

Trinity College

Trinity College Digital Repository

Watkinson Publications

Watkinson Library (Rare books & Special
Collections)

9-2-2008

“They Should Stand for Ages” William Burges, Francis Kimball, and Trinity’s Long Walk Buildings

Peter J. Knapp

Trinity College, peter.knapp@trincoll.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/exhibitions>

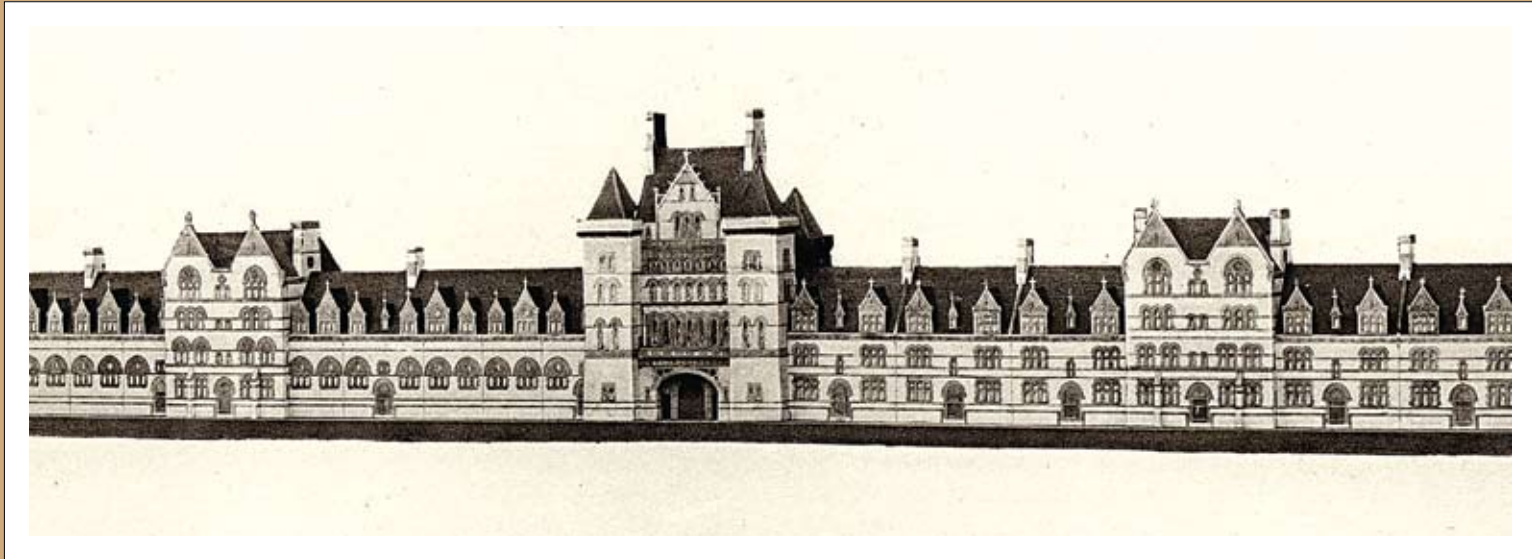
Recommended Citation

Knapp, Peter J., ““They Should Stand for Ages” William Burges, Francis Kimball, and Trinity’s Long Walk Buildings” (2008). *Watkinson Publications*. 2.

<https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/exhibitions/2>

“THEY SHOULD STAND FOR AGES”

WILLIAM BURGESS, FRANCIS KIMBALL,
AND TRINITY’S LONG WALK BUILDINGS



AN EXHIBITION
WATKINSON LIBRARY

SEPTEMBER 2, 2008 - JANUARY 12, 2008

Planned and Described by Peter J. Knapp
Watkinson Library, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut

