

## PRESERVATION AND COMPATIBLE GROWTH OF A TWENTIETH CENTURY CAMPUS: THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

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In dramatic contrast to its opening in 1906 with two unfinished buildings and 102 students, the University of Florida entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a population of almost 70,000 students, faculty, and support personnel occupying over 900 buildings and 2,000 acres of land. Tracing its roots to a parent institution founded in 1853, the University of Florida will celebrate its sesquicentennial in 2003. While the history of the University has been well recorded, the unique architectural evolution of the campus and its preservation has not been documented. This paper seeks to bridge that gap and suggest documentation that might better insure the ongoing preservation and compatible growth of the University of Florida.

On the night of July 5, 1905, a telegram was read on the courthouse square that designated Gainesville as the site of the new University of Florida and the local newspaper reported “everything that could make a noise was put to test.” The Legislature had adopted the much debated Buckman Act that would create four new universities to consolidate the resources of eight scattered institutions. Governor Napoleon Bonaparte Broward had appointed a Board of Control for Institutions of Higher Learning to select the sites. There was vigorous competition for the future site of the University of Florida, but Gainesville Mayor William Ruben Thomas made an offer the Board could not refuse – 500 acres west of the city, capital funding, and water without charge.

The Buckman Act consolidation process did not meet with universal enthusiasm. The citizens of Lake City vigorously protested the loss of the Florida Agricultural College and no local residents could be hired to assist in the transfer of books and equipment to Gainesville. As a result, the move had to be completed by faculty members, who packed and escorted the wagons. A mathematics professor, described as a man of powerful physique, rode in the first wagon with a rifle across his knees for the day long trip by dirt road to Gainesville.

In August of 1905, the Board of Control met in Jacksonville to interview architects and select two for a competition. «After several ballots, Mr. Klutho of Jacksonville and Mssrs. Edwards and Walter of Columbia, S.C. were elected as such architects.» The following morning, the competition was described to the two architectural firms. The submission would include a plan of the campus and elevations of principal buildings. The loser would be paid \$300 and the winner

would become University Architect. The contenders agreed. Henry John Klutho, later acclaimed as one of the most accomplished architects of early twentieth century Florida, submitted a Beaux Arts campus plan focused around the authoritative rotunda of the Administration Building. William Augustus Edwards presented a Collegiate Gothic image for the new University of Florida. The young state of Florida was seeking an architectural image for the new university that would compare favorably with respected institutions, and the Gothic image provided that association.

Following the selection of Edwards and adoption of the Collegiate Gothic, the Board ordered that comparative bids «for the construction of the 3 dorms shall be based upon the use of first sand lime brick, second artificial stone, third pressed brick.» After the bids were read, Architect Edwards was instructed to cut down the size of the buildings or to make other changes that would not affect «the usefulness or the architectural features of the buildings but that might reduce the cost of construction.»

Foreshadowing a persistent shortage of funding, faculty members were enlisted to perform extracurricular duties for no additional remuneration. The Board instructed an engineering professor to go to Gainesville and lay out the double arcs of the Edwards campus plan and locate the two dormitories “with substantial posts....” An agriculture professor was directed to supervise the planting of oak trees. The new campus began with Buckman and Thomas Halls, named for the legislator and the mayor who were driving forces in the establishment of the university in Gainesville. Terra cotta plaques, christened the “anguished scholars,” relieved the unpretentious projecting bays and crenellated parapets of the sister buildings. Regional brick, cast moldings and plaques with relief details became distinctive features that would evolve into the second half of the century.

University President Andrew Sledd wrote in 1907, «I had some talk with Edwards, and it seems that he takes an unreasonable view of the [financial] situation. I told him that we could not deal with what might be ideally desirable but with what was both practical and practicable ...»<sup>1</sup> In 1908, the campus was still limited to the two initial buildings that accommodated virtually all functions, from dormitory to classroom to president's office. Responding to the void of funding from the Legislature, President Sledd stated, “It will

be remembered that three years ago the site of the University was a pine forest, and it takes time, work, and money to transform a pine forest into a well ordered and beautiful campus.”

