1965. Harkness’ decision to use Rogers makes sense; as the preferred architect of Harkness’ philanthropist husband, Rogers had built Harkness donated structures at Yale, Northwestern University, and Columbia, as well as the couple’s summer residence in Waterford, Connecticut. Rogers was well known for his neo-Gothic designs, popular in collegiate structures aspiring to evoke the long-established universities of Europe. For Harkness Chapel, however, Rogers chose to minimize the

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<sup>257</sup> The Harkness Chapel at Connecticut College. 1940. Year in review pamphlet. Campus and Buildings Box 6, Folder: Buildings: Harkness Chapel. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>258</sup> Harkness Chapel. Descriptive Pamphlet. Campus and Buildings Box 6, Folder: Buildings: Harkness Chapel. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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Gothic influence on the chapel's exterior in order to express a style "reminiscent of the early New England churches" that he called "colonial Georgian."<sup>259</sup> Using granite and limestone facing to draw links to the neighboring Windham House, Knowlton House, and Palmer Library, Rogers executed the massive pediment on the front façade of the chapel in smooth blocks to emphasize a colonial simplicity grown to a magnificent size. Below, a central portico flanked by Ionic columns, and tall, white-framed windows again referenced traditions in New England church architecture, while also relating the structure to similarly adorned buildings across the campus.<sup>260</sup> In spite of the oversized appearance of the façade, by far the most imposing aspect of the chapel was the steeple, ornately fashioned with clock faces on each of the four sides, small stone obelisks, and an octagonal, louvred structure to house the bells.

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<sup>259</sup> "Harkness House," *The Commonwealth Fund*, accessed 1 Mar. 2010. <  
<http://www.commonwealthfund.org/Content/Publications/Other/2004/Aug/Harkness-House.aspx> >

Harkness Chapel. Descriptive Pamphlet.

<sup>260</sup> 1940. "Chapel to be Consecrated at Connecticut College," *The New Haven Register*, 14 Jan.

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
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*Figure 62. The interior of Harkness Chapel,  
as viewed from the front vestibule.  
Photograph by Phillip L. Caprener, 1940.*

Within the chapel, Rogers's partiality for Gothic becomes more evident. The arrangement featured a vestibule running the width of the front façade, and leading into a nave with seating for 470 people. The altar and pulpit, separated from the nave within a slightly smaller alcove at the north end of the structure, stood against the screen of an immense organ surrounded by carved figures of angels. Dark wood paneling lined the bottom section of the nave walls, and soaring stained-glass windows admitted a "subdued" and "warm" light. The circular windows adorning both ends of the Chapel, colonial in their exterior form, appear as small rose windows from the interior to heighten the connection to Gothic churches. The intricately carved and painted ceiling, supporting

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cast-iron chandeliers from its massive beams, completed the Gothic ambience of the space.<sup>261</sup>

In its attention to overwhelming scale and rich ornament, Harkness Chapel seems to stand out in a period when other campus structures adopt the streamlined and contemporary in form and function. The contrast addresses the extent to which, after a decade of autonomy in design, the visual vocabulary of the campus had been defined by the work of Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon. Rogers's design for the chapel, however, was driven by Harkness and Blunt's desires for the structure to give Connecticut College an appearance of longstanding tradition. At many schools, chapels stood as the earliest building. These structures founded the institution in both a local and academic context, as universities frequently began as seminaries. At Connecticut College, the academic quality of the chapel was expressed through the inclusion of a library of religious texts and office for the head of the Religion department, both located in the structure's basement. Harkness Chapel was the last building at the College to be designed in a style meant to appear earlier than the school's 1911 founding and thus represents a conclusion, as the completion of Palmer Auditorium and Frederic Bill Hall in the same year herald in the dawn of a new era of campus architecture.<sup>262</sup>

While the physical changes to Harkness Chapel since its completion have been few, the religious facet of the student life that the chapel represents has continued to expand, embracing the faith of all students. The cross that once adorned the bell tower was replaced by a weathervane in 1988, in an effort to make the structure less sectarian and more welcoming. Changes to the interior, such as the removal of the altar cross or

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<sup>261</sup> "Chapel to be Consecrated at Connecticut College."

<sup>262</sup> "The Harkness Chapel at Connecticut College."



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stained glass depicting scenes from Christ's life, were rejected on the grounds that both features were integral to the building's historic and artistic integrity.

**Single Family Faculty Housing at 7 & 8 North Ridge Road**

*Keith Sellers Heine, 1940*

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

*Figure 63. Photograph by William C. Peck, 1940[?]*

Once a series of nine small units running from the land just to the north of Katherine Blunt House to Benham Avenue, the faculty houses on North Ridge Road are unique features on the College campus. Constructed privately in the early 1940s but placed on College-owned land, the two remaining structures represent one of President Katherine Blunt's many efforts to provide faculty and staff with housing as modern and well-appointed as that being built for the student body. Previous to President Blunt's administration, faculty housing came primarily in one of two forms: the housefellow's suites within the student residences halls and off-campus boardinghouses in the Riverside neighborhood. While faculty also made use of several small cottages on the College

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grounds in the early years of the school's operation, the expansion of the campus in the 1920s and 1930s mandated the demolition of many of these structures. Moreover, with the rapid expansion of the student body and diversification of the curriculum, the faculty, too, increased in size and accommodation became a priority.

To facilitate faculty housing, President Blunt and administrative associate William E. Parsons made a general plan that set aside an area on the north east end of the campus and divided it into 16 individual lots.<sup>263</sup> The College funded the laying of roads as well as the installation of water lines, with the plots leased by individual faculty members who made formal request to the College.<sup>264</sup> The houses constructed were paid for by the resident, who would retain the title to the building during his or her time with the College. Should the faculty member leave the school, the plot reverted to the College, which also purchased the house at the original cost of construction.

Once the land was leased, the faculty member was responsible for securing an architect and contractor. One important aspect of the contract was a stipulation mandating that faculty "proceed to erect upon the leased premises a new single-family type building costing not less than Six Thousand Dollars," to ensure that each house met the College's

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<sup>263</sup> Joseph Child, correspondence. 17 Mar. 1939. Campus and Buildings Box 5, Folder: Faculty Housing North Ridge. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>264</sup> Proposed Cost of Roads and Water Lines. A.B. Lambdin, 16 Mar. 1939. Campus and Buildings Box 5, Folder: Faculty Housing North Ridge. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

Mary Mckee to President Blunt. Correspondence, 11 Mar. 1939. Campus and Buildings Box 5, Folder: Faculty Housing North Ridge. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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standard of quality and durability.<sup>265</sup> In order to aid the faculty in the process, the College recommended the services of architect Keith Sellers Heine. Heine, who would go on to be the President of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, appears to have specialized in inexpensive and easy to erect homes of the sort that were gaining popularity in the postwar years.<sup>266</sup> In a 1936 article in the Berks County, Pennsylvania, *Reading Eagle*, Heine is credited with the design of a series of award-winning \$5,000 homes that, while modernly equipped, embrace the “ever popular colonial type.”<sup>267</sup> Heine had also designed a house for faculty member Elizabeth C. Wright only a few years before, another reason he may have been selected to design these homes.

The houses at seven and eight North Ridge Road are typical of Heine’s designs of the 1930s, with a compact and efficient arrangement of rooms encased in a Colonial Revival shell. Both houses were built with wooden frame construction on a foundation of poured concrete. With gabled roofs finished in asphalt shingles and exterior walls clad in wood siding, both houses made use of innovative and cost-effective materials. Both houses feature garages, 7 North Ridge with a two car type and 8 North Ridge with a single car variety, emphasizing the increasing focus on automobile travel in American culture. Key to the domestic appearance of each house is the addition of black shutters surrounding each window, as well as brick chimneys implying a traditional, hearth-centered interior. Both seven and eight North Ridge Road contained four bedrooms and

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<sup>265</sup> Faculty Housing Contract. 1939. Campus and Buildings Box 5, Folder: Faculty Housing North Ridge. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>266</sup> Keith Seller Heine. 1955. *How Teamwork Builds Schools*. 13 Nov., sec. S, p. 12.

<sup>267</sup> 1936. “New Styles Win Approval of Architects,” *The Berks County Reading Eagle*, 7 June: sec. 1, p. 10.

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two bathrooms.<sup>268</sup> Although the house at seven North Ridge was slightly larger, with a family room included on the ground floor, both structures were organized so that all public rooms are on the first floor and private bedrooms on second.

Although the College grew substantially to the north in subsequent decades, at the time of their construction seven and eight North Ridge Road were quite isolated from the rest of campus. In fact, the only other structure near the houses was the home of professors Ruth Stanwood and Elizabeth Holden Harris, built only a few years before. Choosing the borders of campus as the appropriate site for faculty housing was not an established tradition at the College. In the early years, many of the female staff members lived within the student residences as housefellows. Other faculty lived in Thames Hall (the College's first refectory), or one of the pre-existing cottages scattered across the campus. These close quarters, allowed faculty to supervise students from their own residences, lending the College a familial social organization considered key to the early administration. Even as students were accommodated in the boardinghouses of the Riverside neighborhood during the 1920s and 1930s, faculty lived alongside them, continuing to act in loco parentis to a marked degree. Although faculty and staff continued to live in the student residences until the early 1960s, the development of faculty housing away from the core of campus reflects a shift in the mindset of both students and professors whereby autonomy and personal space of both parties appears to take priority over earlier household models. The North Ridge development was followed by the Winchester Road houses and River Ridge apartments, two more housing developments that placed faculty even further from campus. The two Colonial Revival

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<sup>268</sup> Valuation Services, Municipal Assessment, 9 Benham Avenue, Town of Waterford, Account: 023802, 2008.

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homes on North Ridge Road signal the beginning of an era when the campus was designated as a student space, with faculty appearing only to fulfill their role as instructors before returning to their independent domiciles.

Both numbers 7 and 8 North Ridge Road were sold back to the College in 1942, perhaps as the faculty living within them moved to dwellings even further removed from the College campus. With the 1963 completion of North Complex, the two residences became more incorporated within the fabric of the campus, transitioning from seemingly separate entities to ones clearly associated to the institutional structures nearby. As of 2010, the structures continued to serve as faculty and staff housing, having undergone no major renovations since their construction.

**Katherine Blunt House**

*Shreve, Lamb and Harmon, 1946*

**Renovations** *Noyes Vogt Architects, 2008*



*Figure 64. Photograph, 1950[?]*

Now surrounded by dense hedges and towering trees, upon its completion in 1946 Katherine Blunt House appeared far more out of place on the undeveloped northern fringe of campus. The residential hall represented the last construction project taken on under the leadership of third President of the College Katherine Blunt, who retired soon after the structure was dedicated. One of President Blunt's greatest accomplishments in her nearly fifteen years at Connecticut College had been to succeed in housing all students on the College grounds with the completion of Smith and Burdick Houses in

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1940, eliminating the need for unregulated and off-campus student boardinghouses.<sup>269</sup>

After a brief hiatus during the years of World War II, President Blunt returned to construct the first dormitory since the College's commencement that would allow for increases to student enrollment without the concern of providing them with housing. Katherine Blunt House was built in only eight months, an especially impressive feat considering the post-war shortages in material and manpower, and for this reason was nicknamed "the miracle" by its occupants.<sup>270</sup>

The plan for the student residence that took Katherine Blunt's name was a near exact copy of Jane Addams House, built in 1936 at the height of Blunt's construction campaign.<sup>271</sup> Like its twin to the South, Katherine Blunt House employed the same granite and limestone facing, curving wooden extension to denote the building's dining room, and streamlined decoration surrounding its entryways. A terraced front façade, mirroring that of Jane Addams, faced Mohegan Avenue, orienting Katherine Blunt House towards the views of Mamacoke Island and the Thames River. Minor differences from the plan of Jane Addams House, such as the fitting of the basement to house a greater number of staff and the expansion of one wing to fit an additional room on each floor, attest to the desire to house as many students as possible in the new structure. The gracious living spaces of the structure's ground floor, however, remained key to the design of Katherine Blunt House.

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<sup>269</sup> Off-campus housing notes of Getrude Noyes.

<sup>270</sup> Morse, Katherine Blunt House.

<sup>271</sup> Memorandum Re: 1946 Dormitory Connecticut College. Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon to President Katherine Blunt. Campus and Buildings Box 7: Katherine Blunt House – Planning and Construction. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.





*Figure 65. Like each of the student residences built during Katherine Blunt's presidency, the building that took her name featured many spaces for student socialization. Photograph, 1946.*

Like the three, nearby Collegiate Gothic houses, Katherine Blunt House presents a view of how the Connecticut College campus could have developed. Maintaining the Colonial Revival style with its stone construction, classical detailing, and gabled, slate tile roof, the Katherine Blunt House suggests that the College intended to continue the aesthetic of the residences lining the Campus Green on the northern half of the campus. This notion is supported by the fact that one of the eastern walls of Katherine Blunt house was left unfinished, with plans to add a replica of Freeman House directly to its south. Interior functions, such as the large lobby finished in bright wallpaper, light-filled dining room, and gracious living room with nearby lounges, point to the continuance of a

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specific style of both interior arrangement and attached social expectations developed in the residences of the Blunt era. The ground floor housefellow's suite, live-in maid's quarters and dieticians office (now a student room) speak an era of staff involvement in student life, both from the perspective of supervision as well as providing a healthy environment.<sup>272</sup> Within fifteen years of Katherine Blunt House's completion, however, north campus would appear a distinct break from these standards, instead embracing a modernist approach of visually simplified structures built with innovative materials and open plan interiors. In essence, although built just after World War II and on the cusp of the mid-century move to contemporary design, Katherine Blunt House symbolizes the values of the interwar College.

As the modern buildings of north campus were constructed around it in the 1950s and 1960s, Katherine Blunt House remained largely unchanged. The addition of Larrabee House on the site once intended for the Freeman House replicate entailed no significant alterations to the structure other than the joining of Katherine Blunt's kitchen to the newer building's dining room. Both dining rooms closed in the mid 1970s, in an effort to reduce overall expenses without dismissing faculty or cutting courses. As of 2010, the building featured two recently refurbished facilities: a common room renovated as part of the integrated learning space initiative, as well as an updated, student-run coffee shop in the former dining room. Like its twin to the south, Katherine Blunt House remains a popular choice for students who desire the aged, Colonial Revival atmosphere of the

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<sup>272</sup> Connecticut College Dormitory Floor Plans, Katherine Blunt House. Campus and Buildings Box 7, Folder: Katherine Blunt House – Planning and Construction. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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building as well as its close proximity to Harris refectory, the Athletic Complex, and Crozier Williams Student Center.

“Responsive to the special interests of our age”<sup>273</sup>

**The Modern Campus**

**1946-1961**

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

*Figure 66. Students admire the progress of Crozier  
Williams Center, one of several modern structures  
added to the campus during the 1950s.  
Photograph, 1957.*

*In the postwar years, Connecticut College adopted a progressive approach to higher education emphasized by a series of distinctly modern additions to the campus. Like the buildings of the Blunt era, many of the new structures sought to improve the quality of student life, but with more of a focus on physical health and wellness. The period also saw the influx of returning World War II veterans and an ensuing media campaign that encouraged women to forego college in exchange for family life. This social atmosphere shaped campus expansion*

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<sup>273</sup> A Proposal to Improve Science Facilities. Campus and Buildings Box 6, Folder Hale Laboratory – Funding and Planning. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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*programs of the 1950s as colleges and universities built in anticipation of a high number of veteran's children. Meanwhile, those concerned that the nation was losing its footing in the Cold War called for collegiate research in industrial fields and urged scientific and political study for men and women alike.*

The first decade of construction at Connecticut College defined the fundamental structures necessary to house and educate a small and family-like student body. By late 1920s, the start of an ambitious building plan expanded the fledgling College into a developed and modern institution. The period from the beginning of World War II until the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the College in 1961 saw physical development focused on updating or replacing the thirty year old structures on which the campus was founded. In multiple cases, the buildings built during the postwar years represent the continued influence of President Blunt, who left a detailed outline of the College's most urgent physical needs. The buildings of this period were largely intended to enhance student life in a continuance of the 1930s mindset that colleges should provide their residents with a range of facilities to encourage not only academics, but also physical and social wellbeing. Architecturally, these structures broke from the aesthetic of the previous decades, illustrating changing views regarding campus architecture: what it should look like and how built spaces might respond to rapidly changing needs of the college community.

Both socially and economically, the 1940s was a decade defined by World War II. Much like World War I, the industrial boom surrounding the conflict reversed the economic hardship that colored the previous decade, leading into a postwar period of abundance and personal consumption. Also similar to World War I was the valuable role women played in the wartime workforce. While a generation of men fought overseas, women all over the nation took positions in factories, on construction sites, and in other

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industrial pursuits. Media sources romanticized the workingwoman, propagating images such as that of the tough and committed Rosie the Riveter. Underlying this support was the expectation, increasingly vocalized as the war drew to a close, that women would return to the domestic sphere in peacetime. Even as the years just after the war saw a higher number of women working than ever before, the national demand was for a woman to marry, have children, and allow her husband to act as the family provider. The same media that had been so supportive of Rosie the Riveter relabeled feminine success as the ability to catch the right man and become a postwar homemaker. The rise of the private and self-engaged “atomic family,” supported by the increase of spacious suburban housing developments, defined the following decade. Newfound fears surrounding the Cold War led many men and women who had been active in aid organizations during the decade of the New Deal to leave politics in the hands of experts and focus on their own concerns and desires.<sup>274</sup> Still, increased parameters of personal ownership, now embracing automobiles, television, and home appliances caused many women to choose part-time, non-career oriented work in order to purchase the items they viewed as crucial to homemaking. By the mid 1950s, marriage based on mutual happiness, material gain, and shared responsibility through gender specific jobs became the ideal.<sup>275</sup>

The collegiate atmosphere for women during the 1940s and 1950s was also greatly altered by World War II. The GI Bill, which went into effect in 1944, gave every returning veteran access to college-level education. By 1947, nearly half of all students in institutions of higher education were veterans. Women, too, were attending college in greater numbers, many ignoring small, single sex colleges to take advantage of a greater

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<sup>274</sup> Cott 476-491.

<sup>275</sup> Evans 229-238.

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range of state universities. The high number of young people entering college, combined with national pressures to settle down, created a campus culture in which female students were taught to prioritize finding a husband over graduating. The term “pursuing an MRS degree” referred to the over fifty percent of women who dropped out of college to marry. Encouraged by professors and vocational counselors, many college women felt that there was no point to finishing a degree if they had secured themselves a place in middle class domesticity through an early marriage.<sup>276</sup> This trend was well represented at Connecticut College, which lost thirty-five members of the class of 1947 to betrothals, second only to the class of 1948, which saw thirty-six students drop out upon becoming engaged.<sup>277</sup>

Although many newlywed women took part-time or temporary work to support their husbands’ educations and enable the purchase of the abovementioned domestic devices, the female students who did seek long term professions after college often found their choices limited to the gendered careers of the decades previous, such as secretarial jobs or retail work. Meanwhile, reformers called for even more domestic education in women’s colleges, demanding a move away from curriculums based on the instruction of men. Many women attending college in the 1950s returned to an attitude more commonly associated with earliest all-female schools, which was to prepare oneself to be “well-educated housewives,” with the mid-century addition of “some hard skills to fall back on in case of emergency.”<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Cott 498-500.

<sup>277</sup> *1947 Koine, 1948 Koine*. Yearbooks. Published at Connecticut College, New London. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>278</sup> Cott 498.

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While wartime halted most campus construction, the issue of how to educate the massive numbers of young men and women entering college directly postwar expressed itself in a total restructuring of the collegiate built environment. The increase in applicants and demand for a wider range of scientific and vocational studies “rendered the traditional forms of campus design obsolete in many respects.”<sup>279</sup> Schools abandoned their physical development plans, drawn decades earlier, due to their limited scale and lack of flexibility. In 1947, Harvard Graduate School of Design founder Joseph Hudnut called for a loosening of the “corset” of traditional campus plans and an openness to new building forms as the only way to interpret the “unpredictable creature” that was the modern college. The need for large, adaptable spaces that could also be easily and inexpensively added onto as enrollment grew pressed many colleges to embrace modern architecture. In order to ensure that every building was given the space it required for potential future growth, campus planners turned away from aligned and axial site plans and began focusing on each structure as an individual entity. Under President A. Whitney Griswold, Yale University became an “architectural laboratory” of strikingly modern and visually contrasting structures such as Louis Kahn’s 1951 Art Gallery and Eero Saarinen’s 1953 Ingalls Rink. The American college campus, once defined by conservative and historically oriented design, was now a hotbed of innovative architectural concepts.<sup>280</sup>

Modern architecture reached the Connecticut College campus with the 1951 completion of Warnshuis Health Center. A purpose-built infirmary had long been an ambition of President Blunt, who recognized the shortcomings of the former

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<sup>279</sup> Turner 249.

<sup>280</sup> Turner 262.



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accommodations in Bosworth House. In a 1945 pamphlet, the proposed infirmary is illustrated as a heavily built and traditionally styled stone structure.<sup>281</sup> The projected expense of the structure paired with added input of the College physician altered the plans significantly in the years that followed, resulting in a cantilevered structure principally executed in concrete block, brick, and glass.<sup>282</sup> While significantly less costly than stone, the use of modern materials and construction techniques also emphasized Warnshuis Infirmary's state-of-the-art function. Equally important as its use of modern vocabulary was the site chosen for Warnshuis. To the North of Windham House, the new health center was placed way from both the Campus Green as well as the historic core of the College. While in a sense, the separation alluded to the basic desire to isolate unwell students from their peers, it also aided in establishing the northern segment of the College grounds as an area in which to experiment with new architectural forms without disrupting the established order of the Collegiate Gothic and Colonial Revival arrangements. Fittingly, the buildings that would develop on the empty land surrounding the infirmary in the decade to come would embrace an increasingly Modernist character, reflecting the acceptance of this new style of campus planning.