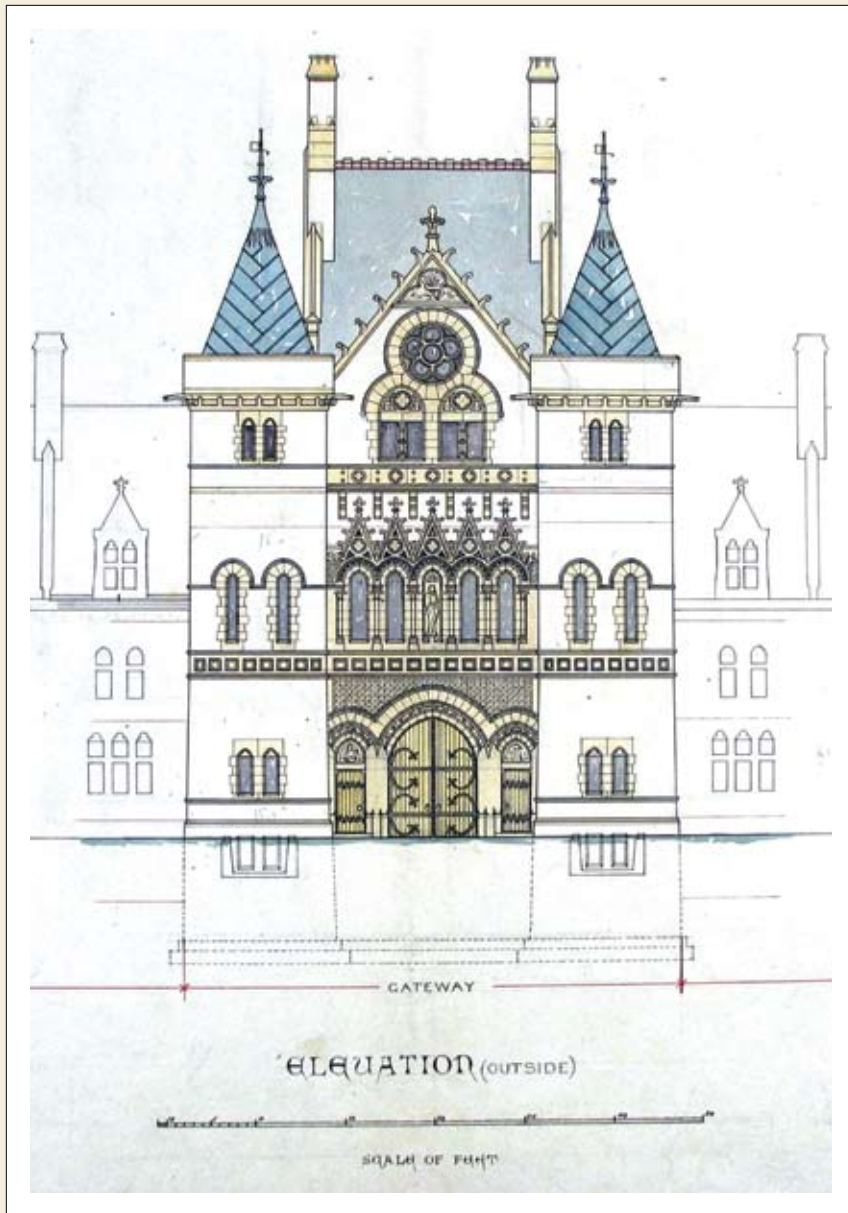


fig 26- William Burges: Hall Quad Gateway – Outside Elevation

AUGUST 2008 marks the completion of a 14-month project to restore Trinity’s famed Long Walk buildings, considered the finest examples in America of High Victorian Collegiate Gothic architecture. The project has included stabilizing and reinforcing some 88 stone dormers, restoring or replacing 1,200 windows, installing an entirely new roof consisting of some 123,000 slate roof tiles, and carrying out a full-scale renovation of interior spaces.

Comprising Seabury and Jarvis Halls (1878) and Northam Towers (1883), the Long Walk buildings are the oldest structures on the Trinity campus and the hallmark of the College’s presence on Rocky Ridge. Celebrating the completion of the Long Walk project, the exhibition in the Watkinson Library draws from the College Archives and consists of a selection of architectural drawings and other original material related to the buildings.

Founded in 1823 as Washington College and designated Trinity College in 1845 to prevent confusion with four other institutions of higher education bearing the name “Washington,” the College was originally located on the site of the present State Capitol. Trinity had remained modest in size from its inception, but in the aftermath of the Civil War, the Rev. Abner Jackson (1811–1874), the College’s new, forward-looking president, believed a larger campus was necessary to accommodate future growth. The City of Hartford opportunely offered to purchase Trinity’s campus as the site for a state capitol building.

FRONT COVER fig 31-View of model of the Long Walk buildings

For some time Hartford and New Haven had been vying to become the permanent capital of the State, sessions of the Legislature alternating between the two cities. In 1872, Hartford offered \$600,000 for the campus. Despite some opposition from alumni, Jackson convinced Trinity's Board of Trustees to accept the offer and to relocate the College to a spacious setting elsewhere in the Hartford area. In the summer of 1872, Jackson travelled to England seeking an architect to design buildings that would be distinctively collegiate and in keeping with his vision of Trinity.

Soon after arriving in London, Jackson visited William Burges (1827-1881), one of England's most distinguished architects and a practitioner of the High Victorian Gothic style. Although Burges's practice was broadly based, his principal client in the 1870s was the Marquess of Bute for whom he carried out restoration work on Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch, both in Wales. Following his first meeting with Burges, Jackson offered him the opportunity to design Trinity's new buildings. The College thus became the only commission Burges undertook in the United States. Burges proposed that the College buildings be arranged in quadrangles, based on English collegiate practice. Jackson returned to Hartford with Burges's initial sketches, and working with a Trustee committee examined several possibilities for a new campus. In February 1873, he prepared a report on the committee's behalf recommending the purchase of a tract of land at Rocky Ridge, south of Hartford's commercial center. The Trustees accepted the proposal for what would later be known as the Summit Campus. In the summer, Jackson again conferred with Burges in London. In October, the Trustees engaged Francis Hatch Kimball (1845-1919), an American architect based in Hartford, to supervise construction. They also authorized him to work with Burges in London and become conversant with the design for Trinity.

Burges's proposals culminated in a series of buildings in four immense quadrangles arranged in a linear configuration. President Jackson died suddenly in April 1874, but the project moved forward. Kimball returned in October with the completed drawings and began working with Trinity's new president, the Rev. Thomas Ruggles Pynchon (1823-1904), to adapt Burges's plans to the Rocky Ridge site. From this evolved three structures that became known collectively as the Long

Walk. With advice from the landscape designer Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903), Kimball and Pynchon situated the Long Walk on the ridge line. Ground-breaking took place in July 1875, and construction of Seabury and Jarvis Halls was completed during the summer of 1878, just in time for the beginning of the fall semester. Although the foundation for the tower linking Seabury and Jarvis was built, it was not until 1881 that work began on Northam, named in memory of its donor, Charles Harvey Northam, Hartford businessman, philanthropist, and Trinity trustee. Completed in 1883, Northam has been known from that time as Northam Towers, a reflection of the four square turrets that help form its roofline.