In 1909 the land grant university opened the Agricultural Experiment Station and Science Hall. In 1912 the College of Agriculture was completed with a large assembly space on the first floor designated for cattle judging and a farm machinery lab adjacent to the dean's office. The terra cotta bas-relief east and north entrances portrayed the bounty of Florida's vegetables and fruit. Built in 1913, Language Hall paired with Science Hall at the north of the quadrangle to flank the planned gateway to the university. The first private donation funded the 1913 construction of the George Peabody College for Teachers across the quadrangle from the College of Agriculture. Simplified wood trim of principal stairs, rails, and doorways were typical of the Spartan interiors of the campus buildings

Athletic endeavors were considered from the earliest Edwards plan for the university. The Gators, so christened in 1907, continued to be a center of interest. It was rumored that President Sledd's announcement that “the University of Florida will never, so long as I am at its head, give any form of compensation or special inducement to any men to play on its athletic teams” led to his replacement as President in 1909. In 1918, the Gymnasium was begun, but funds ran out before completion. The New York Giants baseball team owners agreed to use of the university facilities and athletic field for spring training in order to generate funds to complete the Gymnasium.

The earliest known Edwards plan for the campus was dominated by two curved avenues with the Administration and Auditorium Building as the focal point. As the campus developed, the building site was moved to the south and the quadrangle remained open in the English university tradition. In 1925 President Murphree invited landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. to prepare plans to improve the campus landscape. His drawings show native trees and plants selected to unify the widely spaced buildings around the quadrangle. In 1931 the quadrangle would be named Plaza of the Americas to reflect the University interest in Latin America.

The grand finale of the Edwards era<sup>2</sup> was to be the University Auditorium, an exuberant departure from the restraint of the existing campus buildings. Even more exceptional was the interior with hammer beam trusses and gargoyles representing college characters ranging from scholars to football players. The Auditorium would become the focal point of the campus, but continued shortages in legislative appropriations and the economic history of the nation turned the design for the Administrative Tower section into a swan song. The post World War II flood of students necessitated a much larger administrative building on the more accessible border of the historic campus. The “temporary” stair where the Tower was to connect remained in place until an award winning compatible expansion was completed in 1976.

In 1925 the University of Florida opened a School of Architecture and hired Rudolph Weaver to serve as head of the school and as Architect to the Board of Control. His understanding of the importance of the continuity of the campus image may be seen in his inscription on the back of a photograph of his addition to the Library, «This indicates my effort to carry out and maintain the character of another architect's work.» Only the nave portion of the Edwards design for the Library had been built in 1926. The upper floor reading room with lancet windows and exposed trusses would be restored in the 1990s as the University Archives Library.

The market crash of 1929 and the collapse of the Florida Boom caused further reductions in building funds. Construction was limited during the Great Depression of the 1930s, but funding through government programs promoted an increase in ornament such as cast shields of various universities, reliefs of Florida animals, and the tower dedicated to Chief Mucozo who had befriended Florida's early Spanish explorer Juan Ortiz. The Florida Union was completed in 1936 through private funds solicited by orator William Jennings Bryan, to be restored sixty years later through private funds. Obscured by a technical overlay of language laboratory equipment, the traditional refectory character would be restored as a Faculty Center. The restored second floor meeting room incorporates universal symbols and Florida regional references in a stained glass window that remains a focal point on the campus<sup>3</sup>.

Norman Hall, completed in 1934 as a teaching school, made a shift from the Edwards era with its increased mass and horizontal expanse of fenestration and thus paved the way for the transitional era to come. Guy Fulton succeeded Rudolph Weaver as University System Architect in 1944; Fulton directed a compatible evolution of the burgeoning campus and established guidelines for campus construction and materials to maintain visual cohesiveness.

By the end of World War II, enrollment had dropped to 600 men. The initiation of the GI Bill, providing funds for veterans to return to school, generated an astonishing response as over 6,000 students appeared for enrollment in Fall Semester 1946. The urgent need for space and the availability of military barracks resulted in a campus dotted with temporary buildings, some of which persisted for nearly four decades. Enrollment continued to grow with the 1947 enactment of a co-educational bill allowing women to matriculate at the University of Florida.