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<sup>281</sup> "The Proposed Infirmary At Connecticut College." 10 Dec. 1945. Campus and Buildings Box 4: Folder: Warnshuis Infirmary. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>282</sup> President Blunt to Mr. Arthur J. Connell, correspondence. 19 Jul. 1950. Campus and Buildings Box 4: Folder: Warnshuis Infirmary. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.



*Figure 67. With its dramatic cantilever and unadorned facades, Warnshuis Infirmary was the first truly modern structure on the campus. Photograph, 1951.*

At the time of its construction, Warnshuis Infirmary exceeded the needs of the Connecticut College community. It was planned, like the three modern buildings that soon followed it, in anticipation of future growth. By the late 1950s, the children born during the prosperous and family-oriented years after the war were just entering high school. The College administration anticipated swelling application rates by the beginning of the following decade and hurried to prepare.<sup>283</sup> Low and flat-roofed Hale Laboratory, the new home for the Chemistry Department, was completed in 1954. The academic structure contained multiple independent research labs, as well as a lecture hall

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<sup>283</sup> Turner 260.

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capable of seating 150 students.<sup>284</sup> Larrabee House, the first modern dormitory, contained single and double rooms for 100 additional students as well as a dining hall doubling the size of the attached Katherine Blunt House facility.<sup>285</sup> The same year, the College celebrated the construction of Crozier Williams Center, which housed an alumni wing, state-of-the-art gymnasium with natatorium, and numerous, open plan spaces for student recreation.

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
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*Figure 68. Larrabee House, the first student residence not built of granite and limestone blocks. Photograph by Joseph Molitor, 1960.*

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<sup>284</sup> Proposal to Improve Science Facilities. 1954. "College Dedicates Hale Laboratory; Ambassador Talks," *The New London, Conn Evening Day*.

<sup>285</sup> Connecticut College Dormitory Floor Plans, Larrabee House. Campus and Buildings Box 8, Folder: Larrabee House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives.

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The modern designs used for Warnshuis Infirmary, Hale Laboratory, Larrabee House, and Crozier Williams Center reflected a change in architectural customs brought on by necessity. The College needed to construct multiple facilities, with limits on both time and finances, in order to prepare for the generation to come. When, at the opening of Larrabee House, President Park declared that the College could no longer afford cut stone, her words carried the double meaning. In the most basic sense, President Park references a lack of funding in the years following World War II. Moreover though, her words speak to the fact that the days cautiously planned and heavily constructed buildings must give way to the demands of a quickly growing campus and the forms that best suited immediate, but ever-changing, needs of the College.<sup>286</sup>

The approach of Connecticut College's fiftieth anniversary portrayed both the considerable physical development of the hilltop campus as well as an ever-expanding and diversifying student body. By the time Hale Laboratory was completed in 1955, the College boasted students from thirty-seven states and thirteen foreign countries. Nearly thirty percent of the students on campus received scholarships, a huge increase from the small number of Vinal Cottage work-scholarships available twenty years before.<sup>287</sup> In addition to the students living on campus, nearly fifty fulltime students commuted to class from their homes. This statistic included students who could not afford campus accommodation, but also suggests that some women chose to continue pursuing degrees at Connecticut College even while fulfilling the cultural expectations of marriage and domestic life. The summer course system begun under President Blunt expanded during

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<sup>286</sup> 1957. "Ground Broken April 9<sup>th</sup> for Larrabee House," *Connecticut College Alumni News*. Apr.: Vol. II, No. 3.

<sup>287</sup> Proposal to Improve Science Facilities.

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and after World War II offered enrolled students opportunity for independent research and part-time or visiting students valuable technical and vocational courses.<sup>288</sup> Racial diversity, which would grow to be a key issue in the decade to come, varied from year to year with as many as seven students of color in the class of 1950 but only one in the class of 1960.<sup>289</sup> By attracting a wider range of students, the postwar Connecticut College began making a more conscious effort to move away from the elitist reputation that pervaded many women's colleges before World War II.

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<sup>288</sup> Katherine Blunt – Biographical Material 10.

<sup>289</sup> *1950 Koine, 1960 Koine*. Yearbooks. Published at Connecticut College, New London. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

**ENTRY ADAPTED FROM WEB TEXT WRITTEN BY DOUG ROYALTY**

**The Winslow Ames House**

*Robert W. McLaughlin, Jr. for American Houses, 1933*

**The House of Steel**

*Howard Fisher for General Homes Inc., 1933*

**Acquired 1949**



*Figure 69. Postcard, 1933[?]*

Located on the southeastern tip of the campus, the Winslow Ames House and House of Steel are two early examples of American industrialized housing systems—not to mention two of New England’s first modern houses. The two buildings were commissioned by Winslow Ames, the founding director of the Lyman Allyn Art Museum, after he visited “Houses of Tomorrow,” a display of prefabricated model homes at the Chicago "Century of Progress" Exposition of 1933 and 1934. Ames, a noted art historian who wrote widely on architecture and decorative arts and was the director of the Gallery of Modern Art in New York City, had met General Houses’ founder and chief architect, Howard Fisher while at the Exposition, and found his cause compelling enough

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to install two structures, each by a different manufacturer, on the grounds of the Lyman Allyn Museum. Part show houses, part rental units, Ames sold the buildings to Connecticut College in 1949.

While both houses were comprised of standardized, factory-made panels, each employed a different method of construction. At the House of Steel, structural panels of insulation sandwiched between steel sheets bolt together to create the walls and roof of the 21-foot-by-37-foot rectangular building without the need for framing devices. The House of Steel contained two bedrooms, one bath, and an "open plan" living-dining-kitchen space. At the Winslow-Ames House, panels were composed of specially formulated asbestos cement, and placed within a steel frame. Slightly larger than the House of Steel, the Winslow-Ames House contained three bedrooms, the largest of which comprised the second floor of the building.<sup>290</sup>

The show houses exhibited at the World's Fairs introduced millions of Americans to prefabrication and modern architecture. With their smooth, unadorned exterior surfaces, flat roofs, and use of innovative building materials, the houses' designs adhered closely to the functionalist principles of European modernism. Yet these compact and efficient "machines for living"—prototypes for buildings meant to be mass-produced "like Fords"—also reflected the faith in technology and industry that characterized America's Machine Age.

The Winslow Ames House and neighboring House of Steel are rare surviving example of the low-cost, yet high-quality, "minimum" house meant to address America's

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<sup>290</sup> H. Ward Jandl, John Ward, and Michael Auer. *Yesterday's Houses of Tomorrow: Innovative American Homes, 1850 to 1950* (Washington, DC: Preservation, 1991) 142-43.

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Depression-era housing crisis. Both structures are precursors to later efforts at industrialized housing undertaken by both architects such as Walter Gropius, as well as real-estate developers of the likes of William J. Levitt. The buildings display numerous innovations in design, material, and construction method, representing the latest thinking, circa 1933, about how to rationalize and modernize both the American home and the home-building industry in the United States.

After their 1949 acquisition by the College, both the Winslow Ames House and Steel House served as rental units for members of the faculty. While neither house was ever significantly altered, at some point the Steel House was capped with a gabled roof, most likely to curb leaks springing in the flat roof. The Winslow Ames House was refurbished in 1994 to serve as office space, and soon thereafter listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The House of Steel continued to serve as faculty dwelling until 2004, at which point the College shuttered the building, ended all maintenance, and removed the mechanical systems in preparation for its demolition. Fortunately, through the combined research of both students and professors, the building's was spared. The House of Steel was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in November of 2009, midway through a restoration to return it to its original condition.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> “Connecticut College awarded \$100,000 to continue renovating historic steel house” *Connecticut College Current News*, accessed 10 Apr. 2010 < <http://aspen.conncoll.edu/news/5931.cfm> >



**Lillian Warnshuis Infirmary**

*Shreve, Lamb and Harmon 1951*

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
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*Figure 70. Photograph by Phillip J. Carpenter, 1951.*

A visitor approaching the entrance of Warnshuis Infirmary is given the impression of a modest, stone and glass façade, with a sheltered entrance and long, copper flowerbox. In profile, however, the infirmary reveals its modern character as a dramatically cantilevered overpass projects from the hillside site. Built in 1951, the first structure completed under the presidency of Rosemary Park, the infirmary put an end to decades of inconvenience created by shortcomings in the area of student health services. In the earliest years, a suite of rooms within the now-demolished Thames Hall served as a school's single-bed, makeshift clinic. The infirmary was soon relocated to the slightly larger Deshon House, a former boardinghouse in the Riverside neighborhood, to provide

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easy access to the scores of students living off-campus during the period. By 1930, the infirmary had moved once again, this time to Bosworth House on the far southeast corner of campus. While the College always kept a resident physician on staff, these temporary spaces lacked both the hygiene, facilities, and centrality to campus desired to care for the ever-growing student body.<sup>292</sup> By the 1940s, it became clear that a purpose-built infirmary was vital to the College's development.

President Katherine Blunt ordered the first plans for the infirmary as early as 1945, when she sent a proposal to students' parents along with her annual Christmas greetings. In a rendering by Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, the infirmary appears as a traditional, stone building, with slate roof, mullioned windows, and an unusual pentagonal solarium attached (presumably) to the structure's south facade.<sup>293</sup> In subsequent years, however, the plans were altered significantly to produce the first truly modern structure on the Connecticut College campus. Originally sited to "parallel the contour lines" of its hillside site neighboring Windham House, the building was turned forty-five degrees to allow for a light-filled basement level while also giving the structure its characteristic, pier-like quality. The reorganization of the space resulted in a covered, basement level loading dock for deliveries and hospital transports.<sup>294</sup> The cantilevered wing, with an uninterrupted band of windows wrapping its three sides, gave the building a modernist sense of gravity-defying weightlessness that too would find expression in campus structures of the 1950s and 1960s. Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon chose to clad the

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<sup>292</sup> President Rosemary Park to Helen B. Todd, correspondence. 7 Oct. 1950. Campus and Buildings Box 15, Folder: Warnshuis Infirmary. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>293</sup> The Proposed Infirmary At Connecticut College.

<sup>294</sup> "College Infirmary," *Progressive Architecture*, 1954: 35, 102-105.

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steel framing that supported these forms in a combination of granite facing for the entrance façade, supporting column, and basement level, and a light colored, vitrified brick (a material that would soon become the common vocabulary of the College's modern structures) on the walls of the main wing.<sup>295</sup>

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
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*Figure 71. The simple, light-filled setting of the Warnshuis Infirmary Solarium provided a space where students could rest and recuperate. Photograph by Joseph Molitor, 1951.*

The interior of the infirmary was carefully zoned to enhance both staff efficiency and a sense of peace and privacy for the patients. Surrounding the entrance were the infirmary's public functions: the lobby, dispensary, and consultation room. Offset from

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<sup>295</sup> Special to the New London Day - Connecticut College Infirmary. Jan. 1963. Campus and Buildings Box 15, Folder: Warnshuis Infirmary. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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this to eliminate sightlines, the a main corridor of the medical wing led to twelve patient rooms, with two isolation wards, multiple single bedrooms with attached baths, a nurse's station, lab, and pantry. The resident physician's office, positioned at the boundary of the public and private section of the building, allowed for ease of movement between the two sectors, while also offering access to the attached lab or treatment room. The resident physician was also allowed the use of a small apartment on the structure's upper floor, enabling her constant supervision of the patients as well as access to the roof deck that extended the length of the projecting wing. Far from the traffic of the treatment area, the cantilevered west end of the structure contained the infirmary's most attractive amenity: a solarium that featured three walls of windows. Service spaces, including a full kitchen, bedrooms for two staff members, and a state-of-the-art X-ray system, occupied the basement level.<sup>296</sup>

To an extent, the decision to execute Warnshuis Infirmary in the modern style resulted from the recognition that the College could no longer afford the stone structures of decades past. President Park acknowledged this fact in a letter to donor Arthur J. Connell in 1950, describing how the plan for the infirmary was revised multiple times to achieve a cost-effective design.<sup>297</sup> Moreover, the progressive forms of Warnshuis Infirmary supported an up-to-date notion of its medical function. The clean lines and geometric forms of the exterior alluded to the precise and scientific activities taking place within. Stainless steel countertops, modern asphalt tiles and simple, easy-to-clean furnishings spoke to values of medical sanitation. These values were not, however, particular to Warnshuis Infirmary. In the post war years, many universities and colleges

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<sup>296</sup> "College Infirmary."

<sup>297</sup> President Rosemary Park to Mr. Arthur J. Connell, correspondence.

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made similar provisions to build up and validate their student personnel services by associating them with the sciences. Students' "mental hygiene," - their psychological development - entered the medical program of many educational institutions. Factors such as the physical environment were now more strongly considered factors in health and human development.<sup>298</sup>

A decade after its completion, the infirmary assumed its current title to honor longtime College nurse and namesake, Lillian Warnshuis. Because the infirmary had been planned for a student body larger than that of 1951, the facility kept pace with campus growth the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>299</sup> After students were found squatting in unused rooms of the infirmary in 1986, the College amended the structure's use, allowing almost all of the former sick bays to be converted to student rooms.<sup>300</sup> The arrangement lasted until 2008, when the wing was withdrawn from the housing lottery and occupied by the Office for Residential Living.

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<sup>298</sup> Stefan Muthesius, *The Postwar University: Utopianist Campus and College* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) 19.

<sup>299</sup> 1966. "Warnshuis Infirmary Staff Keeps Finger on Campus Pulse," *The New London Day*, 20 Sept.

<sup>300</sup> 1986. "Students Expelled From Infirmary," *The College Voice*, 18 Feb.

**Winchester Road Faculty Houses**

*Small Homes Council at the University of Illinois, 1952*

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
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*Figure 72. Photograph by Robert L. Perry, 1952.*

Located across Mohegan Avenue from the main section of campus, the nine Winchester Road houses line a narrow, sloped street behind Emily Abbey House and Vinal Cottage. Built in 1952 as faculty dwellings, the nine houses on Winchester Road matched the slightly earlier construction of the North Ridge faculty houses as significant commitments to faculty accommodation. The decision to add the houses reflected the College's preparations for the increased enrollments of the Baby Boom generation, an expansion that would also result in the 1950s construction of Crozier-Williams Center and Larrabee House. Like the measures to improve student life, the Winchester Road

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houses provided affordable, comfortable, and well-located faculty housing that would enhance efforts to recruit the best professors. The Winchester Road houses were financed by a gift from former President of the College Katherine Blunt, who retired in 1945. The donation was supplemented by the Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, an early corporate sponsor of the College.<sup>301</sup>

Connecticut College obtained the land on which the houses were constructed from farmer Edgar C. Winchester, whose name now distinguishes the road on which the structures stand.<sup>302</sup> While a convenient distance from the campus, the inclined sites required a great deal of leveling before construction could begin. This difficult process involved both excavation and filling to establish even terrain for the foundation of each building.<sup>303</sup> In form, the Winchester Road houses were built in visual contrast to the English cottage mode of Vinal Cottage or the Colonial Revival style of Abbey House. Prefabricated, avant-garde, and completed five years before the first modernist student residence, Larrabee House, the Winchester Road houses played a significant role in bringing the modern aesthetic to Connecticut College. Half of the houses had flat roofs, with the others defined by shed roofs. Vertical, wooden siding clad the exterior of each

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<sup>301</sup> “Memorandum from Rosemary Park.” 7 Oct. 1952. Campus and Buildings Box 15, Folder: Winchester Road Houses. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.  
Mr. Frazer B Wilde, President of Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Correspondence. 23 May 1952. Campus and Buildings Box 15, Folder: Winchester Road Houses. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>302</sup> Rosemary Park to Mr. Allen B. Lambdin, correspondence. 17 June 1952. Campus and Buildings Box 15, Folder: Winchester Road Houses. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>303</sup> Memorandum from Allen B. Lambdin, Business Manager. 20 Apr. 1952. Campus and Buildings Box 15, Folder: Winchester Road Houses. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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unit in a nod to colonial forms, while the large, plate glass windows on the front façades of the houses emphasized the blurring of spaces between the inside and outside, a staple of modern design.<sup>304</sup> In color, the nine houses adopted a palette of dark red, with black and white trim in a stark contrast to the stone or whitewashed facades of earlier campus buildings.

The Winchester Road houses were arranged on one of two floor plans. All nine structures contained living space on a single floor, with an open plan living and dining room, a separate kitchen, a bathroom, and three to four bedrooms. The focus on a large living space encouraged interaction and togetherness, a key value of the nuclear family era. Unlike the custom designed Stanwood Harris House of the previous era, the inclusion of three or four bedrooms in all nine of the Winchester Road Houses specified large families as their intended residents.<sup>305</sup>

Like the other structures on the Connecticut College campus adopting a modern architectural vocabulary, a chief component of the Winchester Road Houses was their economic advantage and efficient layout. The plans for the Winchester Road houses were originally drafted in a study done by the University of Illinois and the Small Homes Council, under the direction of James T. Lendrum.<sup>306</sup> The Council began during World War II, as the University explored ways through which it could help to alleviate the impending housing shortage as soldiers returned to settle and start families. The resulting structures represented the collaboration of architects, engineers, and home economics professors, who together sought to provide the finest in inexpensive, carefully considered

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<sup>304</sup> Foley, 259.

<sup>305</sup> Memorandum from Allen B. Lambdin, Business Manager.

<sup>306</sup> James T Lendrum. "How to erect an expansion-attic truss." *House and Home*. 1953: Vol. 3, 156-62.



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living for the modern age.<sup>307</sup> Features such as radiant floor heating, passive solar orientation, and triangulated kitchen spaces spoke to these values, as each feature was intended to make the resident more comfortable while also saving them time and money. In their carefully measured arrangement, the Winchester Road houses also appear quite similar to the House of Steel and Winslow Ames House, display homes from the 1933 World's Fair brought to the nearby Lyman Allyn Museum two decades prior and purchased by the College to serve as faculty housing.<sup>308</sup> Both built as experiments in mass housing, it was these faculty houses that paved the way for modernism to establish itself as the definitive language of the mid-century College.

A few years after their completion, the houses on Winchester Road were coined "Chairmen's Row," a nickname referring to the fact that preference was given to the most senior professors and four of the initial residents were, in fact, departmental chairmen.<sup>309</sup> The houses remained faculty residences into the twenty-first century, but were used primarily as temporary homes for new or visiting professors who had not yet located more permanent living arrangements. By 2009, with six of the original nine dwellings had condemned, the remaining three were retired as staff accommodations and entered into the student housing lottery. With no major alterations since their construction, the last three Winchester Road houses face an uncertain future. It can only be hoped that the College will recognize the significance of these small structures, products of an era that saw the architectural transformation of the campus.

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<sup>307</sup> "The History of the Building Research Council," *University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign*, accessed 10 Mar. 2010 < <http://brc.arch.uiuc.edu/History.htm> >

<sup>308</sup> "Steel House History," *The House of Steel: Preserving Modernism at Connecticut College*, accessed 10 Mar. 2010 < <http://oak.conncoll.edu/~steelhouse/history.html> >

<sup>309</sup> Rosemary Park to Allen B. Lambdin, correspondence.

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### **William Hale Laboratory**

*Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, 1954*

**Additions** 1956, 1990, 1996, 2000

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*Figure 73. Photograph, 1954.*

Low to the ground and horizontal in form, Hale Laboratory is very different in appearance from its substantial, Collegiate Gothic neighbors. Completed in 1954, the building served as a much-desired expansion to the College's Chemistry department. The laboratory was constructed through the gift of Mrs. Ruth Hale, a student of the class of 1939, to honor her parents Helen Dow and William Hale. William Hale was an eminent scientist in chemurgy, or the production of industrial products from agricultural input. A visiting Chemistry professor at Connecticut College for a number of years before his death in 1955, Hale had led a campaign to provide adequate research and teaching space

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for the quickly growing Chemistry department - facilities the forty year-old New London Hall no longer offered. Hale had discussed giving a large sum to construct the needed facility with President Park during the end of her presidency, but died before the donation could be finalized, leaving his daughter to fulfill his wish.<sup>310</sup>

Although Warnshuis Health Center precedes Hale Laboratory as the first truly modern structure on campus, the design of the new chemistry building played a vital role in the acceptance of contemporary design on the Connecticut College campus. The laboratory was designed by College architects Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, and like Warnshuis Health Center, emphasized rational and economic planning. The structure was placed in close proximity to the College power plant in order to minimize the costly service lines providing the necessary voltage to the laboratory equipment. The site, which sloped towards Mohegan Avenue, allowed a full basement with at-grade entrances on both floors and required minimum excavation.<sup>311</sup> Constructed of steel framing and concrete block, the front façade of the laboratory was faced in granite in a bow to the materials of the older buildings surrounding it.<sup>312</sup> On the walls facing Mohegan Avenue however, Hale expressed its modern construction through exposed concrete block walls and large, horizontal sections of metal-framed windows.<sup>313</sup> In contrast to Smith House and Burdick House, where flat roofs were disguised by simple - yet still classically

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<sup>310</sup> “The Hon. Wiley T. Buchanan, Dedicating the Hale Chemical Laboratory at Connecticut College for Women.” 7 Dec. 1955. Campus and Buildings Box 6, Folder: Hale Laboratory Dedication. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>311</sup> A Proposal to Improve Science Facilities.

