

# *Southwestern* *Historical* *Quarterly*



THE TEXAS STATE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
VOL. LXXVII, NO. 4

APRIL, 1974

# *Temples of Knowledge: Historic Mains of Texas Colleges and Universities*

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**I**N THE ARCHITECTURE OF NORTH AMERICA, AS IN THAT OF EUROPE AND other continents, potentates and societies alike throughout historic times have sought glorify with art those activities which they deemed most important to their ways of life, thereby expressing the nature of their cultural as well as political values. Exemplifying these inclinations during colonial days in the Northeast, formal compositions of handsome Classical details at the gates of the enceintes announced the military significance of the mighty French fortress of Louisbourg during the eighteenth century and the importance of the English citadel within Quebec during the nineteenth. In the Southwest elaborate decoration in Baroque or Churrigueresque style on the fronts of the Spanish colonial mission churches affirmed dedicated efforts of ecclesiastical colonial activity while, at the same time, expressing adoration for the Deity.

Likewise, the architectural features of nineteenth-century Texas buildings communicate something of the values of the people who built them. The monumental composition and Classical features of both the Greek Revival and the Renaissance Revival state capitols exhibited deep-seated pride in self-government. At the county level formal design and more or less opulent decoration on the courthouses communicated confidence in local administration and justice—while each of the capitols during its era was the dominant architectural landmark of the state, the courthouses were focal points of the counties. Also expressing values of Texas society and surpassing many governmental buildings in magnitude and opulence, however, were the edifices dedicated to higher education. As with other public works erected throughout the history of the republic and the state, the stylistic features of these edifices expressed pride in the functions which they housed.

The cultural values reflected in the first temples of knowledge had their roots in the early development of the Southwest. Among the distinguishing qualities of the builders of the Lone Star Republic and State was certainly their sincere dedication to enlightenment. Pursuing this ideal, settlers in the

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Mexican state of Coahuila and Texas appealed to the government for a system of schools. Their solicitations were answered by a decree specifying that a "school of mutual instruction . . . be established in each department of the State."<sup>1</sup> Although some schools were opened, they were poorly supported, and finally, as is well known, the failure of Mexico to establish a system of education was listed among the grievances in the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Texas.<sup>2</sup>

In the decades following independence, law provided not only for a general system of public elementary and secondary education but also for higher learning. In 1839 the young republic set aside fifty leagues of land (over 200,000 acres) to finance "two Colleges or Universities." After statehood, in the 1850s fifty leagues of land were again set aside and \$100,000 was appropriated for establishment and maintenance.<sup>3</sup> For a state university which was still unrealized, the State Constitution of 1876 reserved one million acres of land.<sup>4</sup>

Other evidence of the devotion to higher education had been apparent in the specifications for locating and planning the new capital of the fledgling republic. The 1839 act providing for the permanent location of the seat of government required that a site for a university be included among the lots which were to be set aside for public buildings.<sup>5</sup> Hiram Walker, with the Capital Commission, who had been appointed to select a site for the capital city, designated a prominence at the head of present University Avenue as a location for a school of higher learning and named it "College Hill."<sup>6</sup> This pedestal, however, would wait several decades for its monument; public aspiration exceeded capability in those early years; hence state-supported institutions of higher learning would not be realized until after the Civil War.

As had been the case earlier with the Atlantic seaboard colonies, the first

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<sup>1</sup>*Laws and Decrees of the State of Coahuila and Texas*, trans. by J. P. Kimball (Houston, 839), 127, Decree No. 92. As a result of difficulties encountered in establishing these schools, other decrees dealing with education were passed in subsequent years. For the most part, however, all went unfulfilled.

<sup>2</sup>The Texas Declaration of Independence proclaims that "it is an axiom, in political science, that unless a people are educated and enlightened it is idle to expect the continuance of civil liberty, or the capacity for self-government." *Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1970-1971* ([Dallas], 1969), 98.

<sup>3</sup>H. P. N. Gammel (comp.), *Laws of Texas, 1822-1897* (10 vols.; Austin, 1898), II, 134-136; IV, 1020-1023.

<sup>4</sup>Texas, *Constitution* (1876), Art. VII, Sect. 15.

<sup>5</sup>Gammel (comp.), *Laws of Texas*, II, 161-165; *Houston Telegraph and Texas Register*, January 16, 1839.

<sup>6</sup>Speech of Governor John Ireland, September 15, 1883, in *San Antonio Daily Express*, September 16, 1883.

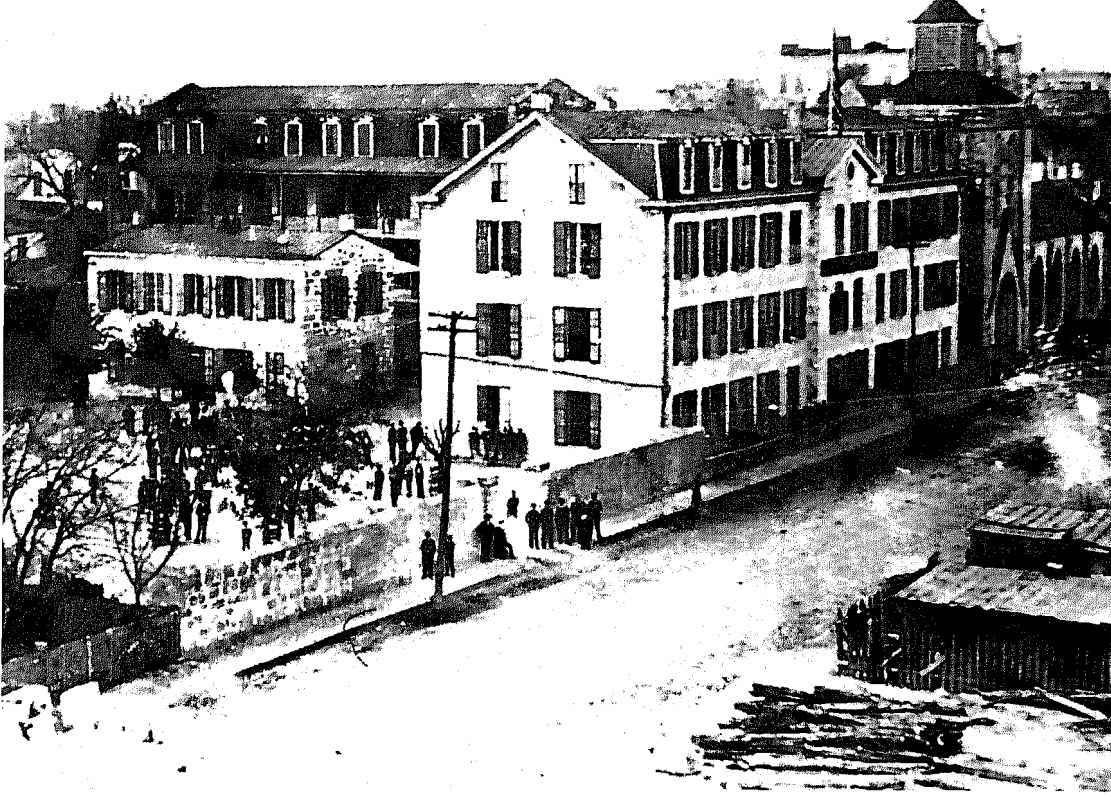


Figure 1

Saint Mary's Institute, San Antonio. Erected in 1852-1853, the first building was 25 by 60 feet, two stories high. In 1867 and 1870 this structure was expanded with additions on three sides, creating a three-story edifice. Courtesy St. Mary's University.

Texas colleges were established by private enterprise. Prior to mid-century several charters were issued to authorize the establishment of institutions of higher learning, including, in 1837, the University of San Augustine, although it was not opened until 1842.<sup>7</sup> In 1840 President Mirabeau B. Lamar approved the charter for Rutgersville College, a Methodist school which was located originally in Fayette County, but which was moved in 1854 to Chappell Hill, thence in 1872 to Georgetown, where it became Southwestern University. The doors of Baylor College, a Baptist institution, were opened to students in 1845, and the program at Austin College, a Presbyterian school, was commenced in 1849. Among the schools established during the 1850s was Saint Mary's, in San Antonio<sup>8</sup> (Fig. 1).

<sup>7</sup>Houston *Telegraph and Texas Register*, July 29, 1837; William Ransom Hogan, *The Texas Republic: A Social and Economic History* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1946), 149-150.

