Chandler Hall

Date Constructed (major alterations):
1928, (1938, 1982), demolished 2013
Original (primary) Function:
Training School (K-12)
Current (primary) Function:
N/A
Architect(s):
Charles M. Robinson Architects Inc., (J. Binford Walford Architect, Glave Newman Anderson)
Period of Significance:
1928-1938, use as a training school
Grade Level (1 highest – 4 lowest):
Grade N/A

Figure 1: Chandler Hall, summer 2011 (Spencer).

Chandler Hall History:

By Michael Spencer

Since the Fredericksburg Normal School opened in 1911, the primary objective of the school was the training of Virginia's future female teachers. One core component to training these aspiring teachers that is still used today is the practice of student teaching. Initially, students at the Normal School were required to walk to the Fredericksburg School on Caroline Street for this portion of their education, over a mile, and less than an ideal situation.

Due to cost and other pressing matters taking precedence, it was 1926-27 before serious discussion was put forward by President Chandler concerning locating a training school closer to the College.[1] However, the benefit to the College as well as the community was clearly evident, so much so that the College's regular session 1927-28 academic catalog notes;

> "…a new training school building is now under construction on the campus of the College, at a cost of $70,000. This building is to be modern in all its appointments. When completed no institution in the State will have superior practice teaching facilities to the Fredericksburg Teachers College, either for Elementary or High School work. This building will be ready for the regular session, 1928-29."[2]

While this announcement was a bit premature, it is evidence that President Chandler was assured of the building's construction and the necessary funding from the General Assembly in Richmond. A February 3, 1928 article in the Free Lance-Star notes that, "It seems fairly certain that the budget will have passed the legislature in advance of February 21 so that the contract for the new building can be let and work begin immediately upon the opening of bids."[3]

---

[1] Alvey, History of Mary Washington College, pg. 136-138.
[2] 1927-28 Fredericksburg Teacher's College Academic Catalogue, pg. 31.
[3] The Free Lance-Star, "Request Bids on Training School", February 3, 1928, pg. 1.

While the budgetary and funding issues were being ironed out, work had already progressed throughout 1927 on the training schools design. Charles M. Robinson Architects Inc. of Richmond, Virginia, having served as the school's architectural firm since inception, was the chosen firm and by January of 1928 had design plans in place. The fast production of these drawings was due in large part to Robinson's proficiency in designing such educational structures having already designed both on the Fredericksburg State Teachers College campus and throughout the state of Virginia. Although the design is often credited to Charles Robinson himself, the original drawings seem to indicate the influence of another architect, J. Binford Walford, who would later take over Charles Robinson Architects, Inc. in 1932.

Records from the UMW special collections indicate a number of Robinson's previous schools were being examined and compared during the initial conceptual phases of design, including the Roanoke Central Grammar School (1910-11), Roanoke, Virginia and the William Fox School (1910-11), Richmond, Virginia. Another school, the Grace Arents School (1912), in Richmond, design by Carneal & Johnson, was also compared.[4] Education architecture and design publications from the time also seem to have had an influence noting that "for general use, rooms should be about 32 feet long, 28 feet wide, and not less than 13 feet high."[5] Dimensions indicated on the original training school drawings fit closely to these prescribed dimensions measuring 31'-10" x 24'-4". The influence of Philip N. Stern's new Maury School, built between 1919 and 1920, in Fredericksburg, is also likely, as the two share similar aesthetic and design features. However, the largest influence on the design aesthetics of the new structure was its surrounding context: "in architectural design it will conform exactly to the general plan of the school buildings already erected..."[6] Special details incorporated into the design of the training school included the observation rooms between the west classrooms on the first and second floors. These rooms were slightly elevated to provide for better observations and separated from the classrooms by vertical sliding wood slat walls complete with viewing holes.

While the $65,000 appropriated by the state in 1928 for construction of the new training school covered much of the "wish list," certain design features and components were ultimately deemed too expensive at the time.[7] This included the gym which was designed to be placed on the east elevation of the building facing today's Ball Circle.[8] Early images from the time show the eastern elevation, now the primary façade, as minimally adorned with few windows and vast expanses of brick since the gym was to be built later.