<sup>312</sup> 1954. “College Chemistry Building Makes Progress,” *The New London Day*, 1 Mar.

<sup>313</sup> Photo of east façade of Hale, 1954. Campus and Building Photographs Box 4, Folder: Hale Laboratory. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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inspired -cornices, at Hale Laboratory the plane of the roof added a sense of dynamic movement as it appeared to float over the uninterrupted bands of window running the length of the structure. The slightly taller, glass-cornered atrium broke the horizontal symmetry, anchoring the south end of the laboratory and clearly defining the main entrance.<sup>314</sup>

The interior of Hale Laboratory was planned around a long, central corridor that divided the building's academic functions. On the side facing Blackstone House, classrooms and faculty offices took advantage of light streaming through the broad windows. On the other side of the hall, laboratories and storage space allowed for independent research and experiments. On the basement level, a "lecture-demonstration room" with the ability to hold 150 students enabled scientific instruction on a scale larger than had ever been possible in New London Hall. Basic to the structure's interior was the application of fireproof materials, a considerable improvement from the flammable wood and plaster interior of New London Hall. Another remarkable aspect of the structure's finish was a mural, painted by Art Department Chair William Ashby McCoy and illustrating the Biblical scene of Adam and Eve adorned the main stairwell.<sup>315</sup>

The construction of Hale Laboratory represented the final stage of a mission to develop the sciences at Connecticut College through the construction of state-of-the-art facilities. The 1935 addition of a greenhouse to New London Hall enhanced the offerings of the Botany Department, while the 1939 construction of Bill Hall provided a new home

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<sup>314</sup> Proposed Chemistry Building, Connecticut College, New London. Architectural rendering. Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon Associates, New York. 2 Mar. 1953. Campus and Buildings Box 6, Folder: Hale Laboratory – Funding and Planning. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>315</sup> Morse, William Hale Laboratory.

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for the Physics Department.<sup>316</sup> The facilities responded not just to the administrative decision to include a science requirement for all students, but also a Cold War period of scientific innovation that pushed men and women alike towards professions that would enhance the United State's reputation as a leader in the fields of industrial and defense technology. Students were encouraged to participate in independent scientific research, a trend observed by President Katherine Blunt as early as 1939.<sup>317</sup> In form, the structures built to house the increased interest in science gave a voice to the new era, adopting a simple aesthetic best suited to house the many types of research and expanding numbers of classes taking place within. Certainly this is the case at Hale Laboratory, where the building's modern exterior appearance confirmed the advanced and quickly growing role of the Chemistry department, even as its interior was specifically arranged and equipped for autonomous student work.

In 1956 Socony Mobil Oil Company donated money for new equipment for many of laboratories in Hale, including a low-pressure hydrogenation apparatus, a spectrophotometer, a pH meter, and an automatic continuous recorder.<sup>318</sup> The new equipment further established science as an important discipline for women of the time. The only addition to the structure came in 1987, when a laboratory was added off of the building's atrium. Constructed to house faculty offices, a research laboratory with storage facilities, and the HVAC system for the entire building, the boxy space appears

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<sup>316</sup> Irene Nye. *Chapters in the History of Connecticut College in its First Three Administrations, 1911 – 1942* (New London, CT: J.J. Little & Ives, 1943).

<sup>317</sup> "President Blunt Cites Striking Development, In Annual Statement."

<sup>318</sup> Ruth Bloomer, "To *New London Day*." 21 Sept 1956. Campus and Buildings Box 6, Folder: Hale Laboratory. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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incongruous and tacked-on next to the elegant profile of the original laboratories.<sup>319</sup> The project coincided with a major renovation to New London Hall in yet another drive to improve the science facilities of the College, but this time with the focus on providing a scholarly environment where all academic areas received equal spatial consideration.<sup>320</sup> Six years later, Hale Laboratory was refurbished to update both the research facilities and the safety of the space.<sup>321</sup> In 2000, the large lecture hall in the basement level was renovated to increase its technological capacities, with a state-of-the-art projector and plentiful outlets for students' computers.<sup>322</sup> Even with the late 2000s completion of these major refurbishments and additions, however, Hale Laboratory retains much of the exterior, modernist form that marked its uniqueness nearly sixty years previous.

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<sup>319</sup> Bruce Branchini, email to author, 4 Apr. 2010.

<sup>320</sup> Dr. Oakes Ames. Address to The Newcomen Society.

<sup>321</sup> "Chemistry Homepage," *Connecticut College*, accessed 2 Mar. 2010 <  
<http://www.conncoll.edu/departments/chemistry/index.htm> >

<sup>322</sup> "Chemistry Department Facilities," *Connecticut College*, accessed 2 Mar. 2010 <  
[http://www.conncoll.edu/sciences/sac\\_facilities.htm](http://www.conncoll.edu/sciences/sac_facilities.htm) >

**Larrabee House**

*Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, 1957*

**Renovations**

*Mid 1970s, Noyes Vogt Architects 2008*



*Figure 74. Rendering by Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, 1957.*

Disguised behind the mass of Katherine Blunt House, Larrabee House is the largest student residence on the Connecticut College campus. Built in 1957 as part of President Rosemary Park's initiative to prepare the campus for swelling enrollments of the Baby Boom generation, the dormitory provided the College with rooms to house one hundred students. The project was made possible through the bequest of sisters Betsey B. and Rachel Larrabee, for whom the dormitory is named. The sisters were long-time friends of the College and pioneers of women's higher education themselves, having taken courses at Vassar College and the University of Michigan in the early twentieth

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century, came from a long lineage of Larrabees native to nearby Ledyard, Connecticut.<sup>323</sup> Built with their gift of \$600,000, Larrabee House became the first student residence at Connecticut College to embrace fully the modernist aesthetic that was quickly becoming the defining language of the mid-century campus.<sup>324</sup>

During the construction of Katherine Blunt House a decade earlier, it was thought that an attached residence hall similar in plan to Freeman House would soon follow. While Larrabee did connect to Katherine Blunt House through a shared kitchen, it was the first student residence to break from the architectural tradition of cut granite block and neocolonial decoration, embracing functionalism and economy in all aspects of its design. Architects Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon made use of inexpensive concrete block for much of the structure, employing granite facing only on the entrance façade opposite nearby Smith and Burdick Houses. While sections of vitrified brick defined the each corner of the structure, the application of undulating vinyl siding around the metal frame windows of the student rooms created a rhythmic, patterned façade unlike that of the early stone houses.

Unlike the basically square or rectangular footprints of earlier structures, Larrabee appeared as a series of interlocking slabs. The tall block of student bedrooms anchored the one-story dining room and living room in a hierarchy of size that suggested the interior arrangement of public and private space. The public nature of the open-plan living room is also evident in the use of glass walls that allowed in ample daylight but

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<sup>323</sup> Judge Allyn Larrabee Brown, ground breaking ceremony speech. 9 Apr. 1957. Campus and Buildings Box 8, Folder: Larrabee House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives.

<sup>324</sup> News from Connecticut College. 16 Mar. 1957. Campus and Buildings Box 8, Folder: Larrabee House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives.



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also full views in from the exterior of the building. A glass corridor leading from the living room to the dining room fashioned the third side of a small courtyard with flagstone paving and raised plantings. The dining room, which also employed full-length glass walls, connected directly to the kitchen of Katherine Blunt House, maintaining the shared arrangement first established in Jane Addams and Freeman Houses. Beyond the dining room, four floors of single and double rooms provided accommodation for the residents. Both room types were designed as units that were repeated along each side of the central corridor, with identical dimensions and a built-in dresser and vanity for each student.<sup>325</sup> The building block method of design, which valued housing a great number of students over the individual qualities of each room, set Larrabee apart from its predecessors as a new student housing type attuned to the changing needs of a College preparing for growth.

A key aspect that set Larrabee apart from earlier residential structures was the clear desire of the architects to create a structure that communicated with the landscape around it. The great windows of the living room, lounge, and dining room create visual continuity with the lawns surrounding it, while the central courtyard brings natural beauty into the core of the structure. The continuation of granite cladding on interior walls, such as that which supports the fireplace in the living room, allows for materials previously associated only with exterior function to assume a central role in interior finish to further blur the line between indoors and out. (The granite walls also extended beyond the flat roof, reinforcing the sense of the building as a series of horizontal planes.) In the

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<sup>325</sup> Connecticut College Dormitory Floor Plans, Larrabee House. Campus and Buildings Box 8, Folder: Larrabee House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives.

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accommodation block, an expansive, 4<sup>th</sup> floor terrace overlooking the Thames River confirms the importance of providing outdoor space as part of the building's program.<sup>326</sup>

Although strikingly modern in contrast to the older residence halls on campus, in terms of student life Larrabee House employed many of the established standards of the older residential halls. A small, glass-walled office just beyond the front entrance allowed for the administrative supervision of students and visitors alike. The living room's large, centrally positioned fireplace reinforced domestic ideals of family-like togetherness. Like Jane Addams and Freeman Houses, the sense of dorm community was strengthened through the inclusion of a dining room. Despite the use of open planning, the layout of the ground floor was arranged to distinguish between spaces for residents and those that were open to guests. While the living room and attached lounge, readily visible from the building's façade and adjacent to restrooms for both men and women, were clearly intended as spaces appropriate for guests, the dining room was more secluded, located opposite the courtyard and up a short flight of steps. In contrast, the strictly private zone of the student rooms could only be accessed through a fire door, turned so as not to be visible from the corridor leading to the dining room.

While alterations to Larrabee House have been few, the building functions quite differently than it did at the time of its completion. The building was one of the first to house male students when the College became co-educational in 1969, perhaps because its simple, modern forms were thought more appropriate for male students than the interior decorated older residences. The dining room was closed as part of an attempt to cut the school's budget in the 1970s, and aptly converted into the Financial Aid office.

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<sup>326</sup> "Ground Broken April 9 for Larrabee House." *Connecticut College Alumnae Newsletter*, April 1957, Vol. II, No. 3.

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The rooms originally intended as doubles now house three students each. Use of the roof terrace is prohibited, and while the public space of the ground floor remains brightly illuminated by sunlight, shrubberies have grown up around the structure and eliminate the once unobstructed views into the space. Renovations to adapt the living room to serve as part of the residential education program in 2008 also entailed the addition of a wall that obstructs the once open plan of the ground floor. Changes aside, Larrabee House retains its original modernist profile, an architectural bridge between the traditional forms of earlier student residences and the progressive designs that would shape the campus in the 1960s and 1970s.

**College Center at Crozier Williams**

*Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon 1959*

**Renovations**

*Centerbrook, 1986, Prentice, Chan, and Olhausen, 1992-1993*

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

*Figure 75. Photograph, 1959.*

With its stucco façade, blue-painted metal detailing, and curving roofline, the College Center at Crozier Williams stands as an architectural entity distinct from the rest of main campus. At the time it was constructed in 1959, however, Crozier Williams matched the modernist aesthetic of the mid-century campus. Built during the presidency of President Rosemary Park, the building completed the last of the campus development plans carried out by Park's predecessor, Katherine Blunt. The structure housed physical education facilities, student activity space, and an entire wing devoted to Alumni Relations named for the first president of the College, Frederick H. Sykes. Housing functions that had long been relegated to inadequate structures, basements and store closets, and sites off-campus, the Center was also the product of a fundraising campaign

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of nearly forty years.<sup>327</sup> A bequest by Mary Williams Crozier in honor of her father allowed construction to begin in the fall of 1957.<sup>328</sup>

Originally, Crozier Williams was planned to sit next to Warnshuis infirmary, on the present site of Lazarus House. Not only would this sloping site have allowed for at-grade entrances on multiple levels, but it would also have continued the development of an “H” shaped campus with Palmer Library serving as the crosspiece.<sup>329</sup> Instead, a roomier and almost completely level site facing Katherine Blunt House was selected.<sup>330</sup> Placement near the road running through the core of campus with room to add parking was key to selecting the site, as the building would act as both the visitor center and Alumnae headquarters.

Crozier Williams was designed by Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon and, to an even greater degree than the slightly earlier Warnshuis Infirmary or Hale Laboratory, illustrated the firm’s proclivity towards contemporary form. A flat-roofed volume at the front of the structure featured a recessed entrance with a cantilevered overhang, glass walls, and a spacious, second floor patio. The rear of the structure contained a steel-framed gymnasium with soaring windows on the north and south faces and metal

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<sup>327</sup> Student Building Fund of Connecticut College. Pamphlet. Campus and Buildings Box 2, Folder: Crozier Williams Center – General Planning and Fundraising. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>328</sup> 1959. “Crozier-Williams Building to be Dedicated Saturday,” *The New London Day*, 13 Oct.

<sup>329</sup> Memorandum Re: Connecticut College Proposed Student-Alumnae Center. 24 Oct. 1952. Campus and Buildings Box 2, Folder: Crozier Williams Center – General Planning and Fundraising. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>330</sup> Memorandum – excerpt of letter to Mrs. Meyer. 19 Mar. 1951. Campus and Buildings Box 2, Folder: Crozier Williams Center – General Planning and Fundraising. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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cladding covering the other walls.<sup>331</sup> Unlike earlier structures; in which modern materials were concealed behind stone facing and slate roofs, Crozier Williams unashamedly employed these new materials to give maximum space at a minimum cost. In keeping with the basic canons of modernism, both the metal window frames and girders supporting the gymnasium's roof were painted to contrast with the surrounding walls to emphasize the structural qualities of the design.

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
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*Figure 76. The main lobby of Crozier Williams, with its strong lines and futuristic light fixtures, encapsulated the midcentury modern aesthetic of the building. Photograph by Joseph Molitor, 1959.*

The years of financial planning and functional consideration prior to construction of Crozier Williams gave College officials much time to consider the specific needs to be housed in the building, which was divided into three spatial areas. To the left of the main foyer, a snack bar with lounge and terrace directly above provided a generously sized

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<sup>331</sup> “Crozier-Williams Building to be Dedicated Saturday.”

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new home for the cramped café once housed in the basement of Burdick House. To the right of the foyer, the wing housing the Frederick H. Sykes Alumnae Center supplied space not only for the offices of Alumni Relations, but also for the Physical Education staff and Student Government. The gymnasium included a six-lane bowling alley, archery and tennis range, swimming pool, two basketball courts, and gallery floor “activities room” intended to house modern dance classes.<sup>332</sup> The gymnasium also featured several outdoor tennis courts (now gone) and a small structure housing a squash court (now the student bank practice shed) directly to the west of the structure. In a nod to the ideals (and underlying concerns) surrounding co-education, which would shape the school in the following decade, the original plans of Crozier Williams included a centrally placed men’s locker room that was moved to the basement in the final design in order to discourage men from walking through the foyer in their exercise clothes.<sup>333</sup>

The construction of Crozier Williams facilitated the growth of Connecticut College in several respects. Along with Larrabee House, the building was part of the preparation for the high number of post World War II Baby Boomers approaching college age. Not only did Crozier Williams provide ample room for the growing campus, it also freed up many cramped quarters to new uses. Hillyer Hall, the former gymnasium, became the print shop, post office, and bookstore. The Knowlton House Salon, former home of College dances and large social events, was converted into eighteen student

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<sup>332</sup> Plans of Student-Alumnae Center. Campus and Buildings Box 2, Folder: Crozier Williams Center – Architectural Planning. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>333</sup> Suggested Features for Recreation Building. Campus and Buildings Box 2, Folder: Crozier Williams Center – Architectural Planning. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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rooms in 1959 to allow for increased enrollment.<sup>334</sup> Further space was freed up for student accommodation as the Student Government and Physical Education offices moved from the basement of Plant, Blackstone, and Branford into the new structure. On a more abstract level, the inclusion of the Frederick H. Sykes Alumnae Center signaled the ever-growing Alumnae community, which had reached 7,000 by the early 1950s.<sup>335</sup>

Perhaps even more essential to the new structure's role on campus was the flexibility of its design. Throughout Crozier-Williams, accordion partitions allowed for large spaces to be subdivided at a moment's notice.<sup>336</sup> The new system set a standard of flexible planning in Connecticut College buildings, a facet that would prove especially important in the construction of North Complex three years later. While supporting modern building methods and technologies, the practice also embraced the contemporary concept the customizable "megastructure" being applied in many colleges and universities at the time. Like Crozier Williams, this type of building planned for masses of students, but ensured a community atmosphere and direct contact through the inclusion of intimate or easily configurable space.<sup>337</sup>

As the campus land surrounding Crozier-Williams developed with the construction of North Complex, Lazarus House, and Shain Library, the function of the student center, too, adapted to serve roles central to students and staff alike. With the mid 1980s completion of the Athletic Complex, many of the former courts and practice rooms became event space or studios for the rapidly growing Dance department. The snack bar was halved to create the adjacent Cro Bar in 1973 (a clear indication of the administration

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<sup>334</sup> "Crozier-Williams Building to be Dedicated Saturday."

<sup>335</sup> A Proposal to Improve Science Facilities.

<sup>336</sup> Plans of the Student-Alumnae Center.

<sup>337</sup> Turner 262.



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stepping away from its parental role as students rejected adult authority and co-education merited a new set of social standards), but much of the rest of the structure remained either cluttered storage space or large, vacant rooms.<sup>338</sup> A fundraising campaign resulted in the 1992 overhaul of the Center, giving it an entirely new façade and completely reconfigured interior. The new space, described as appearing “vaguely nautical” from the front terrace, included a new post office, bookstore, and student life and volunteering offices in the former Alumnae Center.<sup>339</sup> In large measure, the renovation of Crozier-Williams intended to serve as a unifying, metaphorical “hearth,” at which all members of the College community would meet and interact on a daily basis.<sup>340</sup> Today, the Center fills its role well, accommodating a constant flow of students and staff through its foyer and into the spaces beyond.

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<sup>338</sup> 1973. Walter Palmer, “Bar to open 2<sup>nd</sup> semester,” *The Connecticut College Pundit*, 13 Nov. 58:8.

<sup>339</sup> Meg Ramsden, “Something to Cro About,” *Connecticut College Magazine* July/August 1993: 3:1, 8.

<sup>340</sup> Dedication: The College Center & The Connection at Crozier Williams. 30 Apr. 1993. Box 2, Folder: Crozier Williams Center – Renovation and Dedication. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

**“The awakened moral imagination”<sup>341</sup>**

**Campus Equality**

**1961 – 1974**

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

*Figure 77. Castle Court, which joined the Cummings Arts Center to Palmer Auditorium, provided a space for the visitors and members of the College community alike to gather and socialize. Photograph by Phillip A Biscuti, 1970.*

*In the 1960s, the student body, faculty, and administration of Connecticut College chose to embrace many of the groundbreaking societal forces shaping the nation, broadcasting themselves as advocates for social change. This new public face, and the means through which it was achieved or attempted, entailed continuous transformations to the built campus both extant and planned. The previous decade’s preparations for higher enrollment concluded with the completion of the vast and modern North Complex, a space that would prove critical later in the decade as student housing was rearranged to accommodate for the racial, and*

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<sup>341</sup> “President Shain Addresses Opening Assembly,” *Connecticut College Magazine*, 1962: 8:1, 1.

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*then co-educational integration of campus. The campus plans that guided the first half century, indicating growth through the addition of buildings, gave way in the late 1960s to a future defined by diversification of the College, whether through student backgrounds, academics, or staff and services, and how the campus could best be expanded to accommodate these changes.*

The lack of a campus plan for Connecticut College during the 1940s and 1950s reveals the extent to which individual structures had become more significant than any overarching system of campus organization, as well as suggesting a desire for the physical campus to remain flexible in preparation for future growth. Buildings were located where their often unusually shapes and growing footprints could be accommodated. The new method of development meant that, in many ways, campus planning became an exercise in finding ways to connect disparate sets of buildings successfully. Nowhere is this ideological shift clearer than in the architectural development that defined midcentury Connecticut College: North Complex.

A series of six, connected dormitories adjoining an expansive, centrally placed dining facility, North Complex exemplified the College's desire to provide space for growth. The complex afforded rooms for five hundred residents, or half of the College's enrollment in 1960.<sup>342</sup> Beyond providing rooms for additional students, however, North Complex was viewed as a vital step in developing all aspects of Connecticut College. With more housing, the administration planned gradually to admit larger and larger classes, providing more tuition monies to support expansions to the curriculum and faculty pool alike. In this way, the plans for North Complex came to signify the plans for the entire College's long-term development.

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<sup>342</sup> 1960. "College Gets \$3 Million U.S. Loan," *The New London Day, Evening Edition*, June 9<sup>th</sup>.



*Figure 78. A view of North Complex from the north edge of campus, with Harris Refectory linking the two rows of dormitories. Rendering by Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon.*

North Complex was made possible by a three million dollar loan from the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency. Although this was a category of loans typically reserved for state universities, Connecticut College cited an obligation to “bear its share of expected nation-wide [enrollment] increases” as the main reason for requesting the funds. With an additional one million dollars in College funds, the building project began in 1960 under the guidance of Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon.<sup>343</sup> North Complex’s enormous footprint governed the site selection of the northernmost pastures as much as did the general trend of northward expansion in the years leading up to 1960.

The first designs for North Complex date to 1958, and in many ways the seven attached units appeared more as a self-sufficient entity than as a series of residence halls.

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<sup>343</sup> “College Gets \$3 Million U.S. Loan.”