<sup>8</sup>Houston *Telegraph and Texas Register*, August 26, 1840; Hogan, *The Texas Republic*, 147; Williamson County Centennial Committee, *Williamson County Centennial, 1848-1948* (Georgetown, Texas [1948]), 25; Joseph William Schmitz, *The Society of Mary in*

The students who enrolled in the advanced programs of these antebellum institutions pursued a classical education, but not until they had had some previous preparation. Included among the entrance requirements for Rutgersville College were Latin and Greek grammar and Caesar's Commentaries.<sup>9</sup> In the upper levels of study emphasis was placed upon Greek and Roman literature—as in the American schools of the East. Although basic courses such as reading, writing, and arithmetic were stressed in the elementary department, the junior and senior departments of the University of San Augustine were filled with studies of the classics, including "History of Rome, History of Greece . . . Virgil, Cicero's orations, Livy, Horace . . . Herodotus, and Thucydides. . . ."<sup>10</sup> At Austin College students studied Demosthenes's *De Corona* and Cicero's *De Officiis*, *de Amicitia*, *de Senectute*.<sup>11</sup> Although the treatment may have been superficial, other work in the curricula at some colleges included a variety of subjects such as trigonometry, surveying, fortification, and architectural drawing.

Consistent with national fashion, the buildings in which these subjects were taught were distinguished generally by the Greek Revival style, a mode which also characterized many dwellings, hotels, and churches in antebellum Texas. It originally had been given impetus in Europe by the investigations of works of Roman and Greek antiquity and by the publication of James Stuart and Nicholas Revett's book on the antiquities of Athens.<sup>12</sup> In America, Greek and Roman studies certainly stimulated the popularity of the revival; but, at the same time, the style provided a fitting image for colleges teaching the classics. Classical columns, pilasters, and entablatures patterned after the ordered formal geometry of the Greek art of antiquity surely provided appropriate backdrops for the development of discipline and the intellect.

If the Greek Revival depicted the nature of the curricula, it also furnished subject matter for the cultivation of appreciation for beauty. The romantic point of view considering architecture as a beneficial influence in the cultural development of students was expressed in the philosophy on the

*Texas* (San Antonio, 1951), 29; *Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1970-1971*, 576; Rupert Norval Richardson, *Texas: The Lone Star State* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1958), 416.

<sup>9</sup>Julia Lee Sinks, "Rutgersville College," *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association*, II (October, 1898), 127.

<sup>10</sup>San Augustine *Red-Lander*, March 12, 1846.

<sup>11</sup>Dan Ferguson, "Austin College in Huntsville," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LIII (April, 1950), 390.

<sup>12</sup>James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens, Measured and Delimited* (new edition; 4 vols.; London, 1825-1830). The original edition was published in 1762-1816.

architecture of several institutions in the East. When planning the campus for the University of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson wrote that he patterned the buildings after ancient Roman paradigms to provide students "models of taste and good architecture . . . [and] to serve as specimens for the Architectural lecturer."<sup>13</sup> Speaking at the dedication of Girard College, Philadelphia—a temple-type building (1833–1847) derived from the Greek Parthenon—Joseph R. Chandler advocated that "The adoption of the grandeur and beauty of an ancient architecture . . . must be considered with regard to their influences on the mind and character of the pupils. . . ."<sup>14</sup> These same attitudes surely prevailed also in the Southwest.

In Texas the Greek Revival college buildings were planned and constructed by masterbuilders who, either from experience in other parts of the country or from drawings in publications, had acquired some knowledge of the axial composition and Classical details which were so admired. Regardless of whether the entrances were placed on the long or the short axis, plans were developed around a central hall, with classrooms on either side. This symmetry was then emphasized by porticoes centered on the hall.

Erected in 1851–1852 in Huntsville by W. M. Barrett, the original Main for Austin College epitomized the formal design and Classical detailing of the Greek Revival<sup>15</sup> (Fig. 2). A two-story brick edifice, it was seven bays long and four wide, and contained eight classrooms and two assembly rooms on a central-hall dwelling-type plan. Tetrastyle porticoes with colossal Tuscan orders on both the north and the south formally announced entrances to the hall. Other features universally found in all building types in Greek Revival style included double doors with rectangular side lights and transom.

Fine Greek details also marked other antebellum college buildings, including Nacogdoches University and Baylor Female College. Although an

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<sup>13</sup>Jefferson to William Thornton in Fiske Kimball, *Thomas Jefferson, Architect* (Boston, 1916), 75. See also James Marston Fitch, *American Building: The Historical Forces That Shaped It* (2nd ed. rev.; Boston, 1966), 58.

<sup>14</sup>Joseph R. Chandler, quoted in Albert Bush-Brown, "College Architecture: An Expression of Educational Philosophy," *Architectural Record*, CXXII (August, 1957), 154.

<sup>15</sup>Ferguson, "Austin College in Huntsville," 388; *Houston Telegraph and Texas Register*, April 18, 1851, called attention to the cornerstone laying. See also George L. Landolt, *Search for the Summit: Austin College through XII Decades, 1849–1970* (Austin, 1970), 129–130; Percy Everett Wallace, "The History of Austin College" (M.A. thesis, Austin College, 1924), 85.

Many of the buildings discussed in this article acquired the title "Main" or "Main Building" after the college grew enough to expand into other buildings. In some cases the building may even have been known by some other name. However, to simplify the comparison we are making, we have chosen to refer to them all as "Main Building" or "Main" at all stages of their existence.

early rendering<sup>16</sup> delineated a hexastyle portico with Doric columns of Roman character, the completed Main of Nacogdoches (1858-1859) was a beautiful temple-type form with a fine wooden Greek Revival entablature and cornice with columns in Tuscan order (Fig. 3). Baylor Female College at Independence was also a formal classical composition—today, however, while both Austin College and Nacogdoches buildings are still standing, four columns are all that remain of the original Baylor structure.

The cultural development embodied in these colleges was interrupted by the Civil War and Reconstruction, which in Texas marked a turning point for higher education. The impetus which the conflict gave to industrialization and to resource development focused attention upon technical education. To stimulate the development of curricula in the sciences, the Congress of the United States in 1862 passed an act awarding large grants of land to each state in the Union for the purpose of establishing colleges in which agriculture, mechanical arts, and military science were to be taught.<sup>17</sup> Fol-

<sup>16</sup>Published in *Texas: Books, Manuscripts, and Documents Dealing with the History of Texas*, Catalog No. 6 (Houston, 1964), item 86.

<sup>17</sup>George P. Sanger (ed.), *Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations, of the United*

Figure 2

Austin College, Huntsville (1851-1852). Courtesy Library, Sam Houston State University.





Figure 3

Nacogdoches University, Nacogdoches (1858-1859). Courtesy Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress.