Planned and described by Peter J. Knapp, Special Collections Librarian and College Archivist, the Watkinson exhibition portrays how the design of the Long Walk evolved and how Burges and Kimball worked together in adapting the 1874 design to the site. A broad range of material related to the Long Walk is maintained in the College Archives, including separate and extensive sets of architectural drawings by Burges and Kimball. A selection of the drawings is displayed in the exhibition.

Thanks are extended to Anne H. Knapp, Professor of Political Science, University of Hartford, for consulting on the material displayed and for reviewing the text of the exhibition catalog and caption cards. Thanks go also to Darrin M. VonStein, architectural historian; Dr. Jeffrey H. Kaimowitz, Head Librarian of the Watkinson Library; and Sally S. Dickinson, Special Collections Librarian, for their assistance and for critiquing the catalog; to Dr. Richard S. Ross, College Librarian, for his assistance and support; and to Rita K. Law, Manager of Creative Services in the College's Communications Office, for designing the catalog and poster. In addition, the support of the Watkinson Library / Trinity College Library Associates is gratefully acknowledged for making publication of the catalog possible.

Peter J. Knapp
August 2008

FRAMED DRAWINGS

The four framed drawings displayed above the exhibition cases on the south wall of the John M. K. Davis Reading Room show the early stages of Burges's design.

[1] William Burges: Sketch of buildings for Trinity College – three quadrangles arranged in an L-shaped configuration, ca. August 1872

Displayed is Burges's first sketch of Trinity's buildings. He arranged them in quadrangles following English collegiate practice. Before meeting with Burges, Jackson had visited the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Configuring the quadrangles in an L shape resulted in a compact layout.

[2] William Burges: Plan of buildings for Trinity College – three quadrangles arranged in an L-shaped configuration, dated September 27, 1872

Shown is a ground floor plan of the buildings in the three-quadrangle L-shaped configuration. Note the range of facilities provided, including a theater.

[3] William Burges: Perspective drawing of buildings for Trinity College – three quadrangles arranged in an L-shaped configuration, ca. fall 1872

This perspective drawing in pencil of the three-quadrangle configuration shows the multi-dimensional appearance of the buildings and their structural interconnectedness. Although a campus site had not yet been formally selected, the penciled-in street names suggest that the Rocky Ridge tract had become Jackson's preference. Note the view to the west.

[4] William Burges: Perspective watercolor view by Axel Haig of buildings for Trinity College – three quadrangles arranged in a linear configuration, ca. summer 1873

Axel Hermann Haig (1835–1921), a specialist to whom Burges turned for renderings of his proposals, prepared this watercolor view of the Trinity College buildings. The Board of Trustees agreed to purchase the Rocky Ridge site in early 1873 and Haig's view accordingly emphasizes the vista to the west. Burges rearranged the quadrangles in a linear configuration to take full advantage of the site.

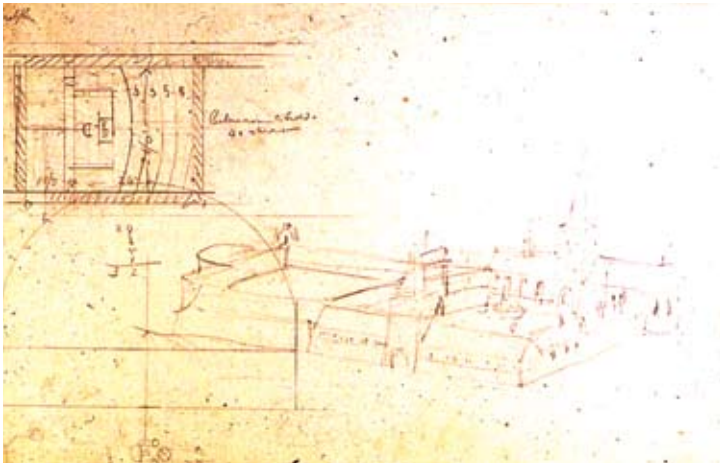


fig 1- William Burges: Sketch of buildings for Trinity College



fig 4- William Burges: Perspective watercolor view by Axel Haig

CASE I

[5] The Rev. Abner Jackson's diary in which he recorded his trip to England in the summer of 1872

[6] Photocopies of the entry in Jackson's diary describing his first meeting with William Burges on August 1, 1872 [the diary is too tightly bound to display with its pages open]

[7] Portrait photograph of the Rev. Abner Jackson

[8] Portrait engraving of William Burges

[9] President Jackson's pocket map of Hartford, ca. 1872, on which he indicated in red ink a direct route from the Old Campus to the Rocky Ridge campus

[10] Jackson's report on behalf of the Site Committee recommending the purchase of the Rocky Ridge tract, ca. February 1873

In this handwritten report Jackson noted that Frederick Law Olmsted, whom he had consulted, advised the College to acquire a tract of land large enough to assure future growth. Olmsted believed 60 acres would be sufficient. The Rocky Ridge tract consisted of approximately 80 acres. Olmsted's other criteria for site selection included distant and attractive views that would offer inspiration, a healthful location with good drainage, and relative proximity to places the College community would want to visit, particularly cultural institutions such as libraries and museums. In the report's conclusion displayed here Jackson stated that the Committee "felt from the first that the paramount consideration was to secure for the College the best site, not for today nor for tomorrow but for all time," and noted the distances from the Rocky Ridge tract to various points in Hartford.