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Unlike the rest of campus' reliance on the Power Plant, North Complex's size dictated its own heating and cooling mechanisms. The dormitories were interconnected not only by corridors but also through intercom, loudspeaker, and telephone services. The dining facility could seat 650 students either banquet style or by house through the use of four accordion partitions, emphasizing design flexibility. The high percentage of single rooms in North Complex reflect not the administration's fears of race suicide that shaped Knowlton in the 1920s, but instead a desire to provide the increasingly autonomous Baby Boomers with a space in which to express their independence.<sup>344</sup>

Even before ground was broken for North Complex, the College administration drew up a plan outlining how the new facility would restructure building use on campus. Titled "Plan 'C,'" the strategy hinged upon moving students out of the "wooden dormitories" which at the time consisted of North Cottage and attached Lieb Cottage, Thames Hall, and Winthrop House. Once students were relocated, these structures, although fifty years old or older, would undergo minor renovations in order to serve as academic buildings and faculty housing. Plant House, viewed as insufficient due to its isolation from dining facilities, was proposed as the new headquarters for admissions, with upper floors devoted to offices for professors and administrators. This change in use would, in turn, allow Fanning Hall to be devoted entirely to academics.<sup>345</sup>

Much of "Plan 'C'" met realization. Thames Hall became the new home of the English and Art departments, with its former dining room converted into a sizeable

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<sup>344</sup> Special College supplement on North Complex. Campus and Buildings, Box 8, Folder: Buildings: North Complex, Folder 1. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>345</sup> Memorandum to President Rosemary Park, Plan "C." Campus and Buildings, Box 8, Folder: Buildings: North Complex, Planning and Construction. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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lecture hall. The ell connecting North Cottage and Dr. Lieb's Cottage was torn down, and both structures became faculty apartments. Winthrop Hall, originally proposed as an apartment for bachelor members of the faculty (striking due to its secluded location from any of the student dormitories) was instead renovated to serve the Economics and Sociology department. Although Plant House remained a student residence, one can imagine that had the plans to turn it into an administrative center succeeded, it would have represented the physical core of a campus equally weighted between new development to the north and established south campus. "Plan 'C'" illustrates the extent to which a few, massive buildings of the sort built by many colleges and universities around 1960 could affect the entire composition of an established school.

The construction of North Complex, and the ensuing plans to incorporate the new structures within the institutional and actual landscape of the College, hints at the development of an egalitarian approach to student life that would shape much of the decade to come. By moving students out of the rickety wood frame structures (primarily used to accommodate first years) and into modern and efficient housing, the College espoused a residential mission whereby all students were offered equivalent living conditions. The high number of single bedrooms within the North Complex units furthered the sense of offering the same standards of personal space to any student who desired it. As the 1960s continued, the theme of equality came to symbolize transformations far more fundamental to the makeup of the campus.

The landmark changes in civil and women's rights during the 1960s engaged college women in the public sphere to a degree beyond any decade previous. By the end of the 1950s, many women found themselves plagued by what author Betty Friedan would later

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refer to as “the problem that has no name,” wherein a life of family-focused domesticity seemed monotonous and imprisoning both in practice and ambition. These women were described in Friedan’s 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* as desiring a fulfillment that could best be met through rewarding work outside the home. In the early 1960s many women used activism, often on issues surrounding the health and safety of their children, as a constructive outlet. The feeling that suburban life was no longer the goal of all women was reflected in a slowing of birthrates, later marriage ages, and an increase in divorces nationwide. The year 1960 also saw the introduction of the birth control pill, an innovation that would change the behavior of women who had for decades been refused any of the sexual liberties allowed men. The emergent faction of young, driven, and politically active women took on the title of Women’s Liberation Movement and galvanized college campuses. Female students rebelled against the contrived and consumer-based lifestyles of their suburban parents, while also demanding a greater role in the governance of their institution. In many ways, idealism, community engagement, and the demand for greater representation expressed by young women of the 1960s mirrored the actions of the determined women of the New Deal era. One significant aspect of this likeness was the fact that, during the 1960s, the activism of the female college student extended beyond the bounds of the campus, aligning with national interest groups to achieve equality. No longer were college women the cloistered intellectuals or husband-seekers training for a career in domesticity, but instead a powerful force behind a movement to benefit all women.

In the same years, the Civil Rights Movement had an enormous impact both on the new feminism of the 1960s and the lives of college students across the nation.

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Participants of the Women's Liberation Movement looked to the strength, nonviolence, and cooperation shown in the fight to desegregate the Deep South as inspiration for their own actions. Furthermore, historically matriarchal Southern Black communities provided examples of strong female leaders to inform the struggle for equal rights. Scores of activists, many of them college students, flocked to areas of turmoil in order to aid in the boycotts and marches. The 1964 Civil Rights Act proved a victory for both racial minorities and women, laying a foundation for fair treatment in all aspects of the public sphere. The young people who participated in this momentous advance for equality, however, often returned to their college campuses to find predominantly White, middle class student bodies continuing to study conventional curriculums. Many college administrations were faced with a demand for enhanced student diversity and curriculums that considered cultures and ethnicities beyond Europe and America.<sup>346</sup>

While Connecticut College never denied admission on racial grounds, and graduated students of color as early as 1931, the mid 1960s marked the beginning of an active campaign to recruit both minority and low income students from within the state.<sup>347</sup>

Three years later, a faculty committee recommended that the College admit at least twenty-five "non-white minority or white poverty" students.<sup>348</sup> Even with active support from the faculty and administration, minority recruitment increased haltingly through the

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<sup>346</sup> Evans 273-285.

<sup>347</sup> Katherine Blunt to Marilyn Sworzyn, correspondence. Admissions Records Box 1 Folder: Correspondence between Marilyn Sworsyn Hoase '43 & Pres. Blunt. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College. Mr. Benjamin Rosenbluh, correspondence. Admissions Records Box 1, Folder: Admissions: Recruitment, Retention & Financial Aid: Minority Students. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>348</sup> 1968. "Faculty Committee Advocates Coeducation." Box: CC Goes Co-ed, 1967-1970, Folder: Coeducation: Conception at Connecticut College. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.



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1960s. The main concern, as described in a 1970 news release for *The New London Day*, was to maintain “genuine, not statistical admission,” against stiff competition from other colleges seeking to attract racial diversity.<sup>349</sup>

The campaign to diversify the student body caused two major shifts in the arrangement of the College campus. Blackstone House, one of the three original College buildings, became the Black Cultural Center in 1971.<sup>350</sup> Unlike the modern North Complex dormitories, Blackstone House stood just yards away from the main entrance to campus, highly visible to students and visitors alike. The new use of the centrally placed Collegiate Gothic structure, once representational of the exclusivity and elitism of the collegiate sphere, appears from a modern standpoint to symbolize the triumph of racial equality. However, the “Plan ‘C’” proposal to refurbish the oldest dormitories as administrative structures due to their shortcomings as aging residential structures implies that the minority students were actually receiving housing that, while central and visible, was viewed as less desirable by the College administration. Presumably chosen because its small size would allow for a quick redistribution of residents and matched the small number of students of color, Blackstone House produced an architectural island of racial diversity within the still largely homogenous environment of the College. The centrality of the building, both in the formation of campus and the College’s history, spoke to a carefully designed and highly advertised program that used constructed space to place racial minorities at the emblematic foundation of the school. However, the space also

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<sup>349</sup> 1970. Special to *The Day* for the College Section. Box: CC Goes Co-ed, 1967-1970, Folder: Coeducation: Conception at Connecticut College. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>350</sup> Judy Kirmmse. “The Path to Unity,” *CC Magazine*. Spring 1997. 18-25.

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allowed for a continuing residential separation of Black and White students in contradiction to the fundamental goals of minority recruitment.

The second physical change brought on by the desire to open the campus to all took place with the 1964 completion of Lazarus House. The third cooperative house opened by the College and capable of accommodating 28 work-study residents, the building represented a continuation of the College's tradition of participatory financial aid. In its prominent location on the College grounds, Lazarus House emphasizes a sense of awareness of the work-study residents as members of the campus community that contrasts to the detached location of the earlier cooperative houses. The modern architectural form, while in keeping with the design trends of the College, indicate the innovations in domestic technology contained within, and the progressive approach to alternative student housing. The construction of Lazarus House speaks to a new sense of student identity during the mid 1960s, one that embraced not only racial diversity but also the financially underprivileged.

The shifting social composition of Connecticut College in the 1960s culminated with the 1968 decision to begin co-education. Men pursuing graduate degrees had enrolled in courses at the College since 1959, when the state officially sanctioned the formation of the contiguous Connecticut College for Men. With 38 men already participating in the program by 1961, the College established a committee to explore the advantages of coeducation and how similar institutions had managed the transition. The establishment of the committee was the first in a series of actions, including a summer planning convention, extensive student survey, and alumni correspondence poll, to ensure that the decision represented the interests of the entire College community. Meanwhile, visiting

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male students, commuter programs with Wesleyan, Connecticut College, and Yale, and the granting of over sixty degrees through Connecticut College for Men indicated the receptiveness of the College community. In January of 1969 President Shain declared to an assembly of all 1402 students, “a young American’s education, when it is shared with the opposite sex, is superior in its basic learning conditions to an education in a single sex environment.”<sup>351</sup> Thus co-education commenced.

While often cited as primarily an administrative response to declining admissions rates and a desire to remain economically viable, coeducation represents the significant acknowledgement that the women of Connecticut College no longer required separate, specially engineered environments in which to excel academically. The shift to co-education therefore fits well into the framework of the feminist movement and the prospect of providing an equal educational foundation. The summer planning convention called the transfer “a realistic reflection of the larger society—socially, racially, economically, and politically.”<sup>352</sup> Notions of equal male/female student ratios, composed of talented individuals from all backgrounds, races, and nationalities were developed upon national movements primarily associated with the sixties, but would also provide principles for the next fifty years of Connecticut College’s evolution.

The introduction of men to Connecticut College entailed surprisingly little adjustment in terms of immediate physical changes to the campus. The construction of North

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<sup>351</sup> News from Connecticut College – Coeducation at Conn College. 9 Jan. 1969. Box: CC Goes Co-ed, 1967-1970, Folder: Coeducation: Conception at Connecticut College. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>352</sup> Exhibit Notes, C. Phinizy. Coeducation at Conn College, 9 Jan. 1969. Box: CC Goes Co-ed, 1967-1970, Folder: Coeducation: Conception at Connecticut College. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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Complex insured accommodation for the additional students, and in the earliest press releases the administration stated clearly a desire for “an integrated situation with men and women living in connected dormitories and sharing common living and dining rooms.”<sup>353</sup> In reality, the approach to housing men was even more liberal, and by 1970 the 144 male students occupied floors in four separate co-ed dormitories.<sup>354</sup> On a larger scale, the introduction of men into the residences specifically designed for young women marked a pivotal change in the ornament and finish of the College dormitories. The series of graciously outfitted spaces based on self-presentation of femininity and sociability with visiting suitors lost much of their meaning once suitors became classmates. What had been living rooms, parlors, and date rooms were stripped of their original Colonial or Gothic fixtures, deemed unsuitable for the activities of rowdy and rebellious co-eds. The new furniture, if replaced at all, proved sturdy, functional, and appropriate to the now multifunctional uses of the space.

The type of egalitarian social change sought out at Connecticut College and other schools found expression in a new set of ideals for designing campuses. The concept of college grounds as laboratories for new built forms, groundbreaking in the late 1950s, had become the standard for planning and design in the sixties. The multifunctional and sprawling “megastructure” remained the preferred method of housing both students and academics, but architects gave more attention to patterns of movement and interaction as key to creating a successful relationship between spaces. Many schools employed dense and complex designs, merging layers of pedestrian and vehicular space, but concerns that

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<sup>353</sup> News from Connecticut College – Coeducation at Conn College College.

<sup>354</sup> “News from Connecticut College – Freshman Boys.” 29 Sept. 1970. Box: CC Goes Co-ed, 1967-1970, Folder: Coeducation: Conception at Connecticut College. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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enormous schools would create student anonymity prompted the inclusion of a variety of small-scale student spaces. In many ways, these structures reflected contemporary ideals for city planning, continuing the notion of the college campus both as a test site for new ideas as well as an urban center in miniature. The reorganization of campus facilities grouped together basic functions, such as student housing, faculty offices, and classrooms, unlike earlier models where a building or domain within the greater campus indicated a particular academic area and those who studied it. Residential design focused on shared units where a small group of students could create a family-like environment within the larger context of a dormitory. An emphasis on meeting space and inclusion of seating areas, amphitheaters, and patios revealed an interest in creating public forums to encourage interaction between students, faculty, and administration, even within large universities. Planners viewed the inclusion of these specifically designed intimate spaces within larger architectural blocks as realistic approximations to the types of urban environments students would inhabit after college. Unlike the social finishing goals of 1930s dormitory design, however, the new campus sought to teach students the value of shared space, contact with those outside their realm of study, and a holistic appreciation of the institution, not just their major. Through the emphasis on forms and spatial layouts that echoed realistic environments, college campuses of the 1960s sought to break down the barrier between education and the outside world, encouraging a “life as education” approach to academics.<sup>355</sup>

A 1966 plan for the physical development of Connecticut College addressed many of these notions. Developed by the firm of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (SOM), well

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<sup>355</sup>Turner 218-286.

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known for its modern building projects at Cornell University, the Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, and Smith College, the plan also illustrates a desire to compete with the vast building programs and academic offerings of state universities and technical schools.<sup>356</sup> Perhaps most evident in the plan is the expansion of multiple pre-existing structures, notably Palmer Library and Crozier Williams Center. The suggestion to greatly expand available buildings, rather than continue to build smaller, separate facilities like Hale Laboratory, speaks to the period ideal of one or two all-encompassing structures that served multiple departments and areas of study. The plan's slated demolition of Thames Hall and Winthrop House, while exhibiting a clear preference for structures of modern and long-lasting material, also upholds the notion of physically centralizing academic space instead of reliance on scattered and specialized classroom buildings.

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<sup>356</sup> President Shain's visit to Los Angeles. Presidents Box 4, Folder: President Shain General Information. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.



*Figure 79. The SOM plan for campus, with the H-shaped North Complex visible at the bottom of the image, and the expanded, O-shaped library evident in the center of campus. Rendering by Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, 1966.*

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Beyond the academic sphere, the 1966 plan also recommends that the northeast quadrant of campus be developed by a series of six new dormitories, connected in pairs and positioned around shared lawns. Spaced from one another and staggered over the site, the distinctiveness of each building set emphasizes an architectural individuality less evident in the neighboring North Complex, and far more aligned with the rambling forms of the earliest constructed student residences. Both in footprint and relationship to enclosed green spaces, the proposed dormitories appear nearly identical to the Gothic quadrangles of the 1914 plan than to the Colonial Revival structures bordering the Campus Green or the sprawling Modernist forms of North Campus. The dormitories, in returning to an architectural pattern based on protection and togetherness, give form to the need to counterbalance the anonymity created by the larger spaces of shared academics.

The courtyard arrangement of the proposed dormitories also suggests a larger theme of human movement, both pedestrian and vehicular, between campus structures. Eight distinct entrances from both Mohegan Avenue and Williams Street proposes a permeability of the College grounds symbolic of openness and acceptance central to campus politics at the time. A completed ring road allots ample parking in two expansive lots book-ending the campus, as well as strips of spaces correlating to each dormitory. More importantly, the ring road allows for an entirely pedestrian campus core. Walking malls replace streets cutting through campus, creating a park-like setting between structures. Boulevards, divided in some sections by lush plantings, encourage casual exchange and a sense of space shared by all members of the College community. The proposed walkways, like the collective academic space and small-scale housing, seek to



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spatially reinforce a sense of collective identity among a small but rapidly changing College community.<sup>357</sup>

The 1966 plan outlined the placement of two badly needed resources on campus, and shaped a building campaign that would last well into the 1970s. Cummings Art Center, visible on the plan in its as-built form, opened in 1969. The product of a decade of planning but only three years of fundraising, the College administration viewed Cummings Art Center as a valuable draw for a generation of students embodying the “modern renaissance” of the 1960s.<sup>358</sup> Poured concrete aggregate and walls of smoked glass produced a monumental and futuristic visual vocabulary, avant-garde even when compared to the still recent North Complex. The center provided accommodations for fine arts, music, theater, and dance, unifying the various subjects by finally allowing them a shared space. The structure stood in opposition to the long-standing demands that no built form should interrupt the southeast views of Long Island Sound, however the site provided immediate access to the only other structure established for the arts: Palmer Auditorium. Castle Court, a sculpture garden well suited to SOM’s vision of outdoor public space, bridged the physical and architectural gap between Cummings Art Center and Palmer Auditorium, uniting the structures into a continuous, art-focused section of campus.

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<sup>357</sup> Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill. Connecticut College Master Plan. Campus and Buildings Box 2, Folder: Campus Views and Plans. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>358</sup> 1964. “Growth of Fine Arts Center Creates Problems; College Eyes Need for a New Building,” *The New London Day*, 9 Dec. An Arts Center, Connecticut College. Campus and Buildings Box 3, Folder: Cummings Art Center – Planning (Folder 1). New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
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*Figure 80. A model showing the unification of Palmer Auditorium and Cummings Art Center through Castle Court. Photograph by Phillip A. Biscuti.*

The second addition to campus, Charles E. Shain Library, represented an equally long process of planning and was not completed until 1976. Palmer Library, built for a student body of fewer than 300 and already expanded during the Blunt Presidency, was by the early 1960s already lacking in space. While preliminary proposals by Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon suggested an addition to Palmer Library not unlike the rendering on the 1966 campus plan, the finalized design of 1974 called for a detached structure situated over the former College reservoirs. Like Cummings, Shain Library presented a monumental, poured concrete façade softened by such elements as an elevated entrance walkway and adjacent outdoor amphitheater. In keeping with the educational ideals of the SOM plan, the original plans for Shain Library included classroom space, conference rooms, and study lounges to create a building that met all points of the academic sphere. In both placement and resources, Shain Library represented the axis of the campus.

**North Complex**

*Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, 1962*

**Renovations 1980, 1996-2005**

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*Figure 81. Photograph, 1963.*

Known simply as “The Plex” by students and staff, the series of six, linked dormitories gathered around the main dining hall stands as the largest structure at Connecticut College and the northern bookend of the College grounds. Begun in 1961, North Complex provided housing for 500 students in an effort both to close many of the older, wooden dormitories as well as to provide housing for the “highest number the College could accommodate without adding classroom space.”<sup>359</sup> Given the magnitude of the project, President Park and the College administration sought not the assistance of large donors or fundraising campaigns, instead turning to the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency. At the time, the agency offered aid to many large universities to

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<sup>359</sup> Connecticut College, North Dormitories. Pamphlet. Campus and Buildings Box 9, Folder: Buildings: North Complex. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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encourage the physical growth necessary to absorb the high number of Baby Boomers reaching college age across the country. Although only a small, liberal arts women's college, Connecticut College garnered a three million dollar federal loan to construct North Complex in stages to prepare for the swell in student enrollment anticipated during the early 1960s.<sup>360</sup>

Built without reliance on individual donors, the seven building units of North Complex were named for men and women influential in the development of the College or in the construction of North Complex. The first dormitory, opened in September of 1961, was named Morrison House for the Secretary of the Board of Trustees Mary Foulke Morrison. Morrison was well known for her role in the Women's Suffrage Movement and as a representative to the Kellogg-Briant Pact in 1928, which sought to establish peaceful relations between France and the United States. The next two dormitories opened to complete the eastern half of the complex were Lambdin House and Hamilton House. Lambdin House was named after the Business Manager of the College at the time, Allen Bennett Lambdin, who was integral in securing the federal loan for the construction of North Complex as well as an additional million dollars toward the project from College funds.<sup>361</sup> Hamilton House was named after two local sisters, Edith and Alice Hamilton, who were known for their pioneering work in literature and medicine, respectively.<sup>362</sup> The three dormitories making up the western half of the complex, Wright House, Park House, and Marshall House, were all opened in September of 1962. Wright

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<sup>360</sup> "College Gets \$3 Million U.S. Loan."

<sup>361</sup> 1961. "First Three Dormitories Named," *Connecticut College News*.

<sup>362</sup> *A Bulletin of Connecticut College*, May 1963: 48:5 Campus and Buildings Box 9, Folder: Buildings: North Complex. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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House drew its name from Elizabeth Caramossi Wright, the College's first Secretary of the Board of Trustees. Park House honored the president who made possible the construction of North Complex, and Marshall House recognized the second president of the College, Benjamin T. Marshall.<sup>363</sup> The central dining hall was named Harris Refectory in honor of the longtime director of residence Elizabeth Holmden Harris, who had retired only a few years before.<sup>364</sup>



*Figure 82. The walkway onto the roof deck over Harris Refectory, with Morrisson House visible in the background. Photograph, 1963.*

North Complex was the last campus structure designed by the New York firm of Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, who had served the College since the inauguration of

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<sup>363</sup> Morse, North Complex.

<sup>364</sup> Special to The New London Day. 12 Jan. 1962. Campus and Buildings Box 9, Folder Buildings: North Complex – Naming. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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President Blunt in 1930. In laying out the six dormitories and dining hall, the firm employed a unifying vocabulary of vitrified brick and white, structural columns framing rectangular windows. All seven units were connected, allowing for effortless passage through the Complex. Above Harris Refectory, a sprawling sundeck, complete with flower boxes and built-in benches, invited residents from all houses to convene on pleasant days. At the same time, however, the architects made a clear effort to uphold a sense of house individuality within the complex. In part, this effort was aided by the irregularly graded site, which allowed for each unit to sit slightly higher or lower than its neighbors. Each house was also given a distinctively designed front entrance with the house name spelled out in a unique font with metal lettering, applied near the entrance. On the interior, a ground floor living room declared the house's color scheme, which was repeated in accent walls and hallways on the floors above. Within Harris refectory, a series of accordion partitions could be employed to divide the hall into six, house specific sections to preserve the type of community created by the small dining halls in the older dorms.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Connecticut College, North Dormitories.