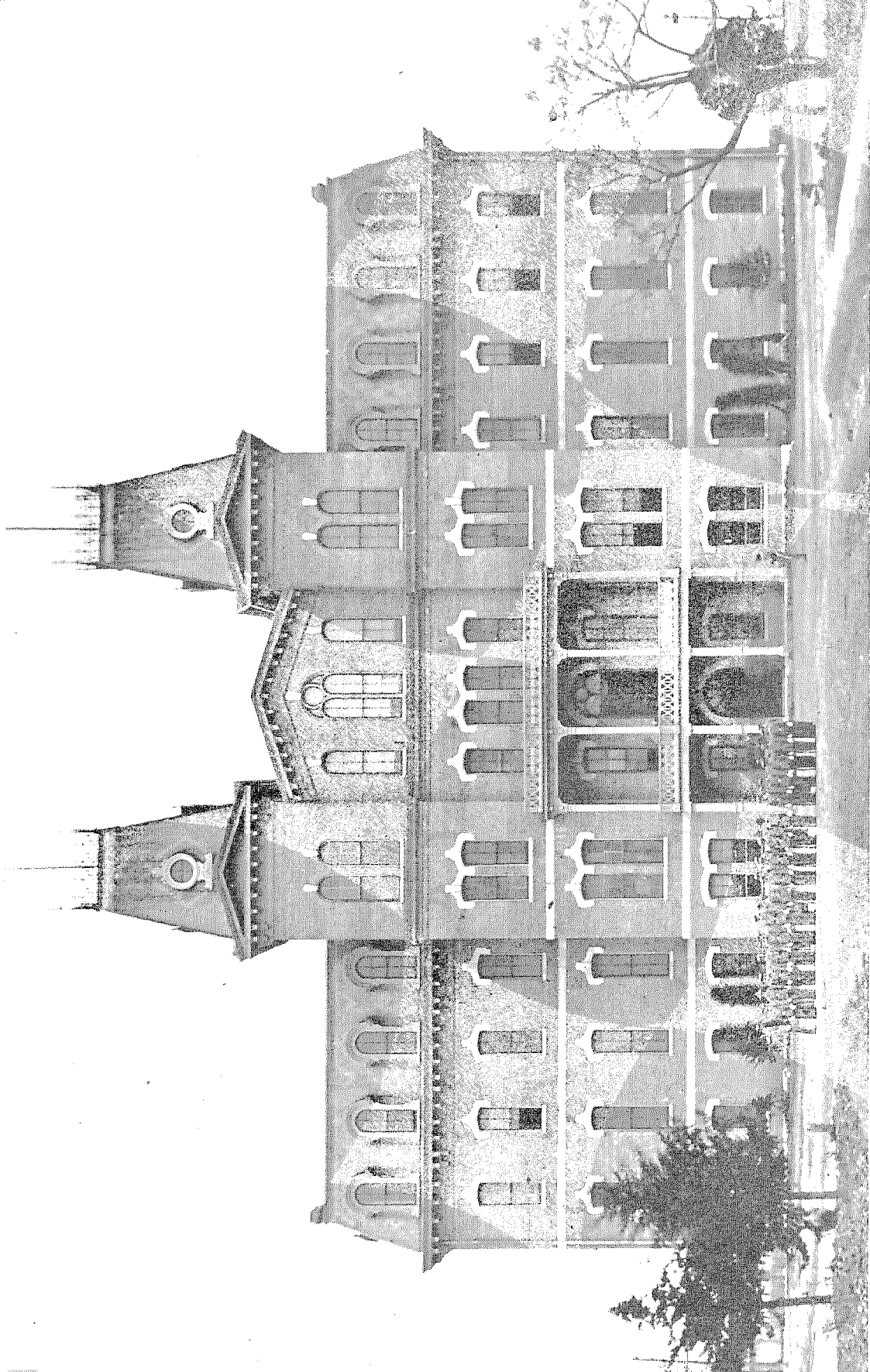
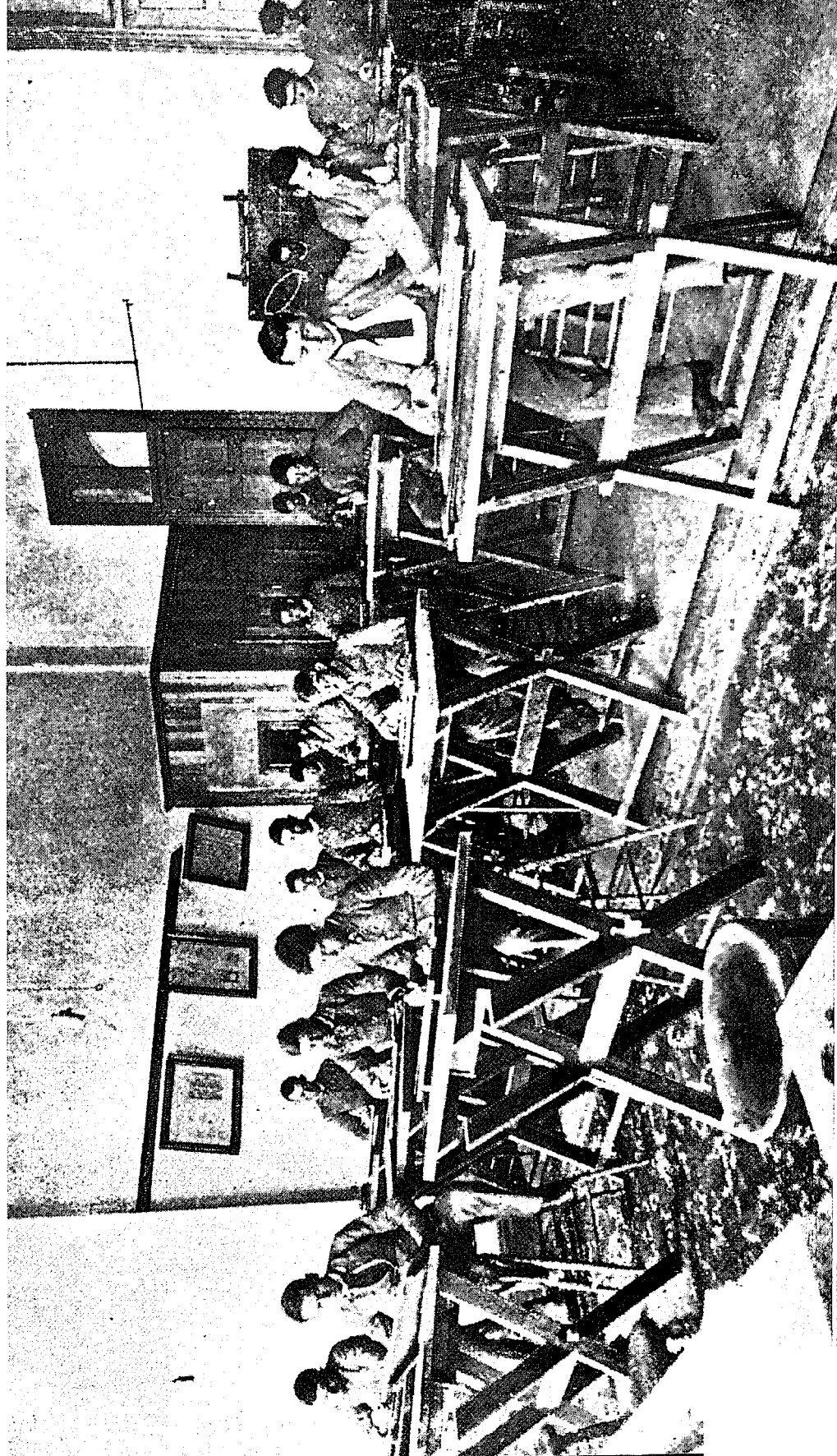


Figure 4

Main Building, Agriculture and Mechanical College of Texas, College Station (1871-1874)—Jacob Larmour, architect, (above) Exterior appearance; (below) a view of the drawing room. The building burned in 1912. Courtesy University Library, Texas A&M University.

Figure 5



lowing the Civil War, a joint resolution allowed for land-grant colleges in the South, on condition that corresponding appropriations were made by each state.<sup>18</sup> With this support, in 1871 the Texas Legislature created the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas—the first state-supported institution of higher learning “to bring about . . . a more modern and practical training.”<sup>19</sup> Subsequently a beautiful eminence near Bryan was selected as the site and the appointment of an architect was authorized.

After irregularities in construction necessitated the replacement of the first architects, Jacob Larmour of Austin, designer of several Texas courthouses, was appointed to design the Main Building.<sup>20</sup> Plans called for a large brick work, on limestone foundations, to contain the many spaces required for specialized technical courses in horticulture, agriculture, and mechanical engineering (Fig. 4).<sup>21</sup> Academic activities providing for an estimated capacity of six hundred students were distributed throughout four stories of the building, which was completed in 1874. Although the functions of the various spaces changed frequently, in 1895 engineering and veterinary science were located on the first floor, offices and classrooms were on the second, library and horticulture were on the third, and the drawing department was on the fourth (Fig. 5).<sup>22</sup>

During the era in which the A&M Main was erected, the taste of the times demanded romantic picturesqueness, rather than the Classical repose of the antebellum years, to characterize the functions of higher learning.

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*States of America*, XII (Boston, 1863), pt. 1, pp. 503–505. The Morrill Act donated to each state 30,000 acres of land or scrip for each senator and representative serving in Washington.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.* (Boston, 1869), XV, 25–26. Texas received 180,000 acres of land. The state appropriated \$75,000. Gammel (comp.), *Laws of Texas*, VI, 938–940.

<sup>19</sup>Gammel (comp.), *Laws of Texas*, VI, 938–940. As with other agricultural and mechanical colleges across the nation, the objective of the institution was “the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes.” Sanger (ed.), *Statutes at Large*, XII, 503–505; Report of John G. James, President, A&M College, December 31, 1882, in *Clarks-ville Standard*, January 19, 1883.

<sup>20</sup>Ernest Langford, *Getting the College Underway* (College Station, 1970), 15–33. The first architectural work was evidently done by C. G. Forshey early in 1871. Later that year Carl de Grote’s plans were accepted, but he, in turn, was replaced by Larmour. Langford, *ibid.*, 11–16.