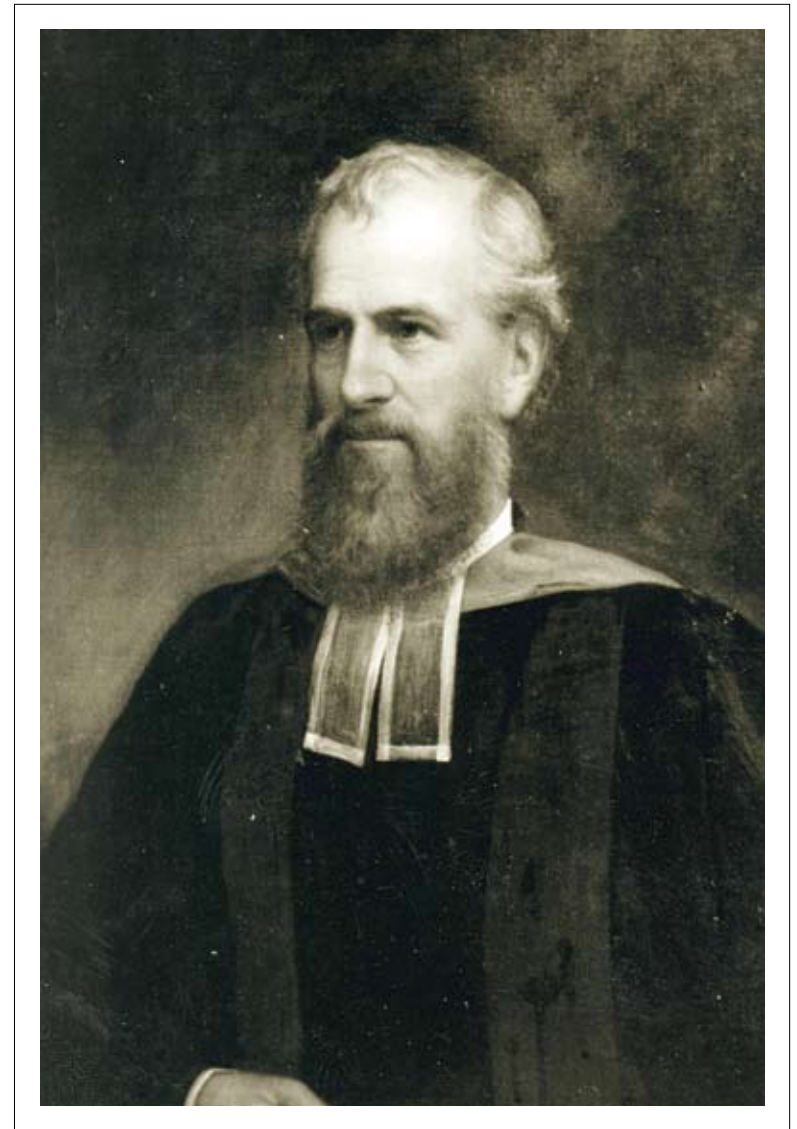


fig 7- Portrait photograph of the Rev. Abner Jackson

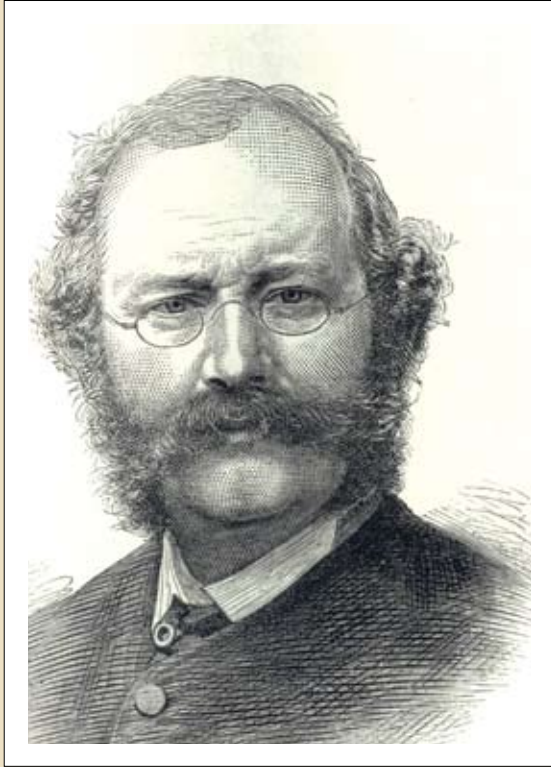


fig 8- Portrait engraving of William Burges

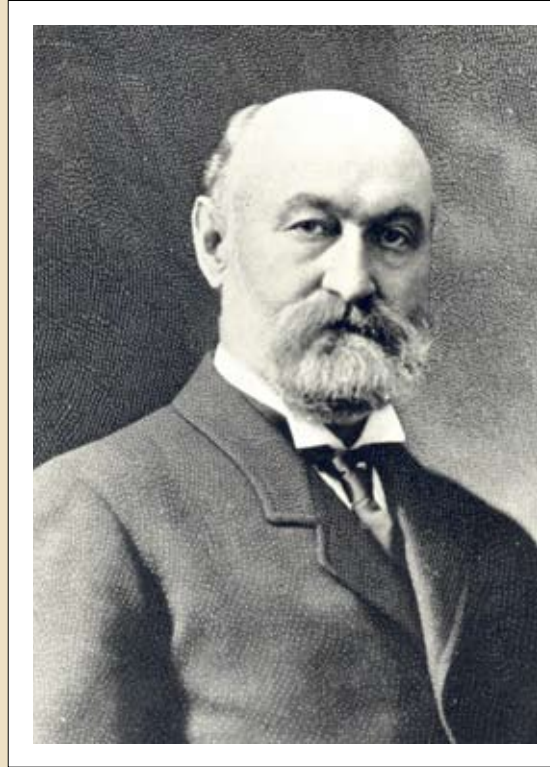


fig 14- Portrait photograph of Francis Kimball



fig 15- Portrait photograph of the Rev. Thomas Pynchon

CASE II

[11] The ground plan of Burges's final proposal for four quadrangles arranged in a linear configuration, ca. spring 1874

In his final proposal Burges called for the phased construction of buildings in four immense quadrangles arranged in a linear configuration. Included among other facilities were lecture rooms, dormitories, professors' apartments, a chapel, dining hall, library, museum, theater, and observatory. In addition to the ground plan shown here, the Burges 1874 set consists of 169 cloth-backed drawings. Each drawing is numbered sequentially. In addition, the drawings for particular buildings have their own numbering sequence.

CASE III

[12] Lithographic print of a perspective drawing of Burges's proposal for four quadrangles arranged in a linear configuration as rendered ca. April 1874 by Maurice Bingham Adams (1849-1933), an English draftsman

The original 1874 lithographic stone from which this print was taken is preserved in the College Archives. The image was widely published at the time. The print displayed does not date from the 19th century, but was made in the early 1970s for public relations purposes. Numbered 11 out of 25, the print depicts the immensity of the four-quadrangle proposal.

[13] Report from William Burges accompanying the drawings for the 1874 proposal, dated September 29, 1874

Burges's report provides a general commentary on various aspects of constructing the buildings he proposed. Time has borne out his observation shown on page six about the central importance of a building's solidity, i.e.: "If you build solidly you will avoid the ever-recurring expense which bad or insufficient buildings always entail. In fact it may be laid down as a maxim that an extra quantity of material is always wanted to resist the effects of time." In the report's conclusion Burges lauded Kimball, observing that "...he has worked upon all the drawings, and in my opinion, I do not think you could obtain another gentleman who possesses so much knowledge of the work itself and so much zeal for its future execution."

[14] Portrait photograph of Francis Kimball

[15] Portrait photograph of the Rev. Thomas Pynchon

[16] Enlarged photographic copy of a perspective rendering of Kimball's proposal for three quadrangles arranged in a linear configuration, an