With drawings in place the project was opened for bidding on February 3, 1928 with bids accepted until February 21, 1928 whereupon the winning bid would be announced publically. Eighteen bids were submitted with local contractor E.G. Heflin winning the contract. Construction started March 5th with project documents noting that the building was to be finished in time for the fall 1928 session, starting on September 15th.[9] Despite this rather aggressive schedule the training school opened on October 8, 1928, just twenty-three days late.[10]

---

[4] Comparison List of Schools, UMW Special Collections (found with correspondence regarding Dr. Chandler)
[5] Shawkey, Morris, "School Architecture", 1910, pg. 63.
[6] The Free Lance-Star, "Request Bids on Training School", March 3, 1928, pg. 1.
[7] The Free Lance-Star, March 3, 1928, pg. 3.
[8] Robinson, Charles, "Original Drawings 1928", Facilities Services, UMW.
[9] The Free Lance-Star, "Building Fills Long Felt Need", March 3, 1928, pg. 1.
[10] The Bullet, Vol. II, No. 3, June 31, 1929.

President Chandler died on September 16, 1928 - just days before the official opening of the training school. In honor of his service to the College and his perseverance in obtaining the necessary funding for the training school's construction, the Board of Visitors voted on December 7, 1928 to officially name the new building Chandler Hall.[11]

Chandler Hall would serve as the training school for a full decade educating roughly 400 students per year. Elementary to high school education was taught with small children running around campus a hallmark at the College from 1928-38. During that time the building went by a variety of unofficial names notably the Campus Training School or the locally preferred, College Heights High School.[12] The later of the names was likely given in an effort to provide the students enrolled with a sense of place and belonging.

June 1938 marked the end of Chandler Hall's use as a training school. College needs coupled with a growing student body meant that the structure could no longer provide its services adequately. Often several students would be assigned a single classroom - limiting their experience. President Combs and Dean Alvey decided that College students should be placed in county schools rather than utilizing the on-campus training school. This meant that Chandler Hall could be renovated to fulfill other classroom needs, notably science lab space.[13]

The architectural firm chosen for the renovation was Robinson's old firm, now under the direction of J. Binford Walford since Charles Robinson's death in 1932. Walford had worked previously on Chandler Hall's original 1928 design. All told, four large rooms and a central hallway were added to the east elevation rather than the previously prescribed gymnasium, designed a decade earlier. Numerous interior alterations were also made during this time including the removal of the original observation walls.[14] The exterior of the structure's east façade changed dramatically with the new design and by the winter of 1938 had a two-story portico. The clock centered in the tympanum of the portico, was installed a few months later in the spring of 1939.

Chandler Hall underwent another substantial interior renovation in 1982 under the direction of Glave Newman Anderson Architectural firm. This most recent renovation seems to have destroyed most of the original 1928 material that may have remained as well as much of the interior spaces created in 1938.

---

[11] The Bullet, Vol. II, No. 3, June 31, 1929.
[12] Alvey, Edward, "History of Mary Washington College", pg 138-39.
[13] Ibid., pg. 224-225.
[14] J. Binford Walford, Original Drawings 1938, Facilities Services, UMW

Timeline Concerning Chandler Hall:

1910-11	Charles M. Robinson designs the Roanoke Central Grammar School in Roanoke, Virginia at a cost of $90,000.[15]
1910-11	Charles M. Robinson designs William Fox School in Richmond, Virginia at a cost of $59,120.[16]
1912	Carneal & Johnson Architectural firm designs the Grace Arents Grade School at South Pine & China Streets, Richmond, VA at a cost of $75,000 [17]
1919-20	Philip Stern designs Maury School in Fredericksburg, Virginia at a cost of $85,267.[18]
1927	The 1927-28 academic catalogue for the Fredericksburg Teachers College announces that "a new training school building is now under construction…and will be ready for the regular session, 1928-29."[19]
1928, January	Charles M. Robinson Architects of Richmond, Virginia complete drawings of new training school.[20]
1928, March	Construction begins March 5, 1928 on training school by local Fredericksburg contractor E.G. Heflin.[21]
1928, October	The training school is opened for students on October 8th, a little less than a month late (September 15th). The proposed gym on the front of the school is left out due to cost constraints. The possibility of it being constructed in the future is left open.
1928	Enrollment is 384 first year
1928, December	December 7, 1928 the training school is formally named Chandler Hall, after the late President of the College.[22]
1929	Enrollment is 420, "model school in every respect including building, equipment, trenching staff and instructional supplies."