By Fall of 1948, student enrollment exceeded 10,000 and the need for an Administration Building was urgent. Completed in 1951, Tigert Hall launched a new campus direction in a language both progressive and compatible with its Collegiate Gothic context. The architecture integrates the campus brick, clay tile, cast trim and plaques representing the University's colleges in the comparatively massive reinforced concrete structure.

The leap in student enrollment also created the need for a new Student Services Center. The Hub<sup>4</sup>, so named by

students in a campus-wide contest, is distinctive in its reflection of International Modern influences. The red brick envelope of the concrete structure is in keeping with the material continuity specified by Fulton to maintain the visual integrity of the campus. A sweeping covered walkway links the geometric composition of central block and circular Post Office. Inside the main lobby, the original pink marble stairs with their metal tube frame railings integrate with the brick which continues from the exterior. By 2002 the future of this building would become uncertain as the bookstore moved to larger quarters and traditionalist factions discussed demolition of this non-Gothic feature of the campus.

The decade to following the post war boom would be marked across the nation by rampant urban renewal and condemnation of old buildings as blighted rather than historic. Even historians on the University campus did not flinch when the 1911 Benton College of Engineering building was razed to make way for new construction. There was a harbinger of protest when the small Post Office building, the third oldest building on campus, was demolished for the construction of a mega classroom building, ignominiously named General Purpose Building A.

The next target of demolition sounded the battle call. The four original buildings of the quadrangle and the core of the university were to be replaced by megastructures. By 1966, the National Historic Preservation Act was in place. An architecture professor who was leading students on summer projects for the Historic American Buildings Survey and a history professor<sup>5</sup> who was directing graduate students in study of the history of the campus<sup>6</sup> were serving on the State Review Board for the National Register of Historic Places. They saw the opportunity to elevate perceptions of the campus and engineered the listing of eleven individual campus buildings on the National Register. The predictable response was a statewide mandate to prevent any future submissions without their approval. Since National Register listing does not protect buildings unless federal funds are involved, the four buildings remained on the university demolition list.

Once again, the economy intervened. The early 1970s recession froze funding for demolition and the forces of preservation solidified. A graduate program in architectural preservation was established in the College of Architecture and a graduate studio invited the University President to a presentation of their rehabilitation projects for the condemned Floyd Hall. This presentation and the urging of faculty persuaded the University Administration to remove the four buildings from the demolition list. The buildings stood preserved but deteriorating.

At the urging of concerned faculty members in 1976, the University designated a Committee for the Preservation of Historic Buildings and Sites, but the work of the Preservation Committee remained an individual watch dog operation. In 1989 the State Historic Preservation Office<sup>7</sup> proposed a Memorandum of Agreement with the University,

based on agreements with federal agencies implemented under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The proposal was stonewalled for a year until a new University Director of Facilities Planning asked the Division of Historical Resources (SHPO) to prepare a formal document for execution. The Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement identifies areas of historic significance, references preservation standards appropriate for development activities affecting historic properties and archaeological sites,<sup>8</sup> and prescribes review procedures and timeframes. Importantly, the Agreement establishes a means of resolving disagreements between the Division of Historical Resources and the University regarding specific undertakings that may affect cultural resources<sup>9</sup>

Alongside these successes, gaps have grown with the magnitude of the resource. For the diverse departments and outside professionals charged with work on the campus, there has been no central source of campus specific documentation and guidelines to assist in decisions about appropriate treatments and compatible construction. The result has been failure to identify proposed work that may impact the historic campus, failure to identify projects that require qualification of architects and contractors with preservation experience, and failure to identify maintenance work that may destroy historic fabric or character.

In 1997 the School of Accounting received a major donation for a new building in the College of Business area of the campus. Even though the proposed site abutted the original College of Law building, the University Preservation Committee did not receive official notice of the proposed construction. The 1914 Bryan Hall College of Law was architecturally significant for its original features and for the 1949 expansion that exemplified the compatible interpretation of the campus construction under University Architect Guy Fulton's purview. The new construction referenced the original entry tower and its terra cotta reliefs of scales of justice with a gable entrance and reliefs in Moderne detail.