*Figure 83. The dorms were distinguished through customized entrances, like that of Park House, pictured above. Photograph, 1963.*

The push to establish each house as a separate entity confirms that the design of North Complex, despite its modern appearance and interior layout, maintained the values of the older residence halls. Dorm reception desks and housefellow's suites, although by the early 1960s often occupied by graduate or undergraduate students, still commanded a central position in each house to ensure the "social wellbeing" of the residents.<sup>366</sup> Open plan living rooms fitted with elegant Danish Modern furnishings graced the ground floor of each house to provide an updated version of the "gracious and comfortable living" offered by earlier spaces of Windham House and Knowlton House, while also referencing trends in mid-century single-family homes. Like in the residence halls built

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<sup>366</sup> 1964. "'Atmosphere' Is Only Thing Missing from New Dorms," *The New London Day*, 4 May.

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by Katherine Blunt, North Complex included less formal common rooms on the upper floors that provided students with soundproof typing carrels, laundry facilities, and a “compact kitchenette for snacking.” In another significant similarity to the residence halls of the 1930s and 1940s, only forty-two of the five hundred North Complex residents lived in doubles, while the rest occupied single rooms.<sup>367</sup> This facet of the design, cited constantly in College publications and news articles on the project, aimed to give students both greater privacy and a sense of personal space. Overall, while new in form, the offerings of North Complex still referenced earlier ideals in student housing.



*Figure 84. North Complex after the refurbishment of the 1990s, which stripped the buildings of their Modernist forms. Photograph by Lisa Brownell, 2000.*

Even with the architects’ efforts to make the space as homey and livable as possible, an article in the *College Day* published only three years after the first house opened bemoaned a lack of the “essence of the historic” that caused many students to opt for housing in the older residences on the southern end of the campus.<sup>368</sup> In a 1980 effort “to

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<sup>367</sup> Connecticut College, North Dormitories.

<sup>368</sup> “‘Atmosphere’ Is Only Thing Missing from New Dorms.”



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bring a flavor of the old campus” resulted in the addition of murals on the walls of Harris Refectory, as well as in the living room of each house.<sup>369</sup> In the mid 1990s, the College undertook a large-scale renovation of North Complex to mitigate its “institutional feel” through a new design that featured irregularly shaped rooms, twisting hallways, and a façade of granite and stucco to replace the older brick and metal.<sup>370</sup> While most of the overhaul was completed by 2000, renovations continued until 2005.<sup>371</sup> With the closure of many of the campus dining halls, the refurbished Harris Refectory came to serve as the primary canteen for the campus. As of 2010, the “New Plex” housed 556 students, continuing in its updated form to serve as the architectural anchor of north campus.

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<sup>369</sup>“Mural Decorates College Dining Hall,” *Connecticut College News Office*, 2 Sept. 1980. Campus and Buildings Box 9, Folder: Buildings: North Complex. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>370</sup> A New Plex by 2000. Pamphlet. Campus and Buildings Box 9, Folder: Buildings: North Complex Renovations 1996-. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>371</sup> “Capital Projects, About the Campaign,” *Connecticut College*, accessed 3 Mar. 2010. < <http://www.conncoll.edu/advancement/campaign/7965.htm> >

**S. Ralph Lazrus House**

*Edward and Margaret Hunter, 1964*

**Renovations** *Lindsay Liebig Roche, 1989, Fred Marzec & Associates, Inc., 2002*

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*Figure 85. Photograph by Joseph Molitor, 1964.*

Tucked behind Shain Library and neighboring Warnshuis Infirmary, Lazrus House represents the most recent chapter in Connecticut College's long history of cooperative student residences. Starting with the construction of Vinal Cottage in 1922, cooperative living was viewed by the College as a form of financial aid, whereby students performed some or all of the household duties in exchange for reduced room and board costs.<sup>372</sup> Chores took up approximately one hour of each resident's day with the

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<sup>372</sup> Noyes 76.

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expectation that students would happily pitch in if more work was deemed necessary.<sup>373</sup> Focused on what President Shain called “the housekeeper’s arts,” student chores in Lazrus House included planning, preparing and serving meals, cleaning the kitchen and bathrooms, vacuuming the common areas, and preparing weekly supply lists.<sup>374</sup> The construction of Lazrus House was made possible through the gift of Mrs. S. Ralph Lazrus in honor of her husband, the president of the Benrus Watch Co.<sup>375</sup>

Meant to house twenty-eight students in eight singles and ten doubles, Lazrus House embraced the contemporary appearance and emphasis on the student health integral to the Presidency of Rosemary Park.<sup>376</sup> Architects Edward and Margaret Hunter of Hanover, Massachusetts, designed the cooperative residence. The husband-and-wife team already had experience in designing college buildings at Dartmouth, Colby, and Harvard, however their firm specialized in New England residential architecture, making them an obvious choice for the College’s newest practice home.<sup>377</sup> The site for the T-

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<sup>373</sup> Instructions for Lazrus House, 1968-69. Campus & Buildings, Box 8, Folder: Lazrus. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>374</sup> [Charles E. Shain,] correspondence. 29 Sept. 1964. Campus & Buildings, Box 8, Folder: Lazrus. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

[Office of College Relations,] Press Release. 25 Sept. 1964. Campus & Buildings, Box 8, Folder: Lazrus. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

“Instructions for Lazrus House, 1968-69.”

<sup>375</sup> Office of College Relations, correspondence. 26 Sept. 1963. Campus & Buildings, Box 8, Folder: Lazrus. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>376</sup> 1965. “Redwood contributes to better living, both in city and on campus.” *Redwood News*, No. 1.

<sup>377</sup> Office of College Relations, Press Release. 13 Dec. 1963. Campus & Buildings, Box 8, Folder: Lazrus. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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shaped building was chosen due to its steep grade, which made possible at-grade entrances on two floors, as well as increased southern exposure for the basement dining room. All of the walls joining the concrete foundation were framed in metal with granite facing, with the upper stories finished in black, board and batten siding.<sup>378</sup> Lazrus' flat roof, which can also be found in the design of North Complex, completed the dorm's modern aesthetic.

Like Larrabee House, Lazrus House appeared as a series of interlocking slabs, each denoting a different function of the residence. The public area of the building, a single-story space jutting from the main block of student rooms, was easily recognizable from the house's exterior. The main entrance was accessed by way of a footbridge that spanned the sloping space between the path and the residential section of the dorm.<sup>379</sup> The large living room was located directly to the east of the main entrance, and featured a glass wall on its south face. The other two other walls of the living room were defined by a continuous strip of glass at the space where the exterior cladding met the roof, giving ample light to the space within as well as the appearance of structural weightlessness employed in many of the other modern structures on campus. A central staircase to the west of the common room led up to the nine bedrooms and down to the kitchen, dining room, and housefellow's suite in the basement. A patio off of the dining room on this floor offered protection of student bicycles, "a transportation necessity on the 670-acre campus."<sup>380</sup> The basement also featured a laundry room with modern equipment,

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<sup>378</sup> [1964] "Lazrus House Becomes Part of College," *The New London Day*.

<sup>379</sup> "Redwood contributes to better living, both in city and on campus."

<sup>380</sup> [Office of College Relations,] Press Release. 25 Sept. 1964.

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dedicated to the Lazrus family's longtime maid, Mary Battle Wright.<sup>381</sup> One highly publicized aspect of the building's design was the inclusion of three study rooms on the upper floor. These soundproof cubicles were housed in an elliptical projection above the common room with each given a domed skylight to flood the workspace in natural light.<sup>382</sup>

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
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*Figure 86. The light-filled kitchen of Lazrus House provided a pleasant and hygienic space where students would prepare meals for their housemates. Photograph by Joseph Molitor, 1966.*

Whereas Vinal Cottage had both looked and functioned as a home, and Abbey House had been divided between homelike and institutional space, Lazrus House adopted a form that did not attempt to evoke traditions of domestic architecture. However, the

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<sup>381</sup> Office of College Relations, Press Release. 29 September 1964.

<sup>382</sup> Office of College Relations, Press Release. 13 December 1963.

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structure did embrace several innovative design aspects that reflected its role as a well-appointed dwelling for its twenty-eight residents. One feature that the design of Lazrus house seemed to stress above all others is that of the beneficial qualities of natural light. Simple, rectangular panes of glass constituted the dorm room windows, allowing for unbroken rays to infiltrate deeply into the rooms. Because the dorm was built into a hill, with the basement opening onto the low side of the slope, both the kitchen and dining room had large windows to maximize the passive solar potential of the site. The partition between the kitchen and dining room, a panel of translucent glass rising from the countertop to the ceiling, underlines the importance of light in the space. It was believed that students would have greater focus, stamina, and general good health while working under natural light, a concept repeated in the second-floor study spaces. With its efficient kitchen filled with the latest technology and the easy-to-clean bathrooms, Lazrus House served as the revised definition of ideal domestic space achieved through a forward-thinking approach to design.

As of 2010, Lazrus functions not as a cooperative student residence, but as a living facility for those preferring to cook their own meals. While the public spaces of the dorm have seen little change (minus the disappearance of much of their original Danish Modern furnishing), many of the student rooms were divided in half to accommodate a greater number of occupants. Even with the increased number of residents, however, the large kitchen, ample patio, and comfortable living room encourage a sense of community in those who live in Lazrus House.

**Service Building**

*Richard Sharpe, 1968*

**Additions** *Lindsay Liebig Roche, 1992*

Home to the Physical Plant department, which oversees the upkeep of Connecticut College's 750-acre campus, the service building occupies an inconspicuous site on southern edge of the College grounds. Built to replace a scattering of workshops and storage sheds demolished to make way for the 1963 construction of North Complex, the building may have been a result of the campus master plan prepared by Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, which proposes a large service building on the present site. The structure was designed, however, by Norwich architect and Art professor Richard Sharpe. Sharpe was responsible for several small projects at the College in the 1960s, including the renovation of the Winthrop Annex and the River Ridge faculty apartments. Beyond his work on the campus, Sharpe was well known in the Northeast, having served as the chairman of the Historic District Commission for the Norwichtown Green as well as having produced buildings for several colleges and universities, and managed the restoration of the Flat Iron Building in New York City.<sup>383</sup>

For the service building, Sharpe designed a low, rectangular structure, sited such that both the ground floor and basement could have at-grade access. Built of concrete block with a flat roof and little in the way of exterior ornament, the service building discloses its functional role through unfussy and efficient design. The main entrance, which sits at the midpoint of the north façade, opens into a small reception area, beyond which lies a corridor giving access to several offices lining the building's north side. The west side of the structure is given over to a Grounds garage, while janitorial storage

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<sup>383</sup> "People and Places, 2007-01-03," *Architecture Week*, accessed 9 Apr. 2010 < [http://www.architectureweek.com/2007/0103/people\\_and\\_places.html](http://www.architectureweek.com/2007/0103/people_and_places.html) >

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originally occupied the east end, and a paint and carpentry shop lay opposite the offices and entrance. The basement was initially left unfinished, marked for future expansion and mechanics. In a nod to occupational gendering, the building contained a men's restroom that rivaled the size of the largest office, while the women's restroom was the smallest space in the building.<sup>384</sup>

It would appear, from a series of plans illustrating proposed additions to the service building in the 1970s, that the structure quickly outgrew the original design. Not until 1992, however, was local architect Lindsay Liebig Roche hired to design an addition to the building. The new space nearly doubled the building's square footage, produced more office space, a plan storage room, and meeting room on the ground floor, as well as a furniture repair shop, and equipment and athletic storage on the basement floor. The project also combined several of the original offices to create an open-plan administrative area just to the right of the main entrance.<sup>385</sup> By the late 2000s, this addition continued to provide the space needed for the many maintenance tasks coordinated by Physical Plant. Nonetheless, the 2000 campus master plan calls for the demolition of the current service building to make way for a series of baseball fields, raising questions as to both the form and location of the future facility.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> Floorplan, first floor, service building. Richard Sharpe, AIA, Norwich, CT. Connecticut College Physical Plant.

<sup>385</sup> Floorplan, basement, service building. Lindsay Liebig Roche, AIA, Waterford, CT. Connecticut College Physical Plant.

<sup>386</sup> Kieran, Timberlake & Harris (Architects and Planners), Rolland/Towers (Site Planners and Landscape Architects). "Comprehensive Master Plan." April 2000. Office of the Vice President, Connecticut College.



**Joanne and Nathan Toor Cummings Art Center**

*Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, 1969, Gordon Bunshaft*

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*Figure 87. Photograph, 1972.*

The last architectural addition to the Campus Green, Cummings Art Center provided a centralized and much-needed facility for the Music, Fine Arts, and Art History departments. Although a combined arts building had been a priority of the College since Katherine Blunt's presidency in the 1930s, large increases in the student body between 1959 and 1964 strained the existing spaces to such an extent that the undertaking was deemed critical to the continued academic health of the College. Furthermore, at the time of the building's construction, the Arts departments occupied facilities scattered across the campus, with the music classes held as far away as Holmes Hall, a ten-minute walk

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from the Campus Green.<sup>387</sup> Unlike the case of Crozier Williams Center and other projects relying on monetary gifts, the funds for Cummings Art Center were amassed quite rapidly in an acknowledging the dire need for space. Several large donations, in particular that of alumna Joanne Toor Cummings and her husband Nathan, enabled construction to begin only three years after the first proposal was made in 1964.<sup>388</sup>

For the design of Cummings Art Center, the College turned to Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (SOM), an internationally renowned office that had completed a campus master plan in 1968. From their campus master plan, which featured several outdoor social spaces and large, multifunction structures, it was clear that Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill could aid the College in developing a community-focused and avant-garde appearance desired during a decade of idealism and social change. Bunshaft had recently completed both the United States Air Force Academy Complex as well as the pioneering Beinecke Library at Yale University, further proof that he could bring an ultramodern edge to the campus.<sup>389</sup>

The site selected for Cummings Art Center was directly to the south of Palmer Auditorium, and basic to the design was the use of a sculpture garden to bridge the space between the carriage access of the older auditorium with the public entryway of the new art center. In form, Cummings Art Center hugs its sloping site, with the lowest floor almost completely underground to preserve the much loved views of Long Island

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<sup>387</sup> 1964. "Growth of Fine Arts Creates Problems; College Eyes Need for a New Building." *The New London Day*, 9 Dec.

<sup>388</sup> "Joanne Cummings, Art Patron, Collector and Philanthropist, 66," Obituaries, *New York Times*, 9/20/95, accessed 3/4/10 <  
<http://www.nytimes.com/1995/09/20/obituaries/joanne-cummings-art-patron-collector-and-philanthropist-66.html?pagewanted=1> >

<sup>389</sup> Nicholas Adams, *Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill: SOM since 1936* (London, England: Phaedon Press, 2007) 146, 184.

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Sound.<sup>390</sup> From the Campus Green, the monumental structure seems to float, employing a similar system of recessed, glass-walled ground floor as was found in the slightly earlier North Complex and Lazrus House. The first structure to break with the tradition of block construction sided with granite wood, or metal, the new arts center is built in a granite concrete aggregate, poured into place onsite. Surrounding the building, terraces provided space for sculptures and gave access to a large staircase on the building's south face, linking the building to the south parking lot, Lyman Allyn Museum, and nearby Williams School. Floor-to-ceiling, tinted glass windows line the building's northern façade providing natural light to the studios within. Six, glass-faced monitors protruding from the roof, as well as large, square windows along the east and west façade provide light to the inner studios, while also giving the structure its characteristic profile.

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<sup>390</sup> An Arts Center, Connecticut College.

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

*Figure 88. From Castle Court, the new arts center  
appeared as a stack of glass and concrete boxes.  
Photograph by Phillip A. Biscuti, 1970.*

The interior of Cummings Art Center was planned around a core of two performances spaces, one stacked on top to of the other to extend the full height of the building. On the lowest floor, music studios and practice rooms surrounded the 230-seat Oliva Hall on three sides, with art studios and a music library occupying the side facing Castle Court. The floor above allowed access to the 360-seat, double story Dana Hall (now Evans), which was bordered by faculty offices on three sides. On the fourth side lay the main entrance, atrium, and series of galleries for the display of student works and traveling shows. The double-height atrium, lit by a large skylight, provided illumination for the surrounding balconies that also served as exhibition

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space. In addition to the balconies, the top floor of the art building contained seven large studios, with a series of art history lecture rooms lining the windowless southern façade. On both levels, the outer walls of the auditorium space were finished in the same aggregate that covered the building's exterior, establishing Evans Hall as a metaphorical structure within a structure.<sup>391</sup>

Both inside and out, the user experience of Cummings Art Center was a highly theatrical one. Not only did the north-facing glass walls provide sweeping panoramas of the Campus Green, they also served to frame the activities of those using the space. The atrium skylight and roof monitors allowed for the weather conditions to alter light conditions of the interior, creating an ever-changing quality to the studio spaces. At night, the atrium space was lit by exposed light bulbs within the coffers of the white ceiling, producing a shadowy effect in contrast to the bright, daylight hours. The simple yet sprawling plan of the art center, with its multiple access points, balconies, and terraces, encouraged a sense of exploration when moving through the space. The sculptures surrounding the building, many of which were kinetic or interactive, enhanced the user's sense of discovery. Above all, the monumental structure made a sweeping gesture of the importance of arts at the College and the value placed on innovation in design.<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Peggie Ford, "Cummings Art Center, Connecticut College, New London, Connecticut," *Connecticut Architect*, July-August 1972: 9-11.

<sup>392</sup> "Growth of Fine Arts Creates Problem."



*Figure 89. With its overhead skylight, the gallery of Cummings Art Center is nearly always filled with sunlight. Photograph, 1972[?]*

Following the completion of Cummings Art Center, student enrollment in the arts increased rapidly.<sup>393</sup> The two performance spaces offered smaller alternatives to Palmer Auditorium, and were ideal for music performances, poetry readings, and lectures. Perhaps due to this particular value, the larger of the two spaces is one of the only in the building to have experienced a major renovation. Evans Hall was refitted in the late 1990s to improve acoustics and present an elegant space to accommodate visiting performers. By the late 2000s, a campaign to renovate many of the seminar and lecture rooms on the third floor was underway, reflecting the growing need for classroom spaces with technological capacities. In form, however, Cummings Art Center remains a strikingly modern facet of the Connecticut College campus, continuing to serve as a symbol of commitment to artistic originality and vision.

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<sup>393</sup> “Cummings Art Center, Connecticut College, New London.”

**River Ridge Apartments**

*Richard Sharpe, 1969*

Located just beyond Abbey House, the River Ridge apartments represent the last addition to the College's holdings in the Riverside neighborhood. The complex, camouflaged from Mohegan Avenue by its low profile and neutral coloring, was constructed in 1968 to provide housing for College faculty. The project was necessitated by an expansion of the Coast Guard Academy that would result in to the demolition of several residential blocks to make way for a large library complex. Although former College President Blunt Katherine constructed much in the way of faculty dwellings, many professors still lived in rental units or boarding accommodations in the section of the Riverside community slated for demolition.<sup>394</sup> In order to ensure that each soon-to-be-evicted faculty would have an equally convenient place to live, the River Ridge complex was erected in a matter of months using College funds.

The period during which the River Ridge apartments were constructed was the first in nearly forty years when the College did not depend on a single architectural firm to produce all structures for the campus. To design the faculty housing complex, the College turned to Richard Sharpe, who had just completed the design for the service building on the south end of the campus.<sup>395</sup> Sharpe produced a simple and economical floor plan, each of which could house a family of up to five in three bedrooms. Taking the form of six, attached houses, each containing two units with mirrored interior arrangements, the River Ridge apartments were staggered to give visual interest to the long front façade and individuality to each paired entryway. Although the grey board and

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<sup>394</sup> Noyes 203.

<sup>395</sup> 1968. "Conn Fire System Nears Completion," *ConnCensus*, 24 Sept.

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batten siding and simple, asphalt shingled roof expressed the complex's inexpensive construction, each apartment included a small front yard fenced for privacy and a back deck overlooking the Thames River.

Like many structures on the campus, the River Ridge apartments made use of the sloped site to construct at-grade basement levels in what appeared - from the upper floor - to be a single-story structure. The apartment's three bedrooms and single bathroom were located on the lower floor while the upper story contained an open plan living and dining room with a small kitchen just inside the front door. Numerous storage areas were included in the arrangement of the apartments in an effort to make use of all extra space in the small floor plans. Full length, sliding glass doors opened onto the deck on the upper story, and a small cement patio on the floor below allow light into the interior and encouraged the use of the outdoor space in pleasant weather. In their design, the apartments may reference architect Charles Moore's Sea Ranch development of the early 1960s, which used wood-clad, geometric forms and simple interior layouts to emphasize the beauty of its natural surroundings.<sup>396</sup>

In design, material, and location, the River Ridge apartments provide an interesting contrast to the residence halls built for students. Both settings focus on providing temporary living space for adults engaged in an academic setting, but similarities between the building types end there. Spartan and remote in comparison to the only slightly earlier North Complex and Lazrus House, the River Ridge apartments show a clear inclination towards minimalist functionality over the creation of luxurious living space. The apartments' separation from campus also speaks to the withdrawal of

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<sup>396</sup> Patricia Leigh Brown, "Utopia by the Sea," *New York Times*, 14 Dec. 2008, accessed 8 Apr. 2010 < <http://travel.nytimes.com/2008/12/14/travel/14SeaRanch.html> >



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faculty from student life in the 1960s and 1970s, a fact supported by the concurrent reworking of the housefellow position to replace the live-in professors with student representatives.<sup>397</sup> Although much of the design and appearance of the River Ridge apartments was dictated by value and expediency, their forms may have also served to give the faculty residents both the physical and architectural distinction from the main campus.