Among the temples of justice attributed to Larmour were the Travis County Courthouse, Austin (1875–1876), and the Grimes County Courthouse, Anderson (1874). In association with A. O. Watson he designed the Milam County Courthouse in Cameron (1890–1891), and the Comanche County Courthouse, Comanche (1891).

<sup>21</sup>Civil engineering was added after the school opened. In 1904–1905 an architectural engineering department was created in which a wide variety of technical courses was taught.

<sup>22</sup>Other buildings were added before the end of the century, including a laboratory for testing the strengths of building materials. See Fort Worth *Daily Gazette*, March 20, 1895.

Late in the nineteenth century one observer summarized the esthetic tenor of the period: "The American mind loves, in architecture, something which will stand up high, something with a touch at least of the soaring and aspiring character about it, and something which shall have, if it can be by any possibility introduced, a broken skyline."<sup>23</sup> The admiration for the picturesque was expressed in the Main Building of A&M by twin towers crowned with ornate cresting, Mansard roofs accented by dormers, and stone window arches contrasted with brick walls, all of which were hallmarks of the French Second Empire style.<sup>24</sup>

Other temples of knowledge erected in the 1870s and early 1880s also displayed the fashionable Mansardic mode, which was popular across the United States.<sup>25</sup> Add-Ran College, before it was moved from Thorp Spring to Fort Worth to become Texas Christian University, in 1877 erected a three-story edifice with walls of limestone, crowned by a Mansard roof (Fig. 6).<sup>26</sup> After moving in 1876 to a site donated by William Rice, the new Main (1878) of Austin College, in Sherman, was a three-story work with a tall central tower and other Second Empire features (Fig. 7). According to a contemporary report the new Main, then under construction (in 1881) at Baylor University in Independence, was a three-story stone block "after the Mansard style, with a tower."<sup>27</sup>

During changing times near the end of the century, however, the popularity of the Mansardic mode waned. Albeit "Collegiate Gothic" had become popular after 1840 on many campuses in the East and remained fashionable well into the twentieth century,<sup>28</sup> no style universally communicated the "purpose" of college buildings as, for example, the Gothic Revival did for ecclesiastical structures. Rather than "portraying" or "symbolizing" function with a particular mode, the main intention of style was to communicate

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<sup>23</sup>Ashton R. Willard, "The Development of College Architecture in America," *The New England Magazine*, XVI (July, 1897), 527.

<sup>24</sup>For distinctions of this style, as well as others, see Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1969).

<sup>25</sup>Interestingly, a Mansard roof, designed by J. Larmour, was added to the Greek Revival Main of Austin College in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The roof has been removed, however, with restoration of the original lines.

<sup>26</sup>Joseph Lynn Clark, *Thank God We Made It! A Family Affair with Education* (Austin, 1969), 388.

<sup>27</sup>Galveston *Daily News*, November 1, 1881. In 1886 Baylor was moved to Waco and consolidated with Waco University, after which another new Main was erected.

<sup>28</sup>See Thomas E. Tallmadge, "Selling Phidias *et al.* to the Trustees," *American Architect*, CXXIX (May 5, 1926), 487-491; and Hardy George, "Georgetown University's Healy Building," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XXXI (October, 1972), 215.

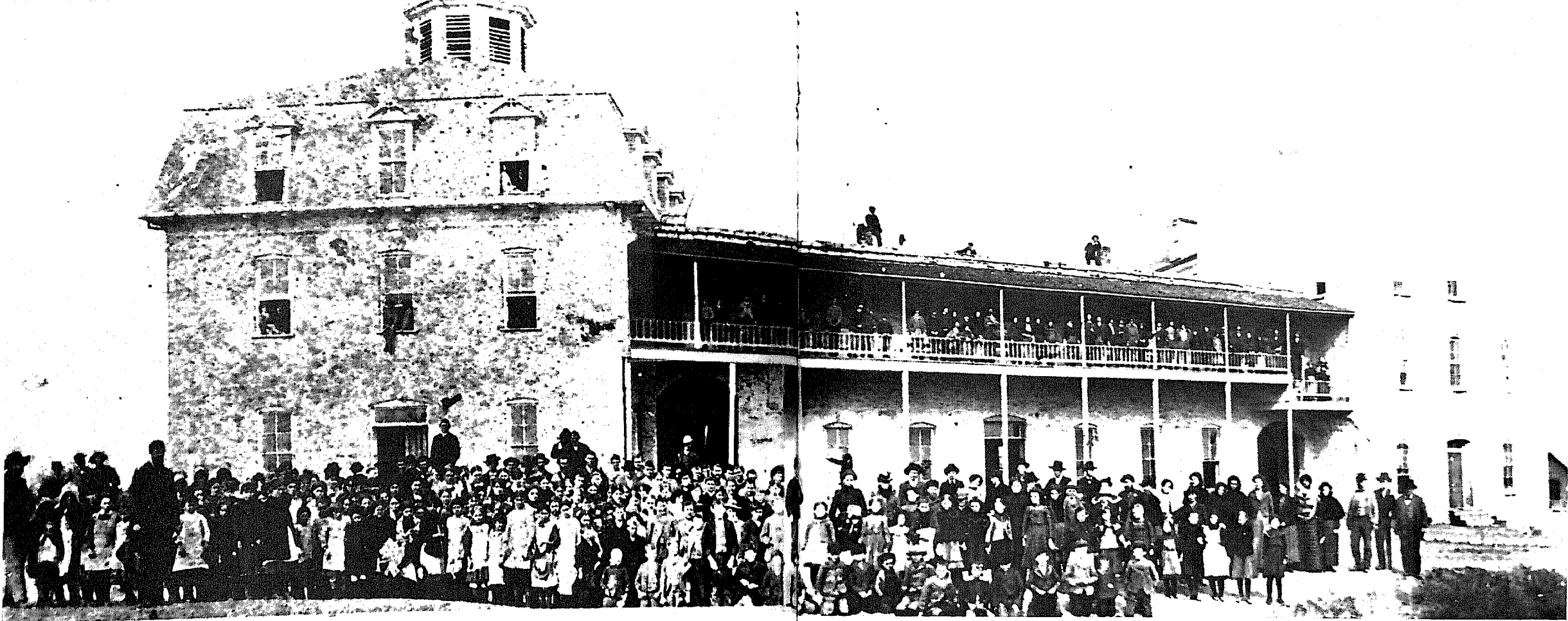


Figure 6

Main Building, Add-Ran Male and Female College, Thorp Spring (1877)—  
G. W. Bruhn, architect. This structure was used by Add-Ran until 1895.  
Courtesy Texas Christian University.

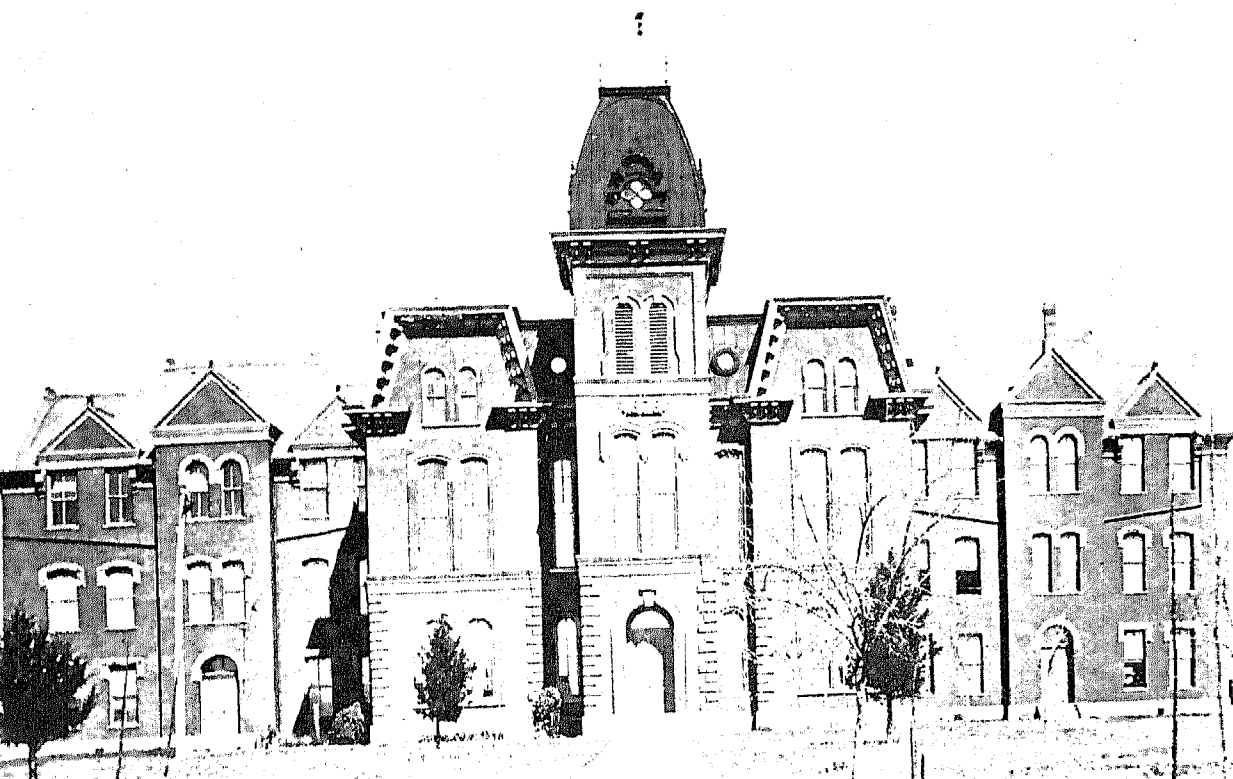


Figure 7

(opposite page) Main Building,  
Austin College, Sherman (1878).  
In 1913 the building burned in a  
fire started by a student. Courtesy  
Austin College Archives.