A concerned business faculty member forwarded a rendering to the Preservation Committee showing a hypothetical building imposed within the Bryan courtyard that was being circulated to stimulate additional private donations. Upon learning that the University Administration had dictated that location, the Committee produced a paper defining the significant features of Bryan Hall and the sensitivity of the proposed site. Ultimately, the Committee prevailed but the preservation processes had failed. Had there been a central resource documenting campus site and building features central to preservation goals, this near disaster would not have been averted.

The restoration of the quadrangle buildings at the original campus entrance, Science Hall and Language Hall, was completed in 2001. After a history of escape from proposed demolition and 25 ensuing years of possible demolition by neglect, their restoration was a wonder. It was, however, a

wonder with conflicts and forebodings. In these projects emerged major private donors with strong wills regarding restoration, often in conflict with original and compatible treatments. Had there been a central resource documenting significant features, donors and architects and administration could have resolved costly conflicts at the initiation of the process.

In 2002, another breakdown in communication erupted and remains unresolved. The Preservation Committee was not notified of the initiation of a project to expand the main library onto the site that had been the original entrance to the campus and that is flanked by the newly restored 1909 Science Hall and 1913 Language Hall. The Committee had no opportunity for comment in the selection of the architect, which resulted in the choice of a firm with no preservation experience or sensitivity. The preliminary proposal failed to recognize the sensitive context and the firm was asked to desist until further determinations could be made. The outcome of this impasse remains uncertain and the critical needs of the library are threatening.

In summary, the University of Florida can list a distinctive history of compatible evolution of this 20<sup>th</sup> Century campus and unique tools for implementation of preservation goals. Documentation of much of the historic campus exists, but in varied and scattered sources. Prints of the architectural drawings of many of the historic buildings are filed at the Physical Plant Division. A program has begun to record all University buildings in CADD format. The University Archives in the historic Reading Room of Smathers Library contains files of early photographs and records of the history of the University. The Architecture and Fine Arts Librarian in 1999 developed a series of web sites listing University Buildings, architects, contractors, and construction dates.<sup>10</sup> The Preservation Committee in conjunction with the College of Design, Construction, and Planning began in 2002 to develop a proposal to expand the initial National Register District to include the post World War II buildings that have now reached the benchmark of 50 years.

The problem comes to focus in recognition of the divergent entities involved with construction, maintenance, and development of sites that may impact the historic campus. The University Divisions that may initiate or influence such work range from Facilities Planning and Construction, Physical Plant, Environmental Health and Safety to Development, University Libraries, Housing, or Athletics to the various colleges and the Health Science Center. Other layers of influence include administrators, architects and contractors, and donors. The absence of direct connections between many of these entities and ongoing turnover in administrators and employees emphasizes the need for a central resource to bridge the gap that continues to challenge the historic campus. This resource should be accessible online and include the following: the architectural history of the campus, significant campus features, character

defining features and spaces of individual historic buildings, boundaries in which new construction would impact the historic campus, buildings that are eligible but not yet listed on the National Register, physical location of documentation and research materials, cyclical maintenance recommendations, procedures and required contacts, qualifications for professionals, and scheduled updates for the resource.

The University Record of 1906 described the «unusual privilege of ample grounds free from previous buildings» and observed glowingly, « It may take a hundred years for the completion of these plans, but as the State grows and new educational needs arise, a place is ready in these plans, and the University will finally grow into a splendid and harmonious whole, worthy of the greatness of the State which sustains it.» The «harmonious whole» has seen successes and failures over the 20<sup>th</sup> century; its future may well rest on the documentation of its past and present.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Florida President Andrew Sledd to Board of Control Chairman Bryan, 1907. In addition to Chairman Nathan Bryan, the Board of Control was composed of P.K. Yonge of Pensacola, A.L. Brown of Eustis, Thomas Butler King of Arcadia, J.C. Baisden, Live Oak, and J.G. Kellum, Secretary to the Board.

#### END NOTES

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1 University of Florida President Andrew Sledd to Board of Control Chairman Bryan, 1907. In addition to Chairman Nathan Bryan, the Board of Control was composed of P.K. Yonge of Pensacola, A.L. Brown of Eustis, Thomas Butler King of Arcadia, J.C. Baisden, Live Oak, and J.G. Kellum, Secretary to the Board.