Although it has undergone no major renovations, the function of River Ridge apartments has changed significantly. Although the exact date is unclear, by the early 2000s, the River Ridge apartments had entered the student housing lottery. As of 2010, each apartment houses five students who, like those in cooperative dormitories, pay only a limited meal plan, while cooking for themselves in the full kitchen of each unit. This shift in use fits into a larger trend to offer independent lifestyle options for the increasing number of students who prefer the autonomy offered by Earth House, the 360 apartments, and other non-dormitory setting.

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<sup>397</sup> 1964. “‘Atmosphere’ Is Only Thing Missing from New Dorms.” *The New London Day*, 4 May.

“Compelled to think carefully about priorities”<sup>398</sup>

## Campus Withdrawal

1974 – 1986



*Figure 90. Students at work within the stacks of Shain Library, which was completed in 1974.*

*Like many other institutes of higher education, in the 1970s and early 1980s Connecticut College turned inwards. Students renounced advocacy and returned to academics. Instead of the shared values of equality or modernization that described decades prior, an individual stance towards academics and campus life by both student and faculty superseded any sort of collective College identity. Many of the policies surrounding racial integration put in place during the 1960s required redrafting as tensions and dissatisfaction deepened. The enduring result of overbuilding in the 1950s and the national financial crisis reduced construction projects, an appropriate indication of a period when the needs of the community surrendered to the focus on self.*

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<sup>398</sup> “Letter from the President,” *Connecticut College News*, Winter 1976. College Presidents Box 5, Folder: Oakes Ames General and Biographical Information. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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The groundbreaking ceremony for Shain Library in 1974 coincided with the dawn of a new attitude towards collegiate life that would characterize the decade to follow. The student activism of the late 1960s, faced with steadfast political policies and unresponsive college administrations, had shifted from optimism to frustration and resentment. Conflict in Vietnam and Cambodia and the resulting draft of young men created fears of life beyond the collegiate sphere. For many young people, drug use and the embrace of alternative lifestyles provided the needed escape from bleak reality, but also served to weaken the energy and authority of the 1960s' youth movements. Media coverage, greatly exaggerating the scope and radicalism of demonstrations and student counterculture, declared the collapse of American higher education. By 1970, students entering college expected an environment of militant dissent, and shaped their actions to reflect this impression. A decisive moment occurred in May of 1970 when, during a national campaign of sixty colleges and universities against American involvement in Cambodia, National Guardsmen killed four, unarmed student protesters at Kent State University. The deaths shocked young people, who, up to that point, viewed a brief period in jail as the worst penalty for nonviolent demonstration. Shortly thereafter, the Watergate scandal brought home the point that many young people already felt; corruption and immorality existed even within the highest rank of the government. With the utopian dreams and prosperous economy of the 1960s receding with equal haste, a new generation of college students saw the need to rethink the "hippie" lifestyle.

In 1977, President Kingman Brewster of Yale University bemoaned the "grim professionalism" students brought to all aspects of academic and social life. Although national enrollments continued to increase with ever expanding numbers of women and

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minority students, campus clubs and extracurricular activities waned. Replacing them was a culture of self-directed meritocracy based on getting ahead in preparation for a job market already saturated with Baby Boomers. Lobbying, when it did occur, focused on campus-specific issues affecting students as individuals instead of the college community or the greater public. While administrations strained to make ends meet in the economic downturn, students vied for longer library hours, lower fees, and a greater selection of courses.<sup>399</sup> Connecticut College, too, was forced to make cuts. In the winter 1976 issue of the *Connecticut College News*, President Ames spoke to the financial crunch felt by many institutions as he called for staff cuts of 11%, tuition increases, and the closure of half of the house dining rooms on campus.<sup>400</sup>

The professorate at many schools took up a self-focus not unlike their students, and for similar reasons. Economic hardship caused many faculty members to focus on their own survival over the vitality of their departments. The need to meet administrative standards, avoid dismissal, and gain tenure provoked the “publish or perish” effect, where professors focused more on their own work than on instructing students.<sup>401</sup> The inaccessibility of professors encouraged an already unreceptive student attitude, stressing relations and causing many faculty members to decrease their physical presence on the campuses. The early 1970s departure of both faculty housefellows and the College president from the campus grounds spoke to this change, as the student domain grew to encompass nearly the entire College grounds.<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1987) 245-262.

<sup>400</sup> Letter from the President, *Connecticut College News*, Winter 1976.

<sup>401</sup> Lucas 269-286.

<sup>402</sup> “1973 Connecticut College “C” Book.” New London, CT. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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The 1970s also proved a period of difficulty for racial relations at colleges and universities. Many minority students recruited to largely White institutions felt isolated, and responded by forming close bonds with other students of color. The Black Power movement of the late 1960s, which emphasized racial solidarity and physical isolation in contrast to an earlier focus on peaceful collaboration, provided direction for these students. Less individually focused but still inwardly oriented, these groups continued to confront college administrations during the 1970s to demand academic programs focused on multiculturalism, larger minority enrollments and more diverse faculties, and the establishment of houses and cultural centers for the sole use of minority students. The creation of support networks, curriculums, and spaces withdrawn from larger campus culture allowed for White students to ignore the minority contingent, which many worried defeated the original goals of integration.<sup>403</sup>

This continued minority activism and determined racial isolation were very evident at Connecticut College, where the problem of minority use of space once again became indicative of the larger issue of racial integration on campus. In 1971, a group of minority students led a sit-in dubbed “The Fanning Takeover,” barring themselves within the chief administrative structure with the demands of an additional twenty-seven Black freshmen by the following academic year, the recruitment of a Black admissions counselor, and a campus commission to investigate “racial relations” on campus. Although each demand was met, a report filed by the Dean of the College as part of a state conference in 1974 stated that “for these students, the psychic load becomes

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<sup>403</sup> Horowitz, *Campus Life* 245-262.  
Off-campus housing notes of Getrude Noyes.

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overwhelming at times...especially during the peak periods at exam time.”<sup>404</sup>

Nonetheless, The Commission on Racial Relations deemed the use of Blackstone House as the minority dorm, a suitable arrangement only a decade before, as potentially harmful to the success of integration. The Commission recommended that Blackstone be put back into the housing lottery (which it was, in 1973, with the understanding that no minority student would be placed in any dormitory without at least twelve other minority students living in it). In addition, each dorm was encouraged to “elicit a positive statement to the effect that students desire to live in dormitories that have a significant racial mixture.”<sup>405</sup>

In order to meet this suggestion while continuing to provide for the particular needs of minority students, Vinal Cottage (vacated after the construction of Lazarus House), was designated as the new minority cultural center. Renamed Unity House, the visual prominence of the structure from Mohegan Avenue called attention to the institutional value placed upon its new function, just as it had when the building housed the home economics practice space. At the same time, many minority students appreciated that the new center was located at some distance from the core of campus. The essentially off-campus site gave students of color the seclusion that many found necessary to cope with life on the central College grounds. Equally important to both incarnations of the cottage was the architectural similarity to domestic space. Unity House was often described as “a

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<sup>404</sup> “The Morning After – A Retrospective View of a Select Number of Colleges and Universities with Increased Black Student Enrollement in the Past Five Years.” Report. Admissions Records Box 1, Folder: Admissions: Recruitment, Retention & Financial Aid: Minority Students. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>405</sup> Recommendations of the Commission on Racial Relations. Report. Admissions Records Box 1, Folder: Admissions: Recruitment, Retention & Financial Aid: Minority Students. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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home away from home” for minority students. The almost entirely student-driven development of Unity House, in addition to a series of new African Studies courses, and the continued recruitment of African American, Puerto-Rican American, Asian American, and foreign-born students, highlights the extent to which the race relations remained one of the few active facets of student life for this inwardly focused generation.<sup>406</sup>



*Figure 91. As the new home for the minority cultural center, Unity House offered many students the architectural seclusion and homelike atmosphere that they desired. Photograph by Ted Hendrickson, mid 1970s.*

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<sup>406</sup> Judy Kirmmse, “The Path to Unity,” *CC Magazine*. Spring 1997: 18-25.

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During the 1970s, new construction was limited to the building of Shain Library. This slowing of campus construction, particularly apparent when compared to the number of major structures built in each decade previous, was a natural phenomenon reflecting the somber attitude many took towards higher education. Many schools had expanded significantly during the prosperous 1960s and this still-recent development, combined with the recession of the 1970s, created little market for new concepts in collegiate design. Projects that were carried out embodied the financial concerns of the period, often utilizing inexpensive material - such as Shain Library's pour concrete walls - to build designs that maximized the use of interior space. The mid decade oil crisis triggered a push for greater energy efficiency, demonstrated in small windows sealed against heat loss, and thickly insulated walls. Also a sign of the times was the choice of many schools, when funds were available, to construct flexibly arranged, open-plan library facilities. Like many college libraries, Shain Library included a multitude of walled study carrels and 24-hour work lounge that catered to the needs of the serious and independent student.<sup>407</sup>

Even during the retreat into the serious and self-focused academics that characterized so many college and universities during the 1970s and into the 1980s, sports remained a symbolic stronghold of traditional collegiate values.<sup>408</sup> At Connecticut College, the disparity between dwindling participation in student government and the formation of multiple sports teams, including cross-country, lacrosse, and swimming,

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<sup>407</sup> "Connecticut: Connecticut College, Palmer Library." *Library Journal*. 1974, Special Report #16: 6-11.

<sup>408</sup> Horowitz, *Campus Life* 260.



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underscored the endurance of athletics during the 1970s.<sup>409</sup> In 1980, Connecticut College opened Dayton Ice Arena, an architectural response to the persistent popularity of sports. The ice arena allowed for the addition of hockey and skating teams, but more importantly established a new area of campus development along the Thames River. Only four years later, a fitness center was added to the site to create the foundation of a sports complex. In consideration of the still recent Oil Crisis, a structural system allowing for greatest span of minimal materials dictated the building's unusual shape.<sup>410</sup>

IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT – VIEW PRINT AT LIND LEAR CENTER FOR  
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*Figure 92. Dayton Arena, the first component of the athletic complex, was completed in 1982. Photograph by Wayne Soverns Jr., 1984.*

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<sup>409</sup> Dedication, The Charles B. Luce Field House. 19 Sept. 1992. Campus and Buildings Box 8: Folder Athletic Center Expansion – Dedication of Charles Luce Field House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>410</sup> Dr. Oakes Ames. Address to The Newcomen Society.

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The construction of the new sports facilities corresponded to the initiation of a campaign of fundraising and campus improvement leading up to the College's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1986. Economic recovery allowed for the College to address many of the needed renovations and expansions that had been delayed during the 1970s. Chief among these was the redevelopment of Palmer Library. Retired in 1976 with the opening of the new library facility, Palmer Library stood empty for nearly a decade before renovations began. Dedicated at the 75th anniversary celebration, the former library acquired the name of Blaustein Humanities Center, and the designation of building containing both classrooms and faculty spaces devoted to the study of culture.

With the opening of the Athletic Center, Crozier Williams Center also experienced substantial renovations. The space once containing the gymnasium became a large, multipurpose room for student events with an additional social area for more intimately scaled gatherings.<sup>411</sup> Both the construction of the athletic facilities as well as the series of renovations illustrates an interest, during the early 1980s, to widen the academic and recreational breadth of the College. Moreover, these building projects, based upon awareness of others and community involvement, indicate a desire to combat the inwardness of the 1970s and reinstitute the shared identity of generations past.

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<sup>411</sup> Oakes Ames, letter to Faculty and Staff. 24 Aug. 1982. President's Files Box 5, Folder Oakes Ames General Information. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

**President's Residence (772 Williams Street)**

*Constructed around 1934, acquired by College in 1972*

**Renovations** *Lindsay Liebig Roche, 1978*

Bordering the Arboretum and surrounded by thick bushes of Mountain Laurel, the President's home at 772 Williams Street looks much like the other homes lining Williams Street. The house appears, from aerial views showing the development of the campus, to have been constructed between 1930 and 1934.<sup>412</sup> In 1972, the College acquired the residence, the last in a long line of College-owned houses designated for the use of the President and his or her family. In the first decade of the school's operation, the President had lived in a suite in Thames Hall. As increased enrollment mandated the conversion of this space to student rooms in the 1920s, the President moved to present-day Nichols House, and then to an off-campus residence on Granite Street. In 1929, the College acquired the Dutch Revival Ewald family residence, now Unity House, which served as the President's house until the acquisition of the Williams Street property.<sup>413</sup>

Like many of the houses on Williams Street, the exterior of the President's house speaks to the Colonial Revival styles that began in the late nineteenth and continued through the twentieth century. Sided in white wood clapboard with dark red shutters, the rectangular structure presents its broad side to the street. The dormer windows and capping chimneys framed by quarter round casements on either end of the building add interest to the otherwise plain, gable roof. The fanlight and transoms of the front door are echoed in the small front porch, with its open pediment and slender columns, and again in the arched ironwork gate leading to the house from the street.

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<sup>412</sup> AER-01-009, AER-01-003. Campus and Buildings Photographs Box 1, Folder: Campus Aerials 1930-1957. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>413</sup> Off-campus housing notes of Getrude Noyes.

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On the interior, the President's house follows a variation of the Georgian plan, a room arrangement often used in the Colonial Revival period. A central hall and staircase divided the ground floor in half, with a large living room on one side and a dining room and kitchen on the other. A glassed-in porch on the house's southern facade, similar to those on Strickland House and Nichols House, provided a semi-outdoor and informal family space off the living room in the era before backyards served as the principal recreation space for the American family. Upstairs, bedrooms arranged around a landing, with a centrally positioned bathroom speak to the inclusion of modern innovation within the traditional form.<sup>414</sup>

While the architectural style of the President's house matches many of the buildings on the College grounds, its peripheral site says much about the shifting notion of the administration's role in campus life. The central locations of the former President's houses at Unity House and Thames Hall allowed the President to assume a role of paternal watchfulness. Even Nichols House sat opposite Deshon Avenue, putting the President in proximity to many of the College-operated boardinghouses. By the late 1960s, as students demanded greater autonomy and as residence hall housefellows shifted from live-in faculty to fourth-year students, the concept of the President living only a few feet from undergraduates seemed less important. The house at 772 Williams Street offered the President a broad view of the campus and yet stood distinctly apart from the physical heart of the College.

Six years after its acquisition, 772 Williams Street was renovated – at least at the ground level - to provide a space both comfortable and fit for entertaining. The addition

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<sup>414</sup> Foley 214.

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to the house's west façade, which was designed by Lindsay Liebig Roche, allowed for an expanded kitchen with its own entrance and small deck. The kitchen was provided with direct access to both the living room and dining room, as well as an ample pantry and storage space. Once completed, the new arrangement rendered the main floor of the house adequate for large events, with separate access for caterers, and a food preparation space that was both centrally located but also removed from the formal areas of the house.<sup>415</sup> The addition appears to be the last major change to the property, which continues to serve the dual function of both a private residence and event space for the College's President.

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<sup>415</sup> Plan for Addition to 772 Williams Street. Lindsay Liebig Roche, AIA, Waterford, CT. Connecticut College Physical Plant.

**Charles E. Shain Library**

*Kilham, Beder and Chu Architects 1976*

**Renovations** 1995, 2001, 2005



*Figure 93. Photograph, 1976.*

Located at the heart of the campus, the imposing Charles E. Shain Library stands as a stark testament to scholarly endeavors at the College. Completed in 1976, the library absorbed the function of the much earlier Palmer Library, which was later renovated to serve as Blaustein Humanities Center. The older library, expanded multiple times over its forty-year life, was finally replaced after significant increases to the student body during the 1960s necessitated a larger, and more flexible, facility. President Shain, for whom the library was named a decade after its completion, was instrumental in organizing both the funds and support needed to construct the building. The project began just after his retirement in 1974.

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In selecting a site, the College administration was finally able to claim the land occupied by two municipal reservoirs that had occupied a central position on the campus since the school's founding. The site was freed after an enclosed holding tank located on Gallows Lane was built to replace the open reservoirs, returning the land to the College. To make the most of the already excavated site, the foundation of Shain Library was constructed within the perimeter of the old pools and graded such that the basement would receive full daylight. To design the structure, the College employed Philip Chu of the New York based firm of Kilham, Beder, and Chu. Chu was especially well known for his designs of modern, open plan libraries at small, liberal arts colleges such as Amherst College, Bryn Mawr College, and Barnard College, making him an obvious choice at Connecticut College. For Shain Library, Chu proposed a spare and monumental exterior, implemented in the same recessed glass on the ground floor and concrete aggregate facing that had been used on Cummings Art Center five years earlier. Nonetheless, the structure's boxy proportions, striated finish, and slit-like upper floor windows set it apart from all preceding buildings, both traditional and contemporary. Unlike even the flat-roofed structures such as Bill Hall or Smith House, where decorative cornices were used to establish the tops of masonry walls, the new library's façade simply ended, meeting the sky absent of any barrier.

The primary entrance of the library, accessed by way of a concrete bridge spanning the graded slope of the site, offers access onto a main floor strikingly different from that of the old Palmer Library. With almost no fixed walls beyond the concrete stairwell and staff offices, the open plan of the Shain Library allows both for efficient use

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of space and flexibility for future alterations.<sup>416</sup> In a second divergence from the earlier model, book storage and study space is integrated on each floor of the library. In this way, students are encouraged to browse the collections while they study, without the aid of the librarian. Originally, the library contained individual carrels, large tables for group work, soundproofed rooms for typing, and modern, comfortable lounge furniture for a less formal atmosphere. While the upper floors of the library boasted conference rooms and even a smoking lounge, the first and second floors included seminar rooms where classes could be held near to the many resources available within the structure.

The design and offerings of Charles Shain Library facilitated an innovative approach to library use to suit a new generation of students and faculty. The open plan anticipated changes that the increasing role of technology would play in higher education, allowing for unproblematic renovations. The design philosophy of combining study space within the stacks facilitated one of the key goals behind modern liberal arts schools like Connecticut College: that students were to “dabble” in many different disciplines. By giving free access to browse the books and study amongst them, the College was encouraging students to do just that. The seminar rooms insured that the library would be the kind of centrally located, multi-functioning academic structures presented in the Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill campus master plan of the previous decade. In the library’s basement, a roomy, 24-hour study lounge with separate entry allowed for access to the facility at any time, recognizing the often-hectic work schedule of the modern student.

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<sup>416</sup> Kilham, Beder and Chu Architects, *Architectural Proposal*. September 1971, Connecticut College Archives, Charles E. Shain Library, New London.



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Given its emphasis on flexible planning principles, Shain Library adapted well as both the student body and library holdings continued to grow during the 1970s and 1980s. By the late 1990s, however, the structure began to show both its age and space limitations. A renovation to the main floor in 2001 produced the Charles Chu Asian Art Reading Room, a quiet study space directly to the north of the main entrance, fitted out with bamboo floor and adorned with pieces from the collection of the emeritus professor for whom the room was named. In 2005, the 24-hour study space in the basement was replaced with the Blue Camel coffee shop, an alteration again focused on providing facilities desired by the modern student body. In 2008, a gift from alumnae Linda Lear allowed for the expansion of the special collections and archives, now located on the second floor. While the 2000 master plan illustrates both a near doubling of the library's footprint, but this enlargement still awaits funding as of 2010.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Library renovation notes of Laurie Deredita. Box 12, Folder: Shain Library. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

**Dayton Ice Arena and Luce Field House (The Athletic Complex)**

*Dan Tully 1980, 1984*

**Additions** *Dan Tully 1992, 2009*



*Figure 94. Photograph, 1990.*

Begun in 1980 with the construction of the Dayton Ice Arena and expanded with the addition of the Luce Field House five years later, the athletic complex represents the principal expansion to Connecticut College in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Formerly housed in Crozier Williams Center, the College's athletic facilities were rendered inadequate with a doubling in the number of students participating in athletics between 1972 and 1982. Prior to the construction of the ice arena, the men's hockey team was required to commute 45 minutes in each direction to practice and compete at the Wesleyan rinks. To fund the new complex, the College gained support from a wide array of benefactors. A large gift from the Dayton family, combined with an anonymous donor's support and a grant from the Kresge Foundation made possible the construction of the ice arena. The subsequent field house, named for athletic director and

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sports advocate Charles Luce, was financed by a \$4 million bond through the Connecticut Higher Education Fiscal Authority and paid off through a 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary fundraising campaign that continued through much of the 1980s.