esteem for works of culture with ornateness. Virtually any mode which was opulent and picturesque was acceptable for college buildings during the 1880s and 1890s, provided the fashion could be considered "up-to-date." Thus the style described as "modern English, here and there slightly modified by a touch of French"<sup>29</sup> was certainly thought to represent the contemporaneity as well as the prestige of the Main of Texas Wesleyan College (1885), designed by M. R. Sanguinett and A. N. Dawson of Fort Worth (Fig. 8).<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Fort Worth *Daily Gazette*, January 3, 1886.

<sup>30</sup>The importance of the building was also emphasized by position. Like many college mains, it was located upon a prominent hill. According to a contemporary, "When one approaches the building, he is struck by the magnificent location, the level of the campus being as high as the base of the cupola on the courthouse. . . . The college is built as the scripture dictates, 'on a rock,' so that storms cannot prevail against it. The foundation is of solid masonry, four feet thick." Fort Worth *Daily Gazette*, October 13, 1885.

M. R. Sanguinett and A. N. Dawson formed a partnership in the mid-1880s. After a short period of working together, the partners separated and established new firms, both of which did noteworthy work. Among the significant commissions of the A. N. Dawson Architectural Company was the Archer County Courthouse, Archer City, a Romanesque Revival edifice erected in 1892. Among the early works of the new firm of Sanguinett & Messer was the 1895 Lamar County Courthouse, Paris, an interesting polychromatic building also in Romanesque style, which burned in 1916. The name of the latter firm

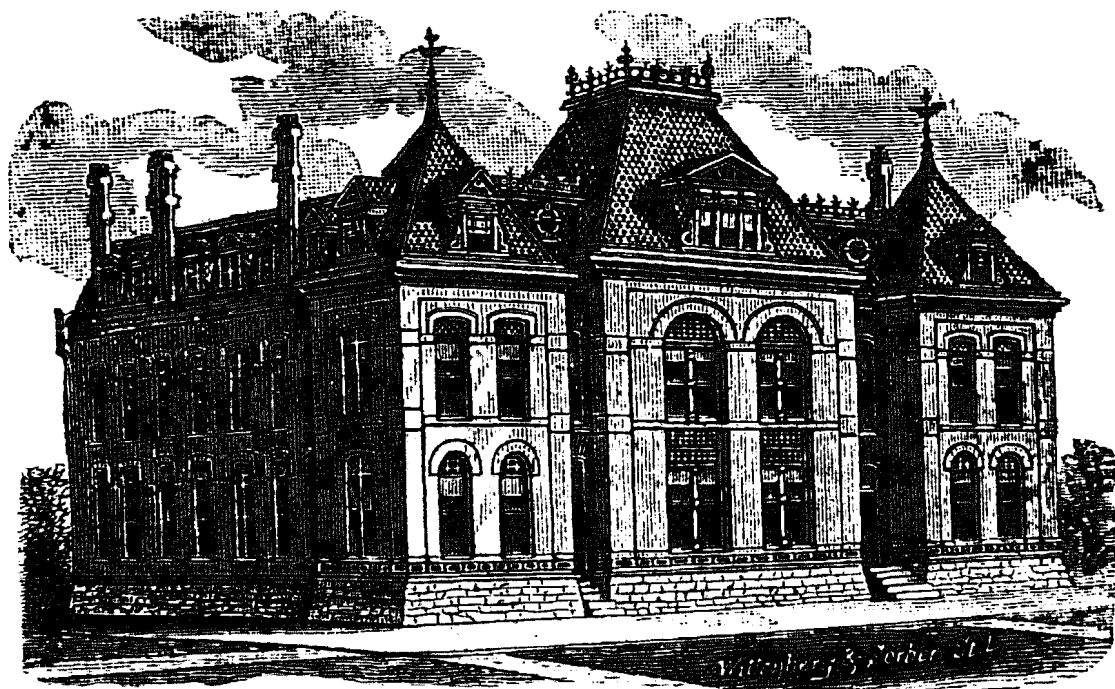
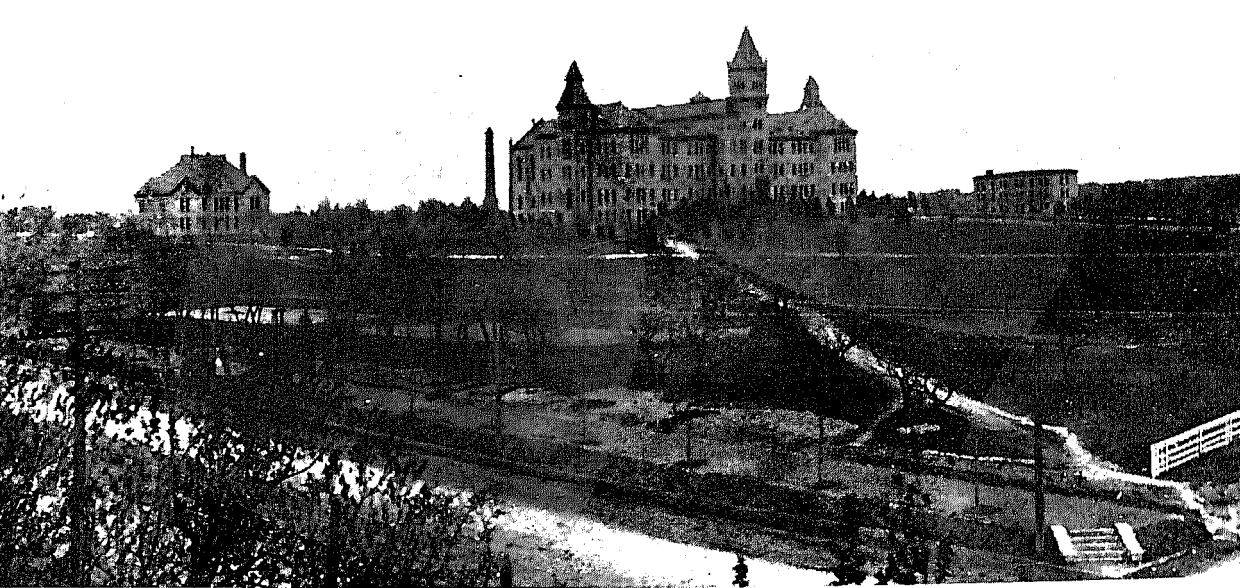