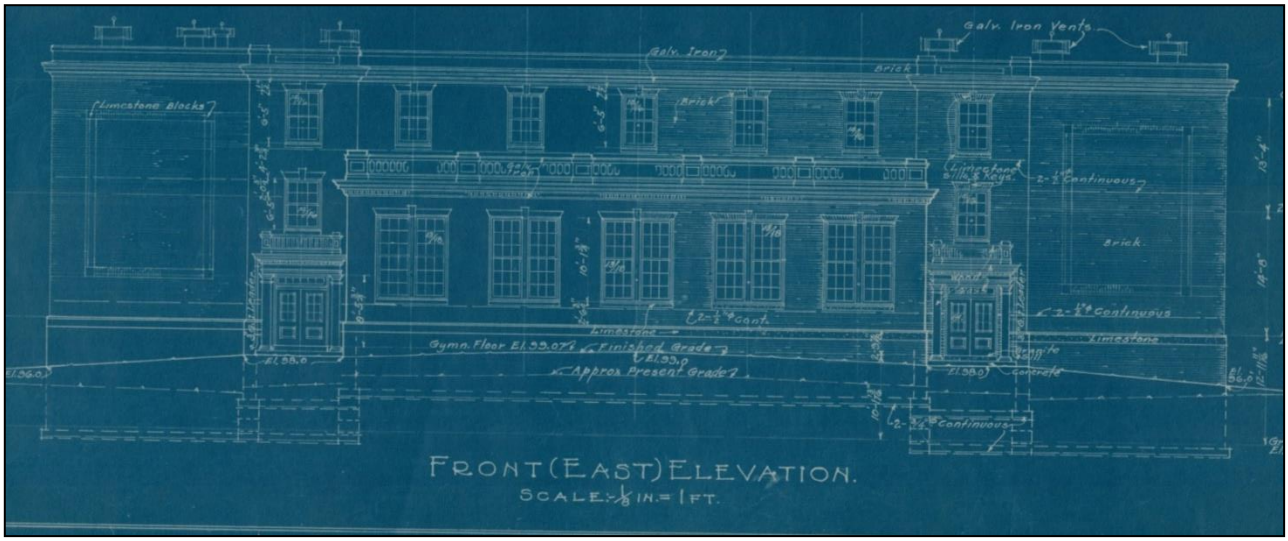
[15] Dalton, Robert and John Wells, "The Virginia Architects 1835-1955", pg 379
[16] Dalton, Robert and John Wells, "The Virginia Architects 1835-1955", pg 379
[17] Comparison List of Schools, UMW Special Collections (found with correspondence regarding Dr. Chandler)
[18] Dalton, Robert and John Wells, "The Virginia Architects 1835-1955", pg 432
[19] 1927-28 Fredericksburg Teacher's College Academic Catalogue, pg 31
[20] Robinson, Charles, "Original Drawings 1928", Facilities Services, UMW
[21] The Free Lance-Star, "Building Fills Long Felt Need", March 3, 1928, pg 1
[22] The Bullet, Vol. II, No. 3, June 31, 1929

1938, June	J. Binford Walford, of Richmond, Virginia, produces drawings of portico addition, clock and interior renovations.[23] Proposals for work are requested by June 28th. Training School ceases operation.
1938, November	Renovated Chandler Hall opens as the Mary Washington College Science building with Home Economics on the ground floor. Total cost of renovation was $54,755.[24]
1939	Clock installed
1982	Major interior renovations are conducted by the Glave Newman Anderson Architectural firm out of Richmond, Virginia.[25]
2013	Chandler Hall is demolished to make way for the new UMW student center.

Figure 2: Aerial of the Fredericksburg State Teachers College (FSTC) in the spring of 1928 with an arrow (right of image) indicating the new indoor pool and the asterisk noting the location of Chandler Hall (lower right). Image courtesy of the UMW Special Collections.