Planned to provide multi-purpose spaces for the College community as well as for New London and Waterford residents, the Athletic Center was located across Mohegan Avenue in order to keep excess traffic off of the main campus. Dan Tully Associates designed Dayton Arena and Luce Field House, as well as a substantial addition to the complex in 1992. Having built “a majority of [the] athletic centers in the east,” including those at Vassar College, Amherst College, and Brown University, Dan Tully Associates was the clear choice given their experience with athletic centers as a building type.<sup>418</sup>

Although built five years apart, both Dayton Arena and Luce Field House employ the same, unusual system of concrete abutments joining wooden and steel buttresses to support a hyperbolic paraboloid roof made up of laminated wooden shells. This design was developed as an economically efficient way to span the necessary area, eliminating the need for interior support columns.<sup>419</sup> Visually, the effect is a distinctive roofline of recurring peaks that appear to be made of stretched fabric. Given its light brown color, the roof reminds many viewers of sand dunes, the natural habitat for Connecticut College’s camel mascot. Rough unfinished stone at the base of the structure provides a

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<sup>418</sup> Chronological List of Meetings and Feed Back Sessions Which Can Aid Decisions on Site, Content, and Phasing Stages. Undated typescript. Box 8, Folder: Buildings: Athletic Center, Construction and Planning of New Athletic Center. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>419</sup> Van Lengen 123-124.

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visual link to the older structures of the main campus. A finish of acrylic stucco with “Camel Blue” trim edged the Field House’s administrative offices.<sup>420</sup>



*Figure 95. The parabolic roof structure of the athletic complex allowed for both efficient construction and a signature design. Photograph, 1986.*

The effect of the unusual roof design was apparent on the interior, where the vast, uninterrupted spaces of Dayton Arena and Luce Field House allowed for maximum use of the facilities. While Dayton Arena contained only the ice rink and locker facilities, Luce Field House could accommodate 1,000 students in its three multi-purpose courts for basketball, volleyball, badminton, and tennis; a jogging track; two locker rooms;

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<sup>420</sup> Dan Tully Associates, Elevation drawings of the Field House at Connecticut College, 1983. Physical Plant, Connecticut College.

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classroom; training rooms; and coaches' offices. Two racquetball courts and four squash courts were situated below and behind the main floor along the building's east edge.<sup>421</sup>

The construction of Dayton Arena and Luce Field House updated what has been a century-long enthusiasm for athletics at Connecticut College. From the construction of Hillyer Hall in 1916, to the early references to using a Campus Green as a central athletic space, and the fitness-centered original layout of Crozier Williams Center, Connecticut College encouraged physical activity as an integral part of the well-rounded student. Therefore, while often cited as an attempt to make the recently co-educational school more attractive to male applicants, Dayton Arena and Luce Field House fit into a larger framework of athletic development as a key component of the College's history. In design, the sports structures also pioneered sustainable technology and practice, which would soon become important features of the College's mission. By employing a prefabricated construction system that minimized material use, as well as a heating technique that recycled the energy used in the production of ice for Dayton Arena, the complex demonstrated that sustainability could improve both the College's image and reduce spending on building construction and operation.

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<sup>421</sup> 1984. Jim Campanini, "Luce's 'heaven' takes shape at Conn College," *The New London Day*. 19 Apr.



*Figure 96. A fitness center was added to the Athletic Complex in 2009, the first in a series of planned expansions to the College's sports facilities. Photograph by Lisa Brownell, 2009.*

Although Dayton Arena has undergone no major renovations, Luce Field House was expanded significantly in 1992. With the addition of a natatorium, two additional wood-floored courts, a rock wall, and a rower's training facility gifted to the College by the Christoffer family, the Field House was again able to boast facilities matching those at rival schools. Playing fields added over the 1990s and early 2000s descend from the athletic complex towards the Thames River, providing more practice space for all manner of teams. In 2008, a two-story fitness center was constructed overlooking the playing fields, granting a larger workout space and a range of modern equipment to match increasing student engagement in personal exercise. At present, more plans to expand the athletic complex ensure a future of additions, a continuance of the College's commitment to athletics and student wellbeing.



“A Model of Civil Society in a Global Community”<sup>422</sup>

The Reflective Campus

1986-2009



Figure 97. A rendering of the renovated façade of Crozier Williams, the focus of the College Center Project initiated in the early 1990s. Rendering by Prentice and Chan, Olhausen.

*From the mid 1980s through the first decade of the twenty-first century, Connecticut College assumed a dual identity. On one hand, the administration struggled to revive a sense of community after a decade when campus unity seemed unattainable. Idealized notions of returning to the cooperative spirit of the College’s founding years defined building programs focused on shared space and reviving traditional aesthetics. On the other hand, a reawakened sense of social activism within the student body called for attention to concerns beyond the personal or collegiate. As a result, student organizations assumed a greater physical presence on campus than in any decade previous.*

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<sup>422</sup> A Letter to the College from President Claire L. Guadiani. 31 Jan. 1994. Presidents Box 6: Folder: Claire Guadiani General and Biographical Information. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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By the mid 1980s, students across the nation began to react against the prevailing tendency towards academic single-mindedness established the decade previous. Renewed interest in the world beyond campus became apparent in a series of highly publicized protests and activist campaigns. Unlike the protests of the 1960s, however, was the focus on the college as a business-like entity that could support or condemn causes through its investments and product consumption. The change in tactic maintained the 1970s fiscal-consciousness of students, but evolved to support causes beyond the individual. The mounting foreign investments of many schools, however, meant that many protesters turned their attention internationally. Anti-Apartheid demonstrations became especially prevalent, leading to 1986 rallies at Wellesley College and Dartmouth College that made national news.<sup>423</sup> The anti-apartheid movement in particular also represented the persistent concerns about racial equality beyond the campus gates.

The first signs of student reengagement to be recorded through physical changes to the Connecticut College campus also centered on issues of diversity. On the fifteenth anniversary of The Fanning Takeover in 1971, a second sit-in occurred to reawaken awareness of the issue of minority integration on campus. Unlike the earlier protest, the second takeover gathered crowds of participants and unified the interest of multiple student organizations.<sup>424</sup> The demonstration centered on applying an Affirmative Action Policy at Connecticut College to increase minority enrollment, but included petitions to

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<sup>423</sup>“Wellesley May Drop Charges,” *New York Times*, 27 Oct. 1986, accessed 20 Dec. 2009 < <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/10/27/us/wellesley-may-drop-charges.html> >  
“Apartheid Foes Move Shanties at Dartmouth College,” *New York Times*, 10 Feb. 1986, accessed 20 Dec. 2009 < <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/02/10/us/apartheid-foes-move-shanties-at-dartmouthcollege.html?n=Top/Reference/Times%20Topics/Subjects/P/Politics%20and%20Government> >



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improve deteriorating conditions at Unity House.<sup>425</sup> Beyond simple repairs, many students voiced a desire for the minority center to be located within the campus grounds proper. In response to this appeal – one that stood in stark contrast to the preferred seclusion of the minority students a decade before – in 1989, Unity House relocated to the former President’s residence at the heart of the campus.<sup>426</sup> Occupying the former president’s dwelling, Unity House maintained its role as a home-away-from-home through the domestic design, while bringing minority presence to the historic core of campus. In 1991, the addition of the multipurpose Pepsico Room enhanced the resources of the center, addressed a call to provide more informal social space on the campus.<sup>427</sup> The relocation of Unity House to the center of campus marked an important shift, not only for minority student recognition, but also towards a student-led desire to reconstruct a sense of campus community.

The pursuit of a unified and binding collegiate identity continued to steer the physical development of Connecticut College. A plan published in 1986 and illustrating the College in 2020 features multiple efforts to reinforce community, both through additional construction and through the reinterpretation of the campus landscape. The plan focuses on the concept of thematic clusters – whether administrative, academic, or residential – reinforced both by new structures and the refurbishment of older spaces. Expansions to the student center, a coffee house on the site of Hillyer Hall, and an

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<sup>425</sup> Statement by Concerned Students and Senior Staff. 1 May 1986. Folder: Fanning Takeover II. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>426</sup> “May 1<sup>st</sup>: The Background” *Connecticut College Alumni Magazine*. Summer 1986: Vol. 63, No. 4.

<sup>427</sup> “Facilities at Unity House,” *Connecticut College*. 20 Mar. 2007, accessed 20 Dec. 2009 < <http://www.conncoll.edu/diversity/5052.htm> >

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enlargement of Harris Refectory speak the key goal of the plan: the desire to create more sites where members of the College community could meet and interact. The proposal still features the pedestrian focus of the 1966 design, labeling the walkways “malls” and featuring circular seating areas at each intersection, in a continuance of the earlier goal of campus unity through shared space.

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*Figure 98. The color-coded 1986 campus master plan seeks to group campus functions, such as housing, administration, and academic departments. Rendering by Stecker, Lebau, Arneill, McManus, Architects, 1986.*

An extension to Crozier Williams Center, included in the 1966 plan but unlabeled, takes on the title of “admin/computers” in the 1986 design. The designation of the large

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and centrally positioned addition alludes to two significant ways in which the changes to campus culture were anticipated architecturally. Not only does the planned facility emphasize the quickly emerging and revolutionary role of computer technology in higher education, the building also suggests that faculty, and moreover College staff, returned to a place of prominence in student life. After the on-your-own mindset of the 1970s and early 1980s, the resurgence of offices dealing with matters such as housing or student activities indicate that students wanted to work with the College administration to accomplish common ends. Although the proposed extension was never constructed, renovations to Crozier Williams Center in the years after the plan allocated almost an entire wing to “student life” offices.

Another component similar to the 1966 master plan is the addition of a residential space in the undeveloped land north of Katherine Blunt House. Instead of the four new dormitories proposed in the 1966 plan, only one, large L-shaped building is suggested. Its placement, with the short arm aligned to the front façade of Katherine Blunt House and extended mass parallel to Larrabee House and perpendicular to Winthrop House (which was to be reestablished as a dormitory), effectively maintains the loose quadrangle intended in the 1965 arrangement. Labeled North Green, the outdoor space to the north of the proposed dormitory was to be left open. This designation, paired with the renaming of the original Green as “South Green,” seeks to encourage smaller, residentially-based social communities within the larger campus landscape by creating comparable outdoor recreational space for the North campus residents.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Stecker, Lebau, Arneill, McManus, Architects. 1986 Master Plan. Campus and Buildings Box 2, Folder: Campus Views and Plans. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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The 1986 campus plan had very little impact on the next decade of construction at Connecticut College, with further renovations of Crozier Williams as the only major accomplishment to result from the proposal. The renovation grew from the 1990 College Center Project, a campaign of campus improvement that entailed several construction stages. Through these initiatives, the College sought to reinstate a sense of campus community that embracing athletic teams, faculty-student friendships, alumni, and guests. The 1992 addition of a natatorium, exercise room, and larger gymnasium to the athletic complex encouraged campus camaraderie through shared athletic accomplishment as well as a holistic approach to education. A year later, a large-scale renovation of Crozier Center provided a “hearthstone” for the “members of the college family” through facilities such as a shared student and faculty mailroom, café, lounges, and offices for student clubs, and the College radio station.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> Dedication: The College Center & The Connection at Crozier Williams. 30 Apr. 1993. Box 2, Folder: Crozier Williams Center – Renovation and Dedication. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.



*Figure 99. With corner towers, slate shingles, and decorative wood siding, Horizon Admissions House adopted a picturesque style divergent from much of the rest of campus. Rendering by Graham Gund Associates, 1989.*

Perhaps the most fully formed aspect of The College Center Project, however, was the construction of Horizons Admissions House and Becker Alumni House, completed in 1989 and 1991, respectively. Horizon Admissions House welcomed prospective students to the College in a facility complete with a double story sitting area, conference rooms, and space for private interviews. Built facing and to the south of Harkness Chapel, Horizon's proximity to the treasured and communal College Green offered both views and physical connection to a space shared by all members of the College. Becker House, constructed on the foundations of Thames Hall, the College's first dining and assembly hall which had been razed the year before, provided a new location for the Alumni Center as well as for the Office of College Relations and Development. The structure also housed multiple spaces that would serve the community for conferences, seminars, and social functions. Although designed by different architects, both buildings relied heavily on elements of domestic design, such as wide porches, wood siding, and central fireplaces to instill a homelike sense of welcome for

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visitors and alums. Becker House made clear connections, both in location and architecture, to the earliest community space on campus and showed a commitment to restoring the sense of collegiate togetherness familiar to alums. Horizon built on a previously undeveloped section of the College grounds, but drew heavily on the homelike aesthetic of many of the oldest buildings on the campus.<sup>430</sup>

The last addition to the Connecticut College campus during the 1990s was Olin Science Center, completed in 1995. The building was a major component of a 1988 Strategic Plan focused on expanding the science departments, a plan that had resulted in the late 1980s renovations of New London Hall and Hale Laboratory. The new structure formed the third side of the planned “science triangle” that centered on a twisting blue sculpture titled “Synergy.” While providing easy access to other labs, the location of the new building also fulfilled the emblematic goals of the strategic plan by placing the sizeable structure within easy view from Mohegan Avenue and the main driveway leading onto campus. Positioned with Collegiate Gothic New London Hall on one side, and mid-century Modern Hale on the other, Olin Science Center adopted an unusual combination of Gothic outline with modern detailing thought of as “the joining of the old to the new.”<sup>431</sup> More than a combination of the two approaches, however, the building melded traditional materials and a form that echoes the shape of New London Hall in a return to an aesthetic of tradition and heritage. This application of a Gothic architectural language, while basic and simplified in form, aided in the 1990s interpretation of a

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<sup>430</sup> President Guadiani, letter to the Kresge Foundation. 29 Jan. 1991. Box 2: Folder: Crozier Williams Center – Renovation, Planning, and Fundraising. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>431</sup> 1994. Natalie Hildt. “New science center will strengthen college’s department.” *The College Voice*. 27 September: Vol. XVIII, No. 4.

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campus architectural tradition focusing on the oldest buildings as the model that all new projects should strive to emulate.



*Figure 100. Just to the right of Fanning Hall, this rendering shows the prominence with which Olin Science Center would appear from the main entrance to campus. Rendering by Tai Soo Kim, 1993.*

The two-year construction of Olin Science Center created more than one hundred construction jobs, a statistic celebrated by local citizens and College administration alike.<sup>432</sup> That the new construction project supported the local economy corresponded to a growing belief that college and university campuses should act as centers of applied political, social, and ecological activism. Groups such as Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC) and Rock the Vote attracted wide followings while campus-specific organizations, focusing on issues of disability, sexual orientation, and ethnicity also multiplied. The number of college students involved in community service skyrocketed,

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<sup>432</sup> 1994. Carl Lewis. "F.W. Olin donates \$5.1 million science center." *The College Voice*, 2 October: Vol. XV, No. 5.



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exceeding 64% by 1993.<sup>433</sup> Correspondingly, the unprecedented growth of Connecticut College's Office of Volunteering and Community Services (OVCS) compelled the College to provide office space for the department within in the renovated Crozier Williams Center. Following the pattern of mounting environmental awareness, the refurbished student center also adopted several environmental construction techniques during its construction, including the use of carbon credits whereby fast-growing trees were planted to offset the emissions produced during the construction process.

Not all efforts at improving communities beyond the College gates proved successful, however. A late 1990s venture to encourage local, urban revitalization through the lease of multiple buildings in downtown New London proved ill-fated when the administration attempted to convert the structures into classrooms and studios. For many, the debacle symbolized a failure on the part of the President of the College who endorsed the project, yet the issue also hinted at inconsistency between the forward-looking principles of the College and its actual role in the surrounding community. Views that the hilltop, so prized for its peripheral location at the school's inception, raised a restricted and club-like façade served to further attempts to develop links to the surrounding areas that continue into the decade to follow. Once a wealthy institution placed on the outskirts of an equally well-off community, the economic decline of the New London area, when paired with the ever-improving standing of the school, strained town-gown relations felt at many similar liberal arts colleges.

The desire to use architecture to represent Connecticut College as a united, welcoming, and socially responsible community continued into the twenty-first century.

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<sup>433</sup> Arthur Levine, *When Hope and Fear Collide: a portrait of today's college student* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998) 39.

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The year 2000 saw the completion of the first in a series of renovations to North Complex, concluded in 2006. The renovations sought to create a less sterile, modern environment through the application of irregularly shaped rooms clustered around winding halls, a greater variety of common areas, and smaller bathrooms. The resurfacing of the original brick veneer with modest granite and stucco underscores the changing ideals of collegiate design, which by the late 1990s rejected the once fashionable modernist forms in favor of either paired down neoclassical designs or whatever forms fit a local and historical context. Solar panels installed on the roof of Morrison House and the addition of water-saving fixtures in the bathrooms of several dormitories were highly publicized steps towards increased environmental awareness on campus. Equally important to the North Complex renovations was the addition of seven elevators shafts, allowing physically handicapped students full access to the dormitories.

Beyond issues of dorm accessibility, many student-run organizations established during the 1990s to promote human and environmental rights continued to gain popularity during the first decade of the twentieth century, an interest evident in the formation of multiple student resource centers. In 1994, the former faculty residence known as North Cottage became Earth House, a cooperative dormitory for students committed to environmentally friendly living.<sup>434</sup> Before long, a student-run, sustainable methods garden developed next door to provide seasonal produce for campus dining halls. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Resource Center opened in 2007, converting part of the former student dining room in Burdick

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<sup>434</sup> 2002-2003 Connecticut College “C” Book. New London, Ct. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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House.<sup>435</sup> Only a year later, the Women's Center opened on the floor below to provide "a safe, welcoming environment for women and men to discuss gender issues."<sup>436</sup>

(Technically, the center reopened: For a brief period in the 1960s, a student conference space devoted to Gender and Women's Studies called the Womyns Center fulfilled a similar role). These organizations prove what the long history of Unity House demonstrates, that obtaining physical space gives student-led initiatives both administrative support as well as a springboard for further development.

Connecticut College's long history of physical education continued in the 2000s, when the growth of club and intramural sports, as well as expanded course offerings, warranted the construction of a new fitness center. The structure tripled the former space devoted to student fitness, offering a wide array of exercise machinery, and served to illustrate a shift from physical activity as community building endeavor to a personal prerogative of wellbeing. The construction of the fitness center also represented the first major building project to follow the College's "green building policy," which took effect in 2005.<sup>437</sup>

The construction of the fitness center, the first new building to be constructed since the completion of Olin Hall in 1995, signifies the initial steps of what is planned to be an extensive building campaign outlined in the 2000 master plan for campus. The plan, printed after several years of circulation and building use studies, focuses not on enlarging the student body, but instead on the need to "regain coherence of campus

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<sup>435</sup> "LGBTQ Resource Center." *Connecticut College*. 21 Sept. 2009, accessed 20 Dec. 2009 < <http://lgbtq.conncoll.edu/> >

<sup>436</sup> "Connecticut College to open new Women's Center Jan. 28." *Current News*. 25 Jan. 2008, accessed 20 Dec. 2009 < <http://aspen.conncoll.edu/news/4016.cfm> >

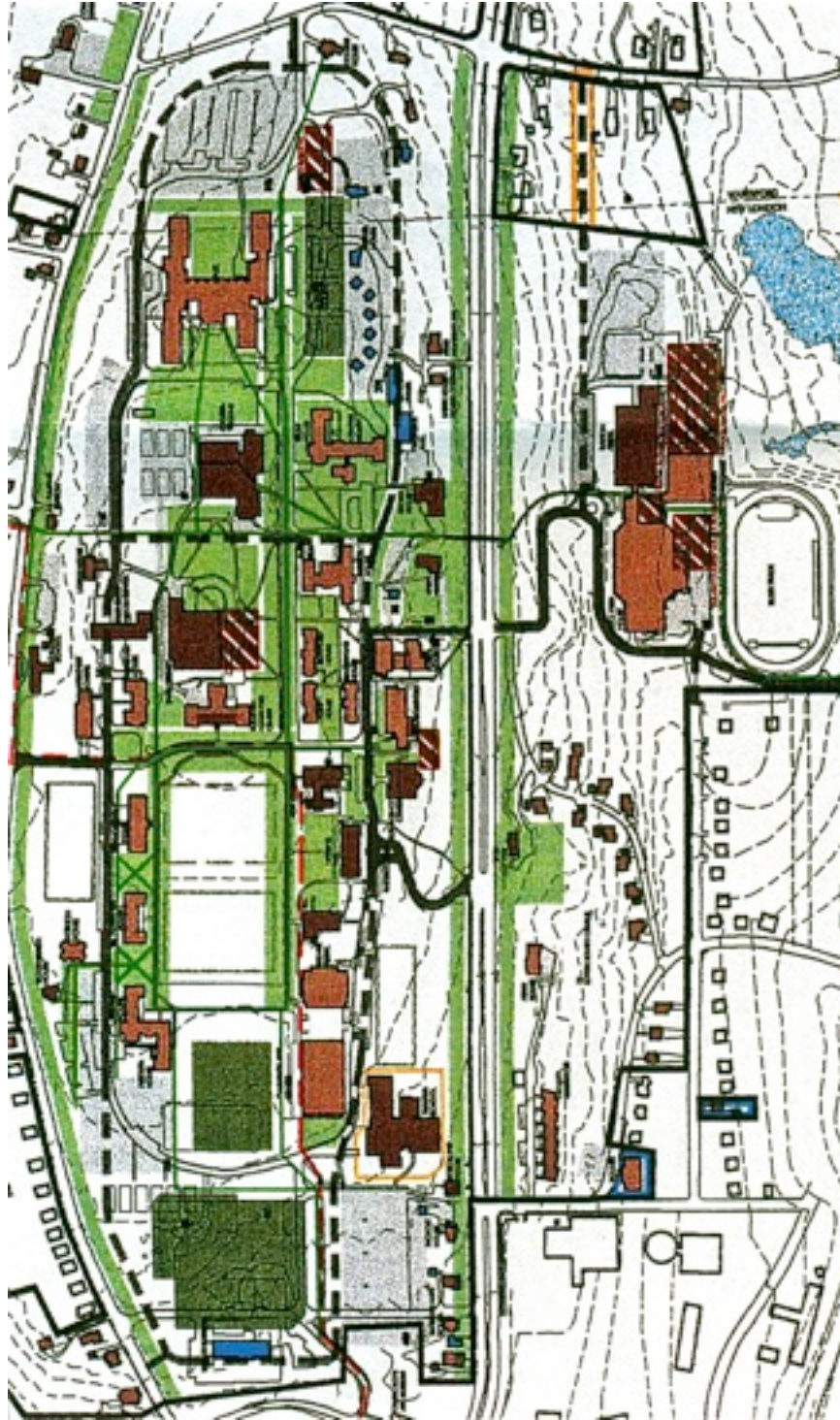
<sup>437</sup> "Connecticut College opens new \$8 million fitness center." *Current News*. 4 Sept. 2009, accessed 20 Dec. 2009 < <http://aspen.conncoll.edu/news/5496.cfm> >

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through locations of new buildings, revisions to landscape, positions of walkways, and vehicular roads.”<sup>438</sup> Beyond spatial harmony, the ongoing development of environmental stewardship, a fully ADA compliant campus, and access to technology central to education rank high among goals of the plan. From a purely academic standpoint, the plan suggests an interweaving of academic and residential buildings, with emphasis on design flexibility, increased office space for faculty members, and mixed use structures that encourage interdisciplinary interaction on both academic and social levels.