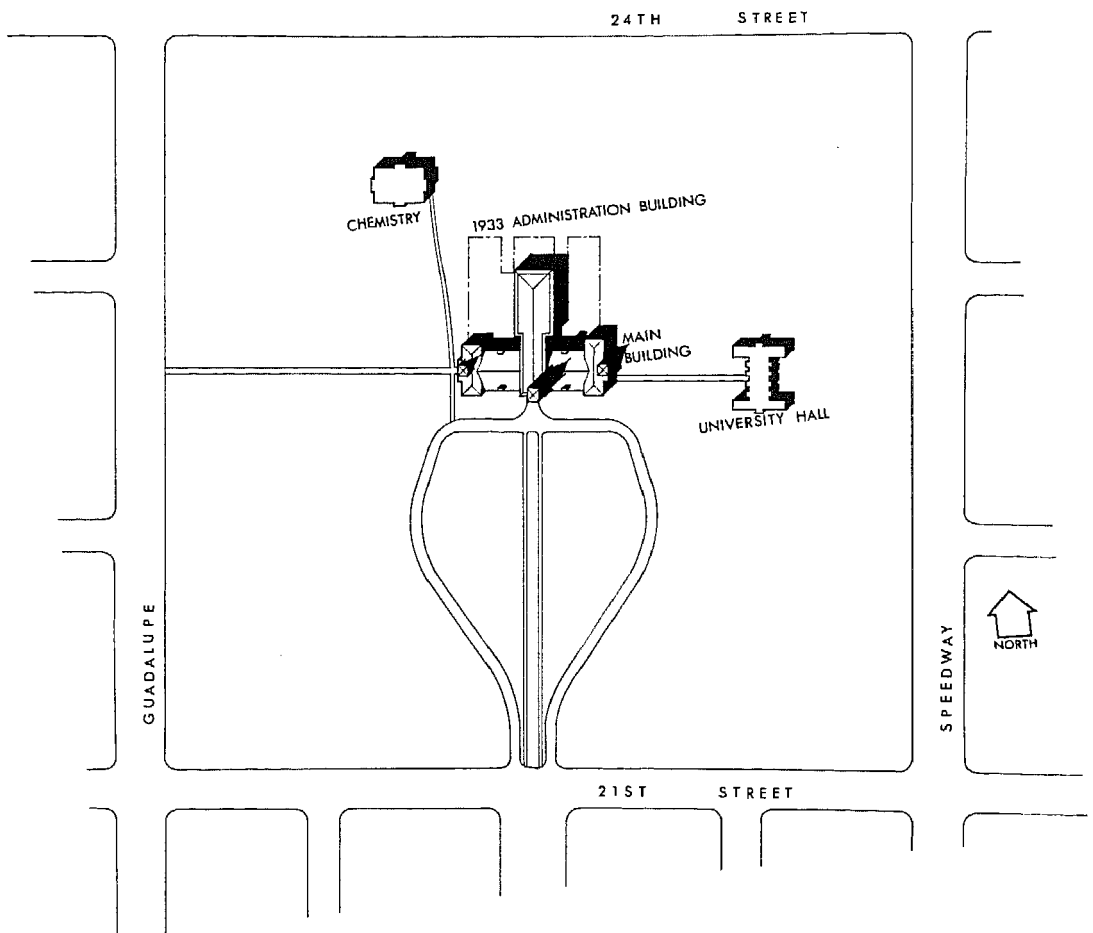
Figure 8

Main Building, Texas Wesleyan College, Fort Worth (1885)—Sanguinett and Dawson, architects. From Fort Worth *Daily Gazette*, 1885.

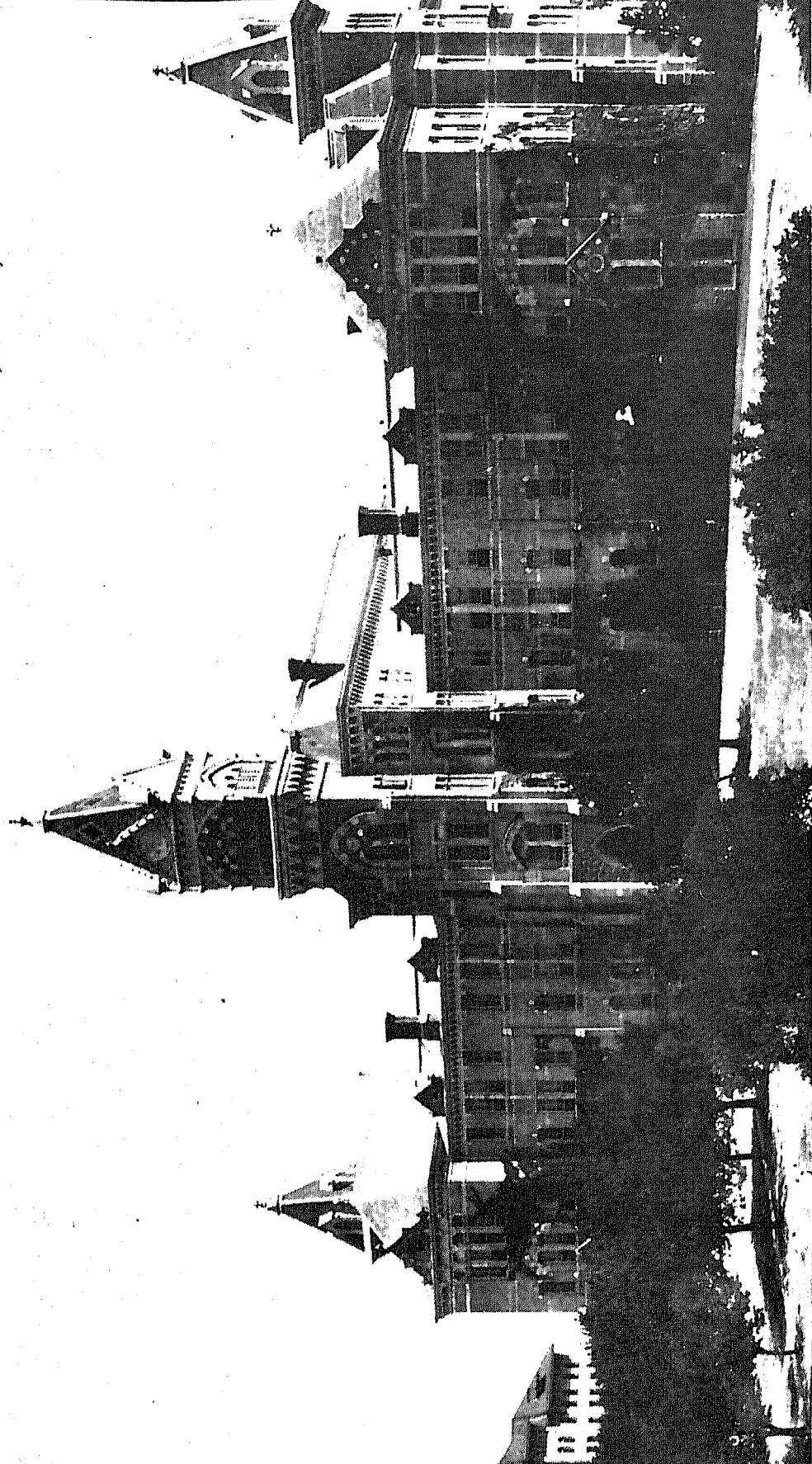


Figures 9a and 9b

University of Texas campus, Austin. (above) As photographed from the corner of Guadalupe and 21st Streets. Courtesy Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas Library, Austin. (below) The plan of the campus (c. 1900). Drawing by author.