adaptation of Burges's 1874 proposal, first published in the March 1876 issue of *Scribner's Monthly*

Trinity acquired the Rocky Ridge site at considerable expense. This required Kimball, in concert with Pynchon, to reduce Burges's 1874 proposal substantially by condensing the Chapel and Hall Quads (the two inner quadrangles) into one enlarged central quadrangle. Kimball then focused on constructing the central quadrangle's western side. Over 900 feet in length, it consisted of a lecture room block, a dormitory block, and a connecting tower, all adapted from structures Burges had designed. Funds were sufficient to build only Seabury, Jarvis, and the foundation of what would later be known as Northam Towers, whose completion in 1883 was made possible by a bequest from the estate of Colonel Charles H. Northam, a former Trinity trustee.

[17] The order at the breaking of ground for the new buildings of Trinity College, July 1, 1875

Shown is the program for the ground-breaking ceremony that occurred at the Rocky Ridge site (the Summit Campus) on July 1, 1875, Commencement Day. The Colt Armory Band provided the music and concluded festivities with the *Star Spangled Banner*. President Pynchon, an alumnus, and the Rt. Rev. John Williams, Episcopal Bishop of Connecticut, also an alumnus, were then carried about on the shoulders of exuberant undergraduates.

[18] Specifications for Carpenter's & Joiner's Work; Specifications for Light Stone Work, ca. 1875

These specifications were essential for selecting building materials of the highest quality and for laying down requirements for construction work.

CASE IV

[19] William Burges: Lecture Room Block – Drawing of Outside Elevation (5LR 66/169:5)

This drawing shows the outside, formal street elevation of a lecture room block, including a gateway fronting to the east. Burges called for medium-sized wood-trimmed dormers with two-pane windows to illuminate the lecture rooms on the second floor. Small single-pane wood-trimmed dormers lighted the stairwells. In his February 20, 1878 report to the Trustee Building Committee (displayed in Case V) Kimball noted that during the period of construction limestone of exceptional quality from Ohio was available at a low price. Kimball and Burges decided to construct all the multi-pane dormers of stone since it could withstand the elements better than wood. Limestone was also used for doorways and trim, while brownstone from Portland, Connecticut, was selected for the exterior walls.