[23] J. Binford Walfrod, Original Drawings 1938, Facilities Services, UMW
[24] Alvey, Edward, "History of Mary Washington College", pg 224-25
[25] Architectural Drawings, UMW Facilities Services

Chandler Hall History



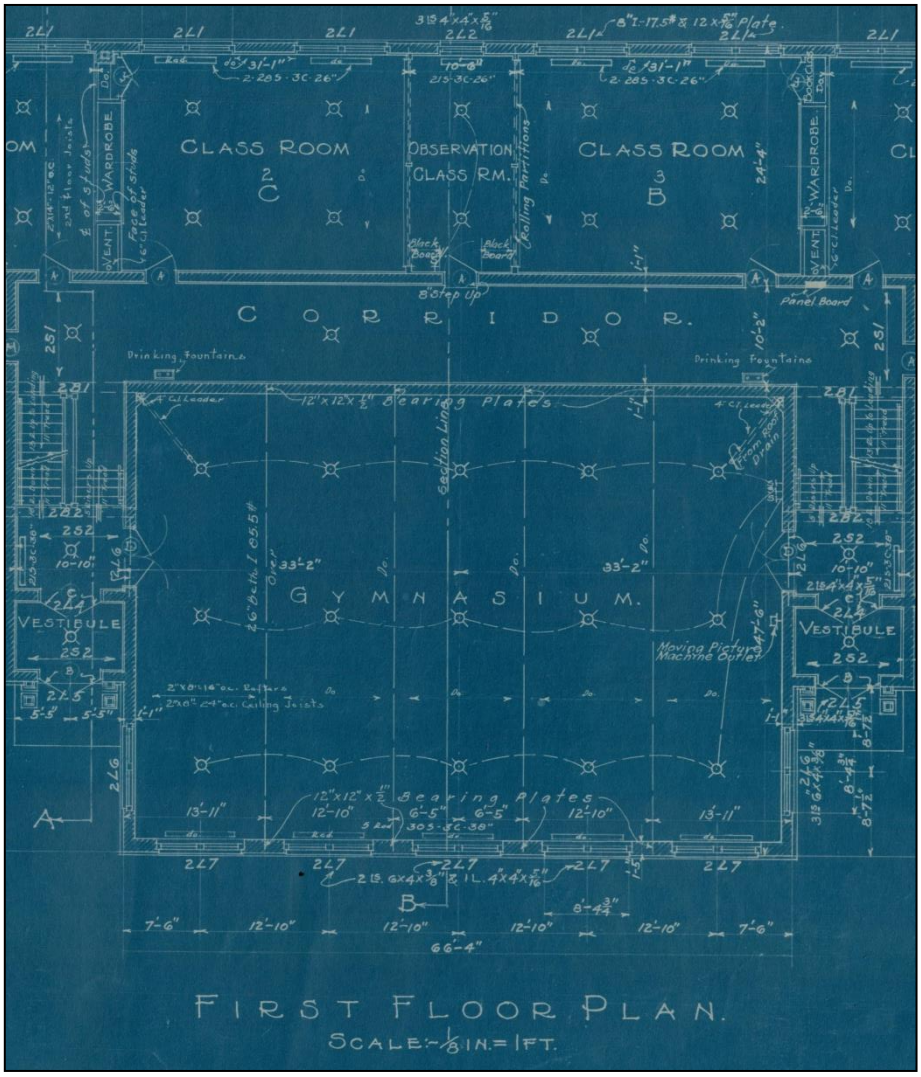


Figure 3 & 4: Original 1928 drawings of Chandler noting the gymnasium to be built as well as showing the east elevation complete with windows. Also of note is the observation classroom noted on the first floor plan (top center). (Drawings in possession of the UMW Facilities Services Collection)

Figure 5: East elevation image from 1928 showing the completed training school without the gymnasium. (Image courtesy of the UMW Special Collections)

Figure 6: Interior of the Training School showing the partitions separating the observational space from the normal classrooms. Also note the raised platform in the observation room. (Image courtesy of the UMW Special Collections)

Figure 7: Image of the east elevation taken in the winter of 1938-39 showing the completed portico but not the clock. (Image courtesy of the UMW Special Collections)

Figure 8: Image of the east elevation taken in the spring of 1939 showing the installed portico clock. (Image courtesy of the UMW Special Collections)