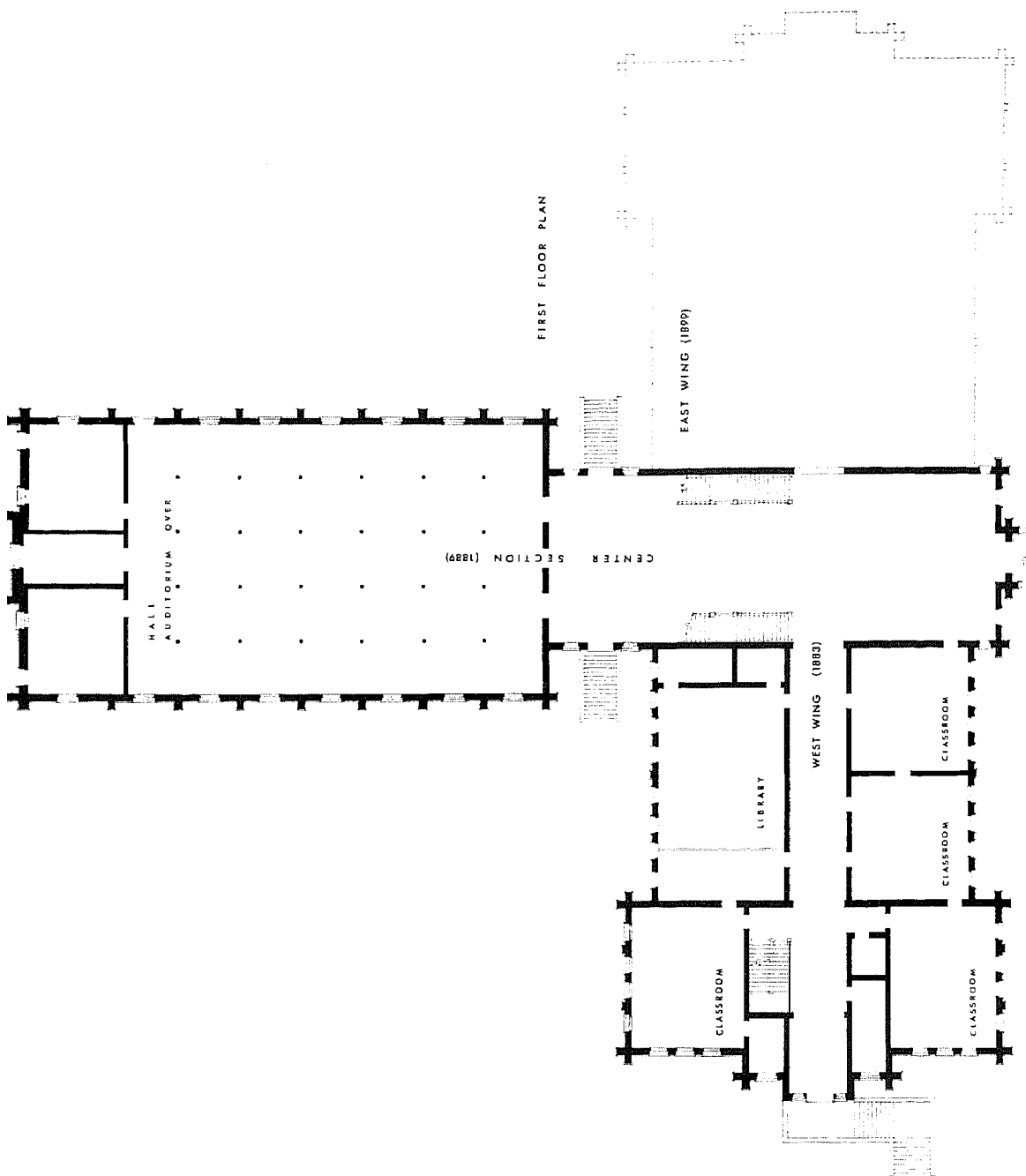
"OLD MAIN BUILDING" UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS



Figures 10 and 11

Main Building, University of Texas, Austin (1883-1889)—F. E. Ruffini, architect. (above) Young trees and ivy harmonize with the ornate Victorian Gothic building. Courtesy Texas State Library, Austin. (below) First-floor plan showing the use of the building (c. 1890). Drawing by author. This edifice was razed to make room for a new administration building and general library, which was completed in 1933.





The manner in which architecture was intended to express dignity of purpose was made apparent in the observations of many contemporaries. A committee which visited the A&M College of Texas in 1876 reported that "The buildings present an imposing style of architectural elegance and taste, which . . . is worthy of the great cause of education and human improvement."<sup>31</sup> Several years later at the University of Texas, in his address at the formal opening of the Main Building, Ashbel Smith, president of the Board of Regents, also noted the importance of character when he proclaimed that "A university as a temple of knowledge is preeminently entitled to buildings of solid structure and graceful architecture with convenient rooms. . . ." The *Houston Post* reported that this latter edifice "will be at once grand, and will compose a fitting monument to remind coming posterity of the high estimate placed upon education. . . ."<sup>32</sup>

In the Main (1883-1899) at the University of Texas, the requisite picturesqueness and opulence was provided by the High Victorian Gothic style (Figs. 9, 10, 11). The design for the four-story building had been selected from eight competitive proposals submitted by "scientific architects from different portions of the State. . . ."<sup>33</sup> After F. E. Ruffini of the capital city was awarded the commission he developed a design of pressed brick, with openings trimmed with cut stone. Cornices of galvanized iron and porticoes of cast iron contributed to the exterior elegance while exposed metalwork added to the interior interest of the structure (Fig. 12). However, fifteen years were required to complete the building in three separate sections—the result of niggardly appropriations typical of state work.<sup>34</sup>

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was eventually changed to Sanguinett & Staats. *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, November 23, 1887; March 28, 1884.

<sup>31</sup>Quoted in Langford, *Getting the College Underway*, 46.

<sup>32</sup>Speech of Ashbel Smith, September 15, 1883, in *San Antonio Daily Express*, September 16, 1883; *Houston Post*, September 16, 1883.

<sup>33</sup>*Houston Post*, September 16, 1883.

<sup>34</sup>When completed provisions had been made for instruction in four general departments: literature, science and arts, law, and engineering. The west wing was the first section completed: it was followed by the central section in 1889 and the east wing in 1899. The length of the entire work was 280 feet. *Texas Almanac* (Galveston, 1904), 179; William James Battle, "A Concise History of the University of Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LIV (April, 1951), 396. For a partial documentation of the utilization of the interior spaces, see Louis C. Moloney, "A History of the University Library at the University of Texas, 1883-1934," (D.L.S. dissertation, Columbia University, 1970).

Frederick Ernst Ruffini was born in 1851 in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1876 he moved to Austin, where he was later joined by his younger brother, Oscar. The Ruffinis practiced architecture together until F. E. died, in 1885. After the death of his brother, Oscar moved to San Angelo and continued his practice until 1958, the year of his death at the age of ninety-eight. Among the significant buildings designed by the Ruffinis were the Concho County Courthouse, Paint Rock; and the Blanco County Courthouse. Blanco. Elise E. Ruffini to James M. Day, August 29, 1961 (copy in possession of W. B. R.).



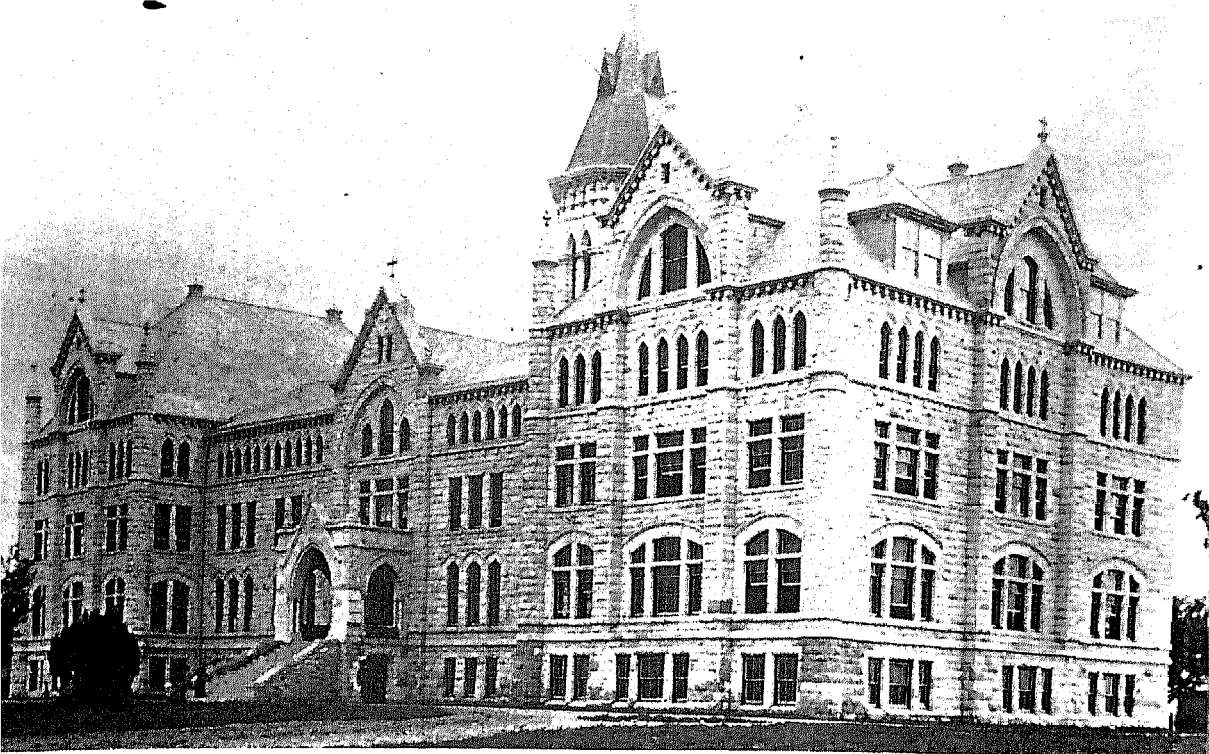
Figure 12

Main Building, University of Texas, library interior showing the ornamental metalwork. Courtesy Texas State University.