CASE V

[20] Francis Kimball: Adaptation of Lecture Room Block design submitted to William Burges for approval in 1876

Kimball closed his February 1878 report by emphasizing the importance he attached to “being in direct communication with Mr. Burges” in regard to adapting his designs. “I have supplied him with tracings of all changes made for his approval and have profited by his criticisms.” Burges thus remained responsible for the design of the Long Walk buildings. In early 1876, Kimball sent Burges this tracing of design changes for the lecture room block. Marked on the bottom right “Sent by Kimball from America February 20, 1876,” the tracing was later mounted on a stiff backing. Note the suggested use of large four-pane and smaller two-pane wood-trimmed dormers for the lecture rooms on the second floor of the facade facing the Quad. Compare this drawing with the drawing in Case VI in which Kimball incorporated these changes. The bottom half of the drawing shows the “Ground Floor” plan of the lecture room block. “Ground Floor” is English terminology for first floor.

[21] Report from Francis Kimball to the Trustee Building Committee, February 20, 1878

In the conclusion of his report Kimball stated his conviction that “When completed, I believe these buildings will be the very best ever erected for Collegiate purposes. They should stand for ages.”

CASE VI

[22] Francis Kimball: Lecture Room Block – Quad Elevation, ca. 1876

Kimball’s Quad elevation of the lecture room block shows the use of large four-pane and smaller two-pane wood-trimmed dormers on the second floor as approved by Burges. The elevation faces east, overlooking the Quad. The variation of the four-story tower that appears on the flap features somewhat higher flues and a window and facade treatment differing from those shown underneath. The design depicted in this drawing evolved into Seabury Hall.

CASE VII

[23] William Burges: Student Rooms – West Elevation (6S 39/169:6)

Burges called for two-pane stone dormers in the rear facade of the student room blocks.

CASE VIII

[24] Francis Kimball: Student Room Block – Quad Elevation, ca. 1876

The elevation shown depicts student rooms flanking a tower. Note the window treatment on the third floor with three-pane stone dormers in the facade fronting on the Quad. The variation of the four-story tower that appears on the flap features a higher roof peak than that shown underneath. The design depicted in this drawing evolved into Jarvis Hall.

[25] Piece of original slate from the Long Walk roof, ca. 1878

This piece of slate, quarried in Maine, was installed on the Long Walk roof, ca. 1878.

CASE IX

[26] William Burges: Hall Quad Gateway – Outside Elevation (6HQ 77/169:6)

In his 1874 proposal Burges called for a gateway tower flanked by student rooms as depicted in an outside, formal street elevation fronting to the east. The gateway gave entrance to the Hall Quad, the third quadrangle from the south (left) as depicted in the master plan. The southern side of the Hall Quad consisted of a lofty central tower flanked by a chapel and dining hall. Note the decorative embellishments on the Hall Quad Gateway’s three-story facade.

[27] Francis Kimball: Gateway Tower study on tracing paper, ca. 1876 (possibly earlier)

Thought to have been executed by Kimball ca. 1876, this study shows the design of a gateway tower linking lecture rooms to a dormitory block. The tower is four stories in height. Northam Towers evolved from this study as well as from Burges’s Hall Quad Gateway design.

[28] Screw box from the American Screw Company, Providence, Rhode Island, ca. 1883

This box was found between the walls in a room in Northam Towers during renovation work carried out in the 1990s.