2 As the University project began William Edwards left the firm of Edwards and Walter in Columbia, South Carolina and established his practice in Atlanta, later in partnership with William Sayward, where he continued to practice into the 1930s. During his tenure as Architect to the Board of Control, Edwards also designed buildings for the other three institutions established by the Buckman Act. For the Florida State University (established as Florida Female College, in spite of opposition by certain legislators who considered college education for women either scandalous or a waste of money) Edwards designed buildings with a more direct connection to Tudor Gothic, distinguished by a prominent entry tower gate. Edwards' FSU buildings include: Bryan Hall Dormitory (1907), James Westcott Memorial Building in 1911, Sevannee Dining Hall (1913), Reynolds Dormitory (1913), Broward Dormitory (1917), the School of Education (Psychology) in 1918, Jennie Murphree Dormitory (1922), the Dodd Hall Library (1924). The Normal School for Negroes (now Florida A&M University) was also established in Tallahassee. The Edwards buildings at FAMU, including the Carnegie Library (1907) and the Commons (1924), reflect the classicism of the Beaux-Arts influence. Edwards designed the campus for the School for the Deaf and Blind in St. Augustine in a simplified Mediterranean language appropriate to St. Augustine. In 1927, Edwards was engaged by Mayor William R. Thomas to design the Hotel Thomas, which was exemplary of the Mediterranean Revival of the Florida Boom but unique in Gainesville where the examples of that style are primarily domestic.

3 Stained glass completed in 1938 by D'Ascengo Studios of Philadelphia.

4 The Hub Student Services Center was designed by the Russell T. Pancoast and Associates of Miami and dedicated on November 3, 1950. The project architect was Andrew Ferendino (later a principal of the important firm of Spillis and Candela). Jefferson M. Hamilton was consulting architect for the University with Guy C. Fulton as Architect for the State Board of Control.

5 Professor of Architecture F. Blair Reeves and Professor of History Samuel Proctor.

6 Kerber, Stephen. "William Edwards and the Historic University of Florida Campus: A Photographic Essay," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 57 (January 1979): 321.

7 In Florida, the Director of the Department of State's Division of Historical Resources serves as Florida's State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), providing a liaison with the national historic preservation program conducted by the National Park Service.

8 The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation.

9 Ferro, David, Director of Architectural Services, Florida Division of Historical Resources. Interview 2002. "This Memorandum of Agreement has become a model for other state agencies. The Division of Historical Resources recently drafted a Memorandum to address maintenance and development activities at the Ringling Center in Sarasota. The Secretary of State's concurrence with the mandated Property Management Plan for Ringling Center that was presented to the Florida Cabinet for approval in late 2001 was on the condition that this Agreement be executed by Ringling Center owner, Florida State University."

10 2003 Sesquicentennial Site: <http://www.ufl.edu/150/>

UF Builds: <http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/ufarch/default.htm> Created by Architecture and Fine Arts Librarian Edward Teague in 1999, this web page contains links to sites including a campus map, historic sites, construction to 1999. These are as follows:

Historic Sites Guide: <http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/ufarch/historic.htm>

UF Buildings and Sites: <http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/ufarch/bldgdata.htm> lists approximately 400 structures to 1999

Gallery: <http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/ufarch/gallery.htm> photographs of nearly 250 buildings and links to campus map

Timetable: <http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/ufarch/history.htm>

Lists 920 existing buildings in 1999 and link to Timeline of UF events.

Resources: <http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/ufarch/resources.htm>

Includes links to bibliographies and web sites. Link the UF Comprehensive Master Plan.

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Professor Susan Tate has been a member of the faculty of the University of Florida since 1972. She serves on the Graduate and Doctoral Research Faculties and has supervised over fifty graduate research projects on a broad range of preservation topics. Professor Tate is a member and past chair of the University Committee for Preservation of Historic Buildings and Sites and past Director of the Preservation Institute: Nantucket. A Registered Architect and General Contractor, Susan Tate's specializations include historic districts, compatible design, code compliance, and adaptive use of historic interiors. She has extensive experience with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, the National Register of Historic Places, Historic Structures Reports, and the Historic American Buildings Survey.