The picturesque Victorian Gothic distinguished other mains of Texas colleges and universities. Located on an imposing eminence some three miles from the Capitol, Saint Edwards College offered a “thorough Classical or Commercial education” in a building (1885, 1903) characterized by pointed arches and an angular silhouette designed by Nicholas J. Clayton, one of Texas’s leading nineteenth-century talents (Fig. 13).<sup>35</sup>

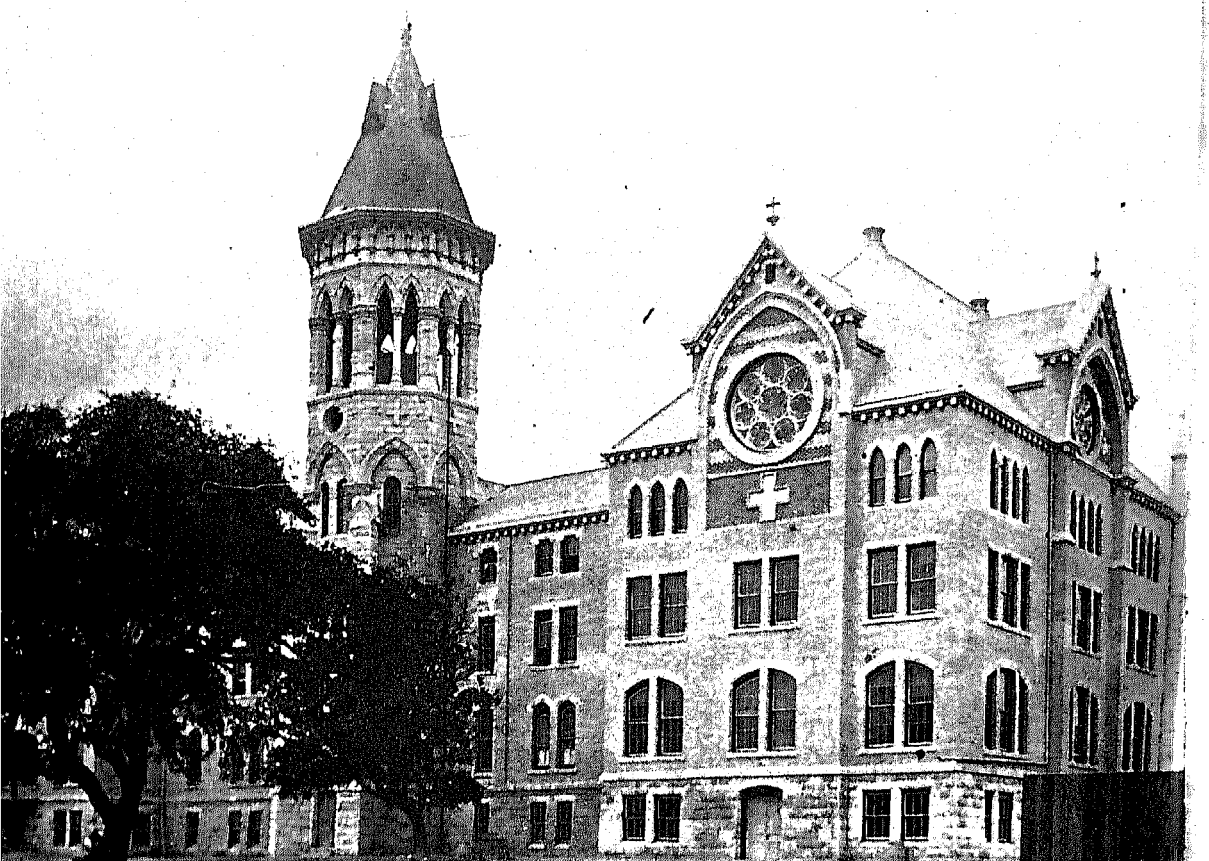
<sup>35</sup>The original structure was illustrated in an advertisement in the *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, August 21, 1892. In 1903, after partial destruction by fire, it was rebuilt along the lines of the original building.

In addition to this edifice, Clayton, himself a devout Catholic who had been born in Ireland, received many other commissions from the Catholic Church. In these he com-



Figures 13a and 13b

Saint Edwards College, Austin (1885, 1903)—Nicholas J. Clayton, architect.  
(above) Front view; (below) back view. Courtesy Saint Edwards University.



The architects of other college main buildings were also fond of the picturesque style. With its irregular skyline, the Main (1889-1890) of Sam Houston Normal Institute, designed by Alfred Mueller,<sup>36</sup> was also notable for its extraordinary pinnacles, steep-pitched roofs, and pointed arches (Fig. 14). E. Northcraft, who had supervised the construction of the Sam Houston Main, himself designed another remarkable, although somewhat later, example of the delightful Victorian Gothic—the Main (1902-1903) of Southwest Texas State Normal College, which was situated atop Chautauqua Height, a condition dramatizing the vertical aspects of the perpendicular style (Fig. 15).

monly exploited the Victorian Gothic style. As early as 1874—shortly after opening his office in Galveston—he employed pointed-arch motifs in Saint Mary's Infirmary in his hometown. Works in subsequent decades included Saint Mary's Cathedral in Austin (1873-1884) and the Ursuline Academy, Galveston (1893-1894), both elaborate designs in Victorian Gothic style.

<sup>36</sup>As with many important Texas architects, little is known about the designer of the Sam Houston Main. In 1885 Alfred Mueller evidently arrived in Galveston where he opened an office. In that city his talent was well expressed by the Galveston City Hall,

Figure 14

Main Building, Sam Houston Normal Institute, Huntsville (1889-1890)—Alfred Mueller, architect. Courtesy Library, Sam Houston State University.

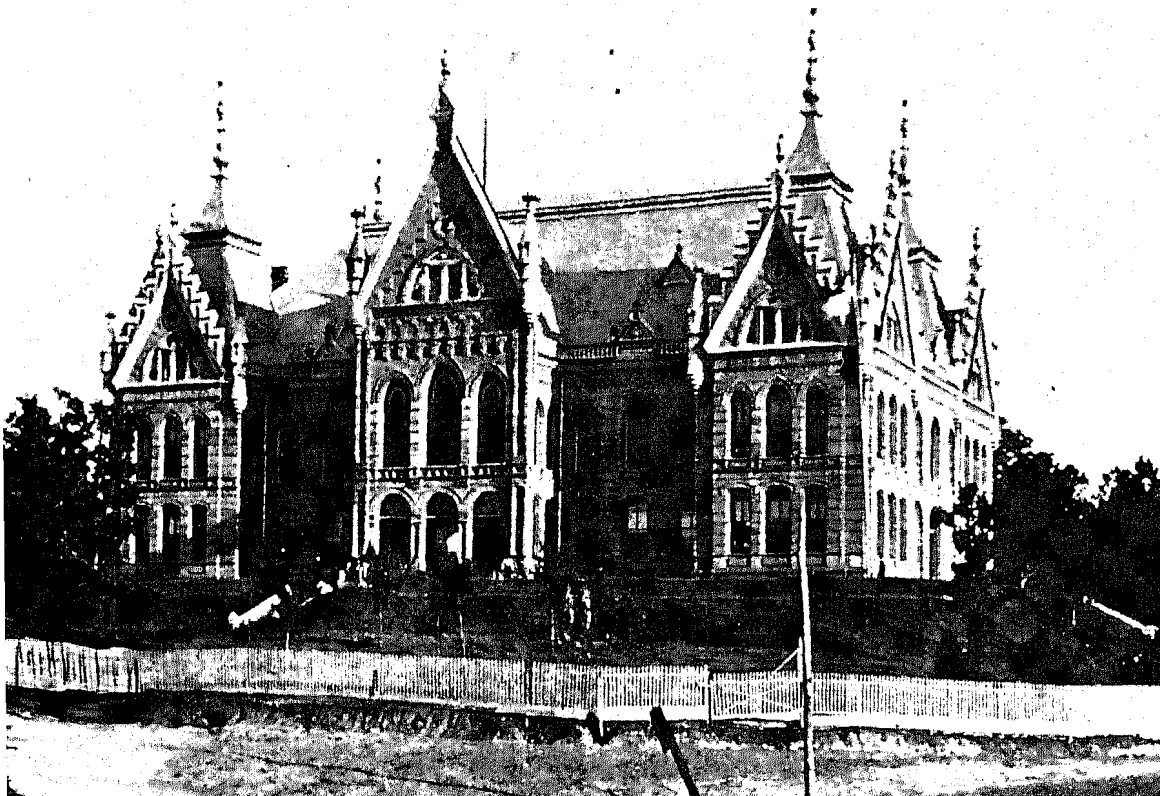