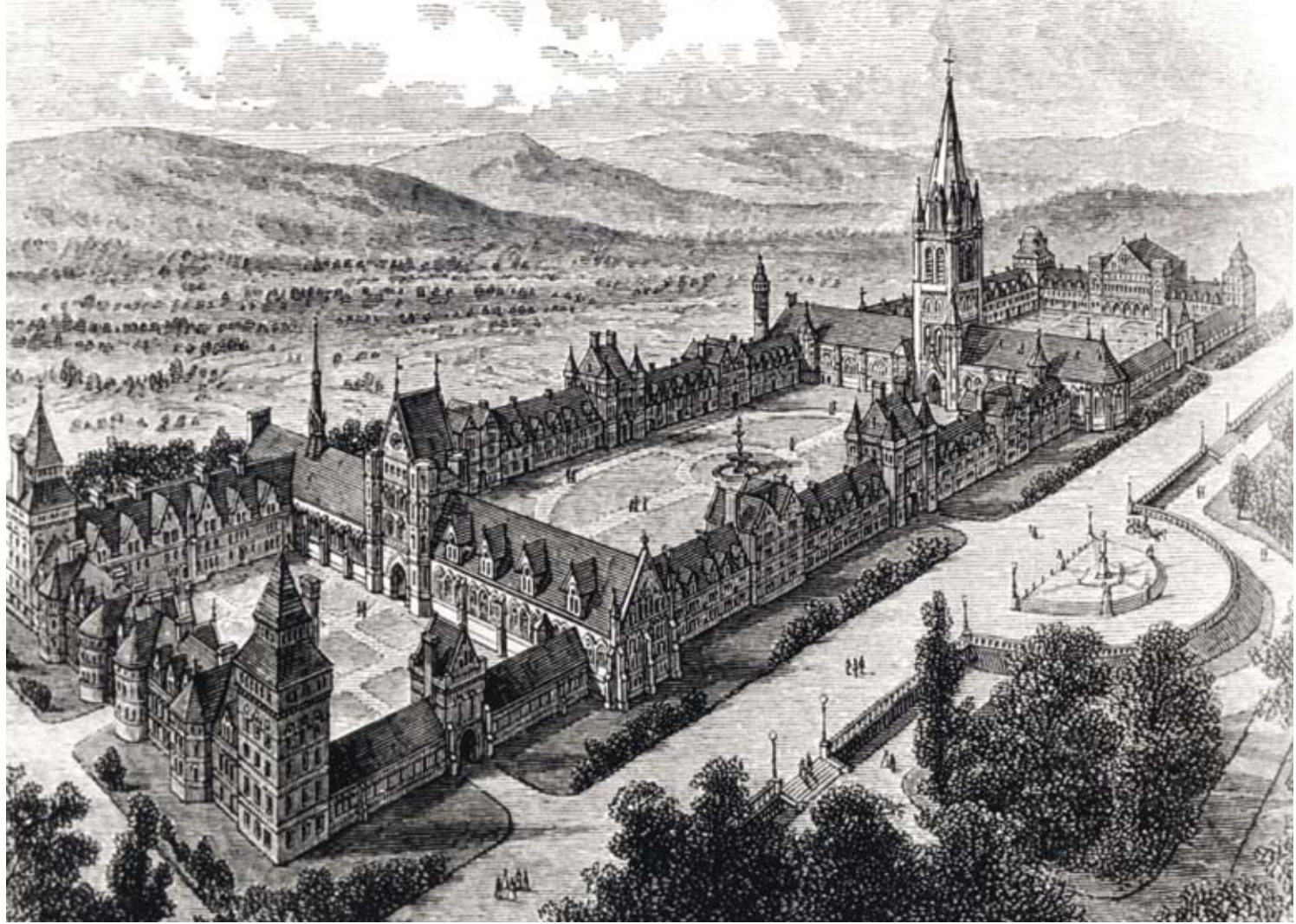


fig 16- Enlarged photographic copy of a perspective rendering of Kimball's proposal