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<sup>438</sup> Kieran, Timberlake & Harris (Architects and Planners), Rolland/Towers (Site Planners and Landscape Architects). “Comprehensive Master Plan.” April 2000. Office of the Vice President, Connecticut College.



*Figure 101. The 2000 master plan, which illustrates new structures with white stripes, shows an expanded athletic complex to the right, an addition to the library at the left, and a new Life Science building to the right of the Campus Green and next to Olin Science Center. Rendering by Kieran, Timberlake & Harris (Architects and Planners), Rolland/Towers (Site Planners and Landscape Architects), 2000.*

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In terms of actual physical growth and renewal, the current design features key aspects from nearly every plan previously made for the Connecticut College campus. Furthermore, elements of the plan illustrate that many of the academic trends of the 21<sup>st</sup> century remain important to present ideals concerning the physical campus. The three and four sided quadrangles that governed the Preliminary Announcement and plans of the early 1930s returned in the 2000 master plan as the primary means of structuring academic space. A Math and Sciences Quadrangle, made up of Olin Hall, Hale Laboratory and a future Life Sciences building proposed to the east of the Social Sciences Quadrangle, made up of Bill Hall, Fanning Hall, and New London Hall. In both areas, extensive landscaping defined the central, shared space and pedestrian boulevards delineated the fourth side of the quadrangle.

As in the 1966 and 1986 proposals, an initiative to decrease vehicular traffic and expand pedestrian access was central to the 2000 proposal. Walkways that replace all but one of the roads cutting through the core of campus allow for uninterrupted pedestrian corridors, car-free vistas, and natural beautification of former parking areas. The campus Green remained essential to this landscaping program to provide both a nucleus and guiding model for the rest of the campus, much as it did when developed during the presidency of Katherine Blunt.

Like the original intentions of both the inwardly focused quadrangles of the early plans and pedestrian space of the 1966 proposal, the current master plan seeks to continue the development of a shared, family-like College identity. The 2000 master plan features the addition of a café in the greenhouse adjacent to Fanning Hall, renovations to improve social spaces in Crozier Williams Center, and further additions to the athletic complex.

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Each of these would provide shared space for informal interactions between students, faculty, and staff, similar to the building campaigns of the 1980s and 1990s. However, a planned doubling of space in Shain Library illustrated a holdover of the academic single-mindedness of the 1970s, and likely the need to house some of the academic output produced by the self-driven researchers of the period.<sup>439</sup>

The collaged nature of the 2000 master plan symbolizes an ongoing desire to reinstate past forms as representative of current values. While the Collegiate Gothic aesthetic of the earliest structures looked back on the academic heritage of Europe, the pared-down Gothicism of Olin Science Center, renovated North Complex, and planned academic quadrangles of the 2000s evoke educational traditions within the College's own history. By returning to the very foundations from which the school grew, the College administration expresses a desire to revive an idealized notion of the small-scale, cohesive, and stimulating learning environment cited in the first decades of the school's operation. Even the mixed used nature encouraged by the 2000 master plan seems to reference the sharing of space that characterized the early College's lack of facilities and created a common academic identity. Marked by the 1986 renovations to Blaustein Humanities Center - the restoration of a space symbolizing an earlier epoch of academia - the new concept guiding development largely turns it back on contemporary form as representative of the social unrest and apathy characterizing the decades of its use. Even in the almost unchanged reuse of the common walkways indicative of 1960s planning,

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<sup>439</sup> Kieran, Timberlake & Harris (Architects and Planners), Rolland/Towers (Site Planners and Landscape Architects). Comprehensive Master Plan. Office of the Vice President, Connecticut College.

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the 2000 master plan employed the paths as a means to return the campus to its imagined origins as a pedestrian environment.

In essence, the 2000 master plan, and every plan previous to it, attempted to guide the formation of Connecticut College as something more than a series of buildings. In each era, the administration looked to college planners to create the campus as a *place* that honored the specific nature and prominent values of the College. Though these values changed, and continue to change, with each new generation, the result is a campus where each structure represents far more than stone or glass, but an architectural map of the social and academic forces that produced the identity of Connecticut College.



**Horizon Admissions House**

*Graham Gund Associates, 1987-1988*



*Figure 102. Photograph, 1989.*

Dominated by four, octagonal towers, each featuring a large, round window, Horizon Admissions House evokes a whimsical impression heightened by the lush plants surrounding the structure. Horizon House was completed in 1988, a much-needed addition to the Connecticut College campus. Formerly the Admissions office had been housed in Woodworth House, a 4,000 sq. ft. pre-existing farmhouse just southwest of the new building.<sup>440</sup> Although Woodworth House had served as the Admissions office for nearly twenty years, the function of the office did not fit easily to the building's domestic space. The lack of sound insulating materials proved particularly problematic during prospective student interviews. As enrollments in the 1980s decreased, small, liberal arts

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<sup>440</sup> Fundraising Brochure. Campus and Buildings Box 6, Folder: Buildings: Horizon House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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schools like Connecticut College found themselves in competition to attract qualified applicants, making a pleasant and memorable Admissions office a highly desirable addition to the campus.

After the Blaustein Humanities Center renovations at the College's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1986, the administration turned once again to Graham Gund Associates to design Horizon Admissions House. The site near the former offices in Woodworth House offered prospects of Chapel Green, a popular space for sports practices. The structure was also positioned near to the impressive Campus Green, considered by many to be the College's most beautiful attribute. In form, building's hipped roof and paired brick chimneys allude to what Graham Gund Associates labeled "Victorian Influenced cottage-style."<sup>441</sup> In a nod to the domestic appearance of Woodworth House, the architects employed a two-tone, painted wood exterior to finish the exterior of Horizon House, giving it a less heavily built quality than the stone structures on campus. A small garden and bench near the main entrance, as well as flowerbeds surrounding the building's foundation additionally softened the structure's appearance. Overall, Horizon's location – near to the hub of campus yet tucked away in a carefully landscaped corner – as well as its visual link to the Woodworth House and the homes lining Williams Street, denote a desire to create a purposefully homelike space.

The interior of Horizon House provides even more in the way of domestic charm. A vestibule containing the reception desk and main stairwell opens onto a double-height living room. Designed to host both small-scale events as well as visitors waiting before interviews or tours, the space is filled with comfortable furniture and fitted with two large

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<sup>441</sup> Fundraising Brochure.

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fireplaces, one on either side of the room. French doors flanked by windows span the full height of the living room to provide natural light, views of Harkness Chapel, and in warm weather, an extension of the space onto a large, brick patio. The rest of the ground floor is given over to administrative offices and records storage, grouping these functions to allow for the easy retrieval of materials. The second floor houses both offices and interview rooms in the four octagonal towers, with the office of the Dean of Admissions occupying one, and the other three divided diagonally to provide to seven, separate spaces in all. In these rooms, too, the large windows give beautiful vistas and natural light to produce a calming environment for the employees and prospective students alike.

In design, Horizon House appears far more aligned to the houses along Williams Street than the stone residence halls of the Campus Green. However, the Victorian cottage style used for Horizon House was not uncommon in the Admissions buildings of similar colleges. At the time that Horizon House was constructed, admission's facilities for institutions such as Union College and Hobart and William Smith Colleges used or constructed similarly domestic forms to house their Admissions offices. An Admissions facility that instilled the feeling of being at home would ease the apprehension of prospective students and parents alike, as they prepared to transition from high school to college. Furthermore, a residential building type based allowed the College to reassure prospective students and their families that their institution was a safe and supportive environment. However, by echoing the design of attractive and established upper middle class homes, Connecticut College and other schools nurtured a direct link to perspective students who came from a similar demographic environment. This approach of presenting a safe, homelike, and class-oriented structure to visiting students and their families recalls

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a far earlier period in Connecticut College's history, when the erection of residentially inspired Blackstone, Plant, and Branford Houses assured wealthy parents that their sheltered daughters would remain in a protected and appropriately feminine environment.

Presently, Connecticut College is faced with increasing numbers of applicants every year, placing strain on the existing facility. Although Horizon House has undergone some minor renovations to maximize the efficiency of office arrangements, the conditions remain cramped. With an addition or new building seemingly imminent, the question at hand is what the design and appearance the future Admissions structure will express to Connecticut College visitors.

**The Charles and Sarah Pithouse '27 Becker House**

*Roth and Moore 1991*



*Figure 103. Rendering by Roth & Moore, 1990.*

Built only two years after the domestically inspired Horizon House, Becker House too appears as a sizeable and traditional home. With its shingle siding and wrap-around porches, Becker House sits between Winthrop House and Unity House, where it offers commanding views of the athletic complex and the Thames River. Becker House was constructed in 1991 as a new setting for the alumni offices, and several other public relations functions. Formerly, alumni personnel had worked from a small suite of rooms within the Sykes Wing of Crozier Williams Center. As the number of Connecticut College graduates grew to 17,000 by the late 1980s, however, it was clear that the office required more spacious headquarters. The College turned to donations from alums to fund the project, and was rewarded with a generous gift from Sarah “Sally” Pithouse Becker, of the class of 1927. Becker, for whom the building was named, had served as president of the Alumni Association, a leader of the Philadelphia Chapter of Connecticut

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College group, and had received the Alumni Association's Agnes Berkeley Leahy Award only five years before her contribution.<sup>442</sup>

Selecting an appropriately sized and centrally located site for Becker House on the already-developed central section of campus was easier than it may seem. Only a year before the project began, the administration had made the decision to tear down Thames Hall, the College's first refectory, chapel, and assembly space. Originally two separate houses that were joined by a gallery to serve the College, the structure required renovations by the late 1980s that exceeded the price of building a new facility from the ground up. Therefore, the New Haven firm of Roth and Moore was chosen to design Becker House on the foundations of Thames Hall.<sup>443</sup> Roth and Moore began the project by carefully studying how the memory of Thames Hall could be preserved in the new alumni building, identifying multiple design characteristics of the former structure that could be translated into a modern facility. The result was a building that retained the essence of the old houses lining Mohegan Avenue, with a broad, stone foundation and shingled facade facing the street, and a welcoming porch of white columns to meet the campus. Like neighboring Unity House, Becker House featured a substantial, river stone chimney and white-painted casement windows. A solarium on the ground floor echoed the original glassed-in porches of Nichols House and Strickland House, while the cross-gabled, saltbox roof referred directly to the nearby 360 Apartments.

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<sup>442</sup> Becker House. Pamphlet. Campus and Buildings Box 1, Folder: Becker House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>443</sup> Dr. Claire L. Guadiani to Mr. John E. Marshall, correspondence. 29 Jan. 1991. Campus and Buildings Box 2, Folder: Crozier-Williams Center – Renovation, Planning, and Fundraising.

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On the interior, Becker House offered a combination of comfortable and attractive space for entertaining alums as well as modern office arrangements for the many College employees to be accommodated in the new space. On the ground floor, a living room outfitted with donated antiques opened onto both the porches and solarium for alumni gatherings. The floor also housed the College Relations and Alumni Center offices, with a visual arts production lab to assist with college publications. The upper floor contained Development offices, as well as a large conference room intended to serve alumni, faculty, and students for seminars, conventions, and special events. The second floor was also designed to include a central office for the Vice President for Development. On both floors, the office arrangement featured private rooms on the building's perimeter, with cubicles arranged in the inner space. This open-plan arrangement allowed for a degree of flexibility as cubicles could be added or removed, and also allowed for the casual and efficient communication between staff working in the central area.<sup>444</sup>

Becker House was completed as part of The College Center Project, which sought to reinforce the multiple meanings of community and “the development of the whole person,” both in College and beyond. By including in this campaign a structure entirely devoted to Alums and the wider College community, the administration communicated several things. First, that maintaining ongoing relationships with alums was important enough to mandate its own structure, separate from other administrative centers and the spatial constraints of pre-existing buildings. The design of Becker House took into account the possibility of several future additions, showing that the College was making the first in what it saw as a series of expansions necessary to support alumni connections.

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<sup>444</sup> Becker House. Pamphlet.

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Second, Becker House also endorsed the notion of the College as a place that serves as a temporary but meaningful home, by occupying a space that appeared as a home and welcomed visitors into a home-like interior. Finally, the structure's location, flanked by an academic building, minority cultural center, and dormitory, speaks to the College's commitment to decentralizing administration. By incorporating alumni offices in the fabric of the campus in particular, the staff would be able to gain a genuine sense of how the College was developing.

In 1992, Roth and Moore were awarded the AIA New England Design Award for their work on Becker House, an honor to the firm and College alike. The structure continues to serve the offices it was constructed to accommodate, with no significant changes beyond the conversion of the solarium into an office. With the College's alumni community growing yearly, it would seem that the expansions allowed in the original design may soon be necessary.<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> "Firm Profile," *Roth & Moore Architects*, accessed Mar. 10 2010. <  
[http://www.american-architects.com/index.php?seite=usa\\_profile\\_architekten\\_detail\\_us&root=67426&system\\_id=10981&kanal=html\\_ohne\\_menu\\_kein\\_domain](http://www.american-architects.com/index.php?seite=usa_profile_architekten_detail_us&root=67426&system_id=10981&kanal=html_ohne_menu_kein_domain) >



**F.W. Olin Science Center**

*Tai Soo Kim, 1995*



*Figure 104. Rendering by Tai Soo Kim, 1994.*

Sited in a prominent location next to the College's main driveway and opposite New London Hall, F.W. Olin Science Center provides a highly visible status for the academic disciplines it houses. Constructed in 1995 to house a range of scientific areas including Environmental Studies, Astronomy, and Physics, the building was named after civil engineer and benefactor Franklin W. Olin, whose foundation awards construction grants to institutions based on their academic programs as well as their need for a science or engineering facility.<sup>446</sup> Connecticut College was one of only two colleges to receive grant money from the F.W. Olin Foundation in 1992, having shown, in the words of foundation president Lawrence W. Milas "extraordinary institutional strength and

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<sup>446</sup> The F.W. Olin Foundation, Commemorative Program: Science Announcement Dinner. Campus and Buildings Box 11, Folder: Olin Science Center. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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[having] adopted the strategy of improving its already exemplary science program to become an even stronger liberal arts institution.”<sup>447</sup>

College officials hired Hartford architect Tai Soo Kim to design Olin due to his local success and his familiarity with collegiate architecture.<sup>448</sup> Before his work at Connecticut College, Kim had worked for multiple colleges and universities in the state, including the renovations to the anthropology building at Yale and the Vernon Residence and Social Hall at Trinity.<sup>449</sup> For the four-story Olin Science Center, Kim employed a steel frame faced in banded granite to ensure the new structure fit in with its much older neighbors. In form, the building consisted of a rectangular core with a chimney-capped tower at each corner. A semi-circular terrace extended from the rear of the building, allowing for events and classes to be held outside in pleasant weather. Atop the main structure, the domed, metal casing of a long-awaited observatory contained a powerful Ritchey-chrétien telescope, one of the structure’s most extolled attributes.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> Olin Science Center. Pamphlet. 1994. Campus and Buildings Box 11, Folder: Olin Science Center. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

<sup>448</sup> 1992. Glen A. Brenner, “Proposal Process Spanned Four Years” *The College Voice Special Supplement*, Vol. XV, No. 5, 2.

<sup>449</sup> “Architectural Case Studies for Educational, Corporate, Cultural Arts, Government, Commercial Facilities,” *Tai Soo Kim Partners*, accessed Mar. 10 2010 < <http://www.tskp.com/> >

<sup>450</sup> 1994. “Campus Where Stars Are a Major.” *The New York Times*, Dec. 25.



*Figure 105. With just steel frame of Olin Science Center in place, the basic arrangement of corner towers and central service core is plainly visible. Photograph by Brian Rogers, 1994.*

The main entrance consisted of a contemporary awning of I-beams and frosted glass set against a ground floor façade of floor-to-ceiling windows divided into grids. Beyond the small entrance vestibule with access to the main stairwell, the ground floor features a central hall with exhibition cases for student projects, and a perimeter corridor giving access to the classrooms and offices surrounding the core space. The second and third floor contain the same arrangement of bathrooms, storage facilities, and prep rooms occupying the structure's core and surrounded by a hallway giving access to the classrooms, labs, and faculty offices lining the building's outer walls. The basement, which also includes ample laboratory space, features a 148-seat auditorium distinguished by "up-to-date audio-visual equipment" for large introductory courses, as well as for use

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by the College community for movie showings, performances, and small concerts.<sup>451</sup> A key feature of the design was to spread the academic facilities of each department through the entire building, encouraging the creation of what then-President Claire Guadiani called “a model synergy building,” where day-to-day interdisciplinary interaction would produce a higher degree of academic achievement. The inclusion of lounge spaces on each floor reinforced the sense that the work being done within Olin Science Center was to be enhanced by informal collaborations among students and faculty from multiple disciplines.<sup>452</sup>

Upon its completion, Olin Science Center offered not only the latest in scientific equipment and educational facilities, but it also presented a new way of configuring space based upon interdepartmental communication and familiarity. The architectural form that housed these functions did not, however, correspond to these progressive features. With its hipped, slate roof, stone stringcourses to define stories, and rows of windows to indicate interior arrangements, Olin Science Center relates most consistently to nearby New London Hall. Even in its basic massing of forms, with slightly recessed facades book-ended by projecting towers at each corner, the science building mimics the form of the far earlier structure. Olin Science Center was the first, purpose-built academic building in nearly fifty years to forego modern aesthetics in favor of forms that imitated the Collegiate Gothic with which the College began. The association makes sense from a spatial perspective, as New London Hall sits only feet away from the new structure. Yet the choice also reflects a desire, evident in the 1992 construction of Becker House and the

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<sup>451</sup> 1992. Jonathan Budd, “Four-story F.W. Olin Center completes “science triangle.”” *The College Voice Special Supplement*, Vol. XV, No. 5, front page.

<sup>452</sup> 1992. Carl Lewis, “F.W. Olin donates \$5.1 million science center.” *The College Voice Special Supplement*, Vol. XV, No. 5, front page.

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late 1990s renovation of North Complex to reintroduce a sense of architectural tradition. Although the first Collegiate Gothic structures of the campus represent only a brief period in a century of the College's physical development, they communicated a belief that had renewed appeal in the 1990s: that long-established styles would bring with them the dignity associated with their roots.

As one of the newest structures on the Connecticut College campus, Olin Science Center has received very little in the way of renovations since its construction. In all respects the building continues to function as it was intended. Planned as a "signature building for the college," Olin Science Center remains a highly visible and much valued resource to both the science departments and the many others who use its facilities.

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**Figure 103.** Becker House, 1990. Cover from pamphlet showing Roth & Moore rendering of building. Campus and Buildings Box 1, Folder: Becker House. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

**Figure 104.** Tai Soo Kim. Olin Science Center, 1993. Rendering. Campus and Building Photos, OLIN-01-034. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

**Figure 105.** Brian Rogers. Olin Science Center, 1994. Campus and Building Photos OLIN-01-027. New London: Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives at Connecticut College.

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The materials available in the Linda Lear Center for Archives and Special Collections at Connecticut College were indispensable to my research of the school's architecture. The Campus and Building Collection, with text and photo files for nearly every building on the College grounds served as the foundation of every individual building entry, as well as much of the supporting material for the overarching, interpretative sections. The past master plans, another central aspect to my analysis, are also kept in this collection.

Beyond the Campus and Building Collection, I made use of the volumes of student newspapers, alumni newsletters, and faculty bulletins, which would often mention spaces that had been renovated or changed in function.

The President's Files, also held in the Linda Lear Center, provided much in the way of general information pertaining to the campus culture during each decade of the twentieth century, as well as references to the building projects undertaken by each President.

For information on the current master plan, as well as deeds of sale on properties acquired by the College, I accessed the records kept in the office of the Vice President for Administration.

Building plans, which aided in understanding each structure's original form as well as alterations and additions, were accessed through the College's Physical Plant department.

Finally, original articles from *The New London Day*, *Hartford Courant*, *New York Times*, and *Herald Tribune*, which described developments on the Connecticut College, were valuable in ascertaining how buildings and figures were considered beyond the scope of the College community.

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