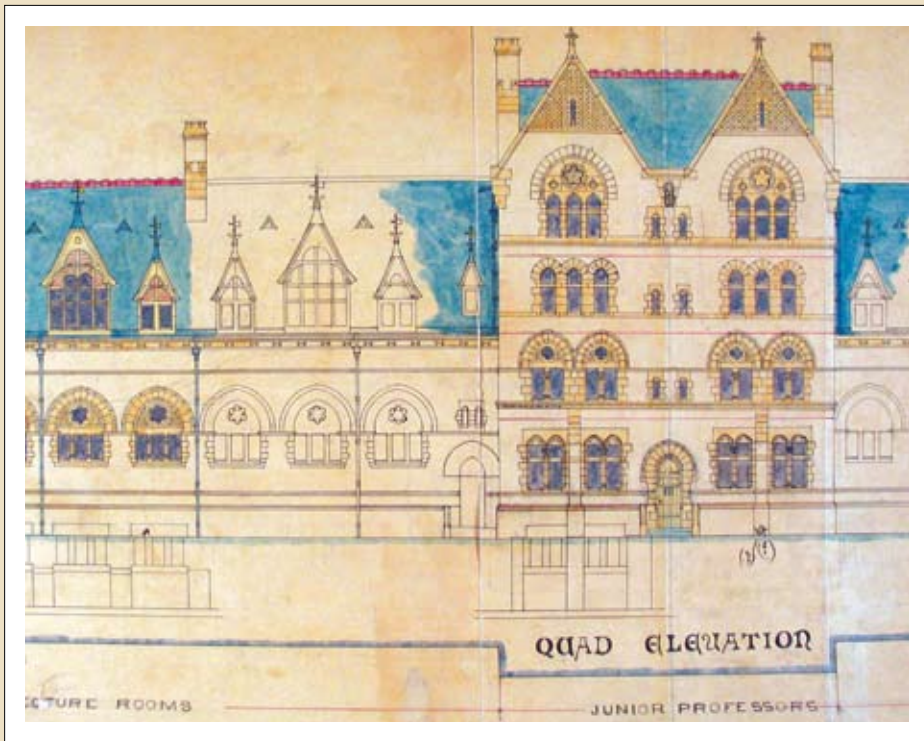


fig 20- Francis Kimball: Adaptation of Lecture Room Block design

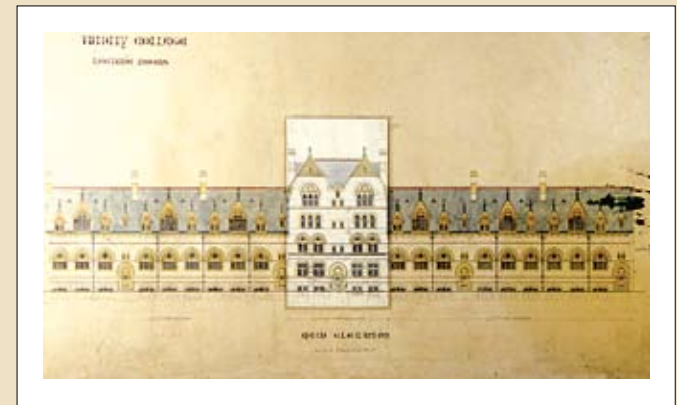


fig 22- Francis Kimball: Lecture Room Block – Quad Elevation

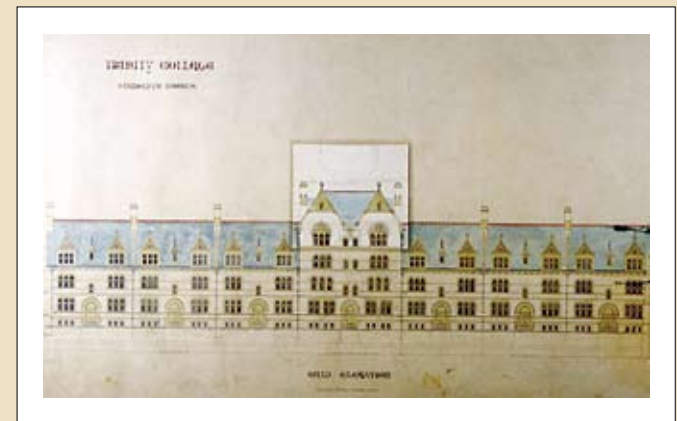


fig 24- Francis Kimball: Student Room Block – Quad Elevation

CASE X

[29] Francis Kimball: Lecture Room Block – Floor Plan with Chapel, ca. 1876

To find a suitable location for a chapel, Kimball revised the plan of the second floor at the north end of the lecture room block. As the penciled drawing shows, he eliminated the partition between two lecture rooms in addition to the fireplaces and flue. This created space for an altar, organ, and other liturgical furnishings as well as for rows of pews facing one another across a central aisle in the English collegiate manner. Note that the drawing is for the “First Floor.” “First Floor” is English terminology for the second floor. The drawing has been professionally conserved.

[30] Photograph of the Chapel in Seabury Hall, ca. 1880

The photograph shows the chapel Kimball created from two lecture rooms on the second floor of Seabury Hall. The view is toward the altar at the south end of the chapel.

[31] View of model of the Long Walk buildings from *The College Book*, ed. by Charles F. Richardson and Henry A. Clark, Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Company, 1878

Trinity College is among the American institutions of higher education described in this study. The essay on Trinity by an unidentified author refers to the construction of the College’s new buildings and is accompanied by the illustration shown of a model of the Long Walk. Although the model did not survive, it remains important because it depicts the final design of a central gateway tower later known as Northam Towers. Note the lack of a flue on the Seabury Hall ridge line just south (left) of Northam, the result of Kimball’s second-floor chapel design. The model confirms that Burges approved the gateway’s design prior to his death in 1881. It was thought previously that only Kimball was responsible for Northam’s design. Darrin VonStein, architectural historian, discovered the illustration.

[32] Photographic view of the Long Walk just after completion of Northam Towers, ca. 1883

The original photograph from which this copy was made belonged to Edward L. Dockray, Class of 1883. It is thought to be among the earliest views of the completed Long Walk.

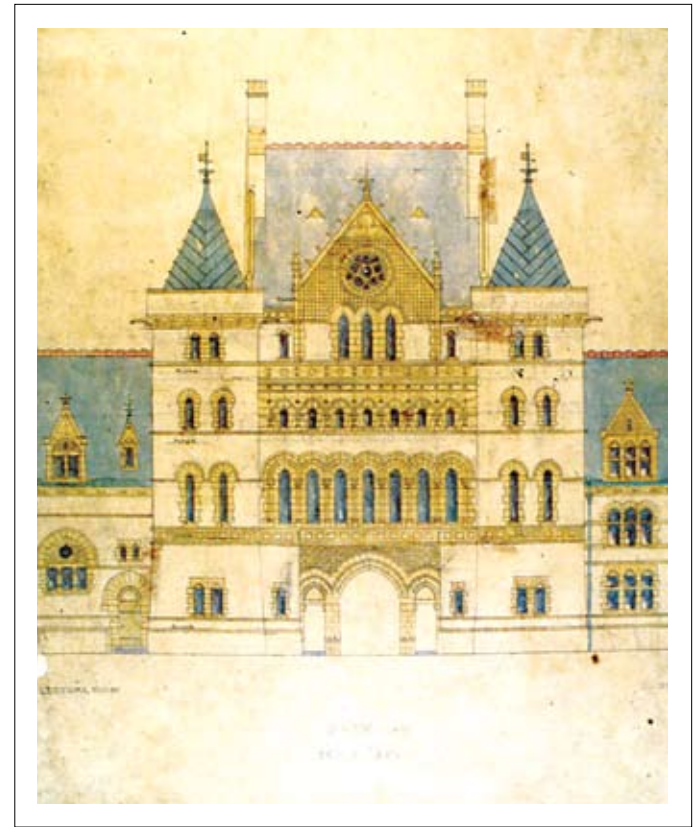


fig 27- Francis Kimball: Gateway Tower Study



fig 32-Photographic view of the Long Walk



Trinity College
HARTFORD CONNECTICUT

THE WATKINSON LIBRARY
300 SUMMIT STREET
HARTFORD, CT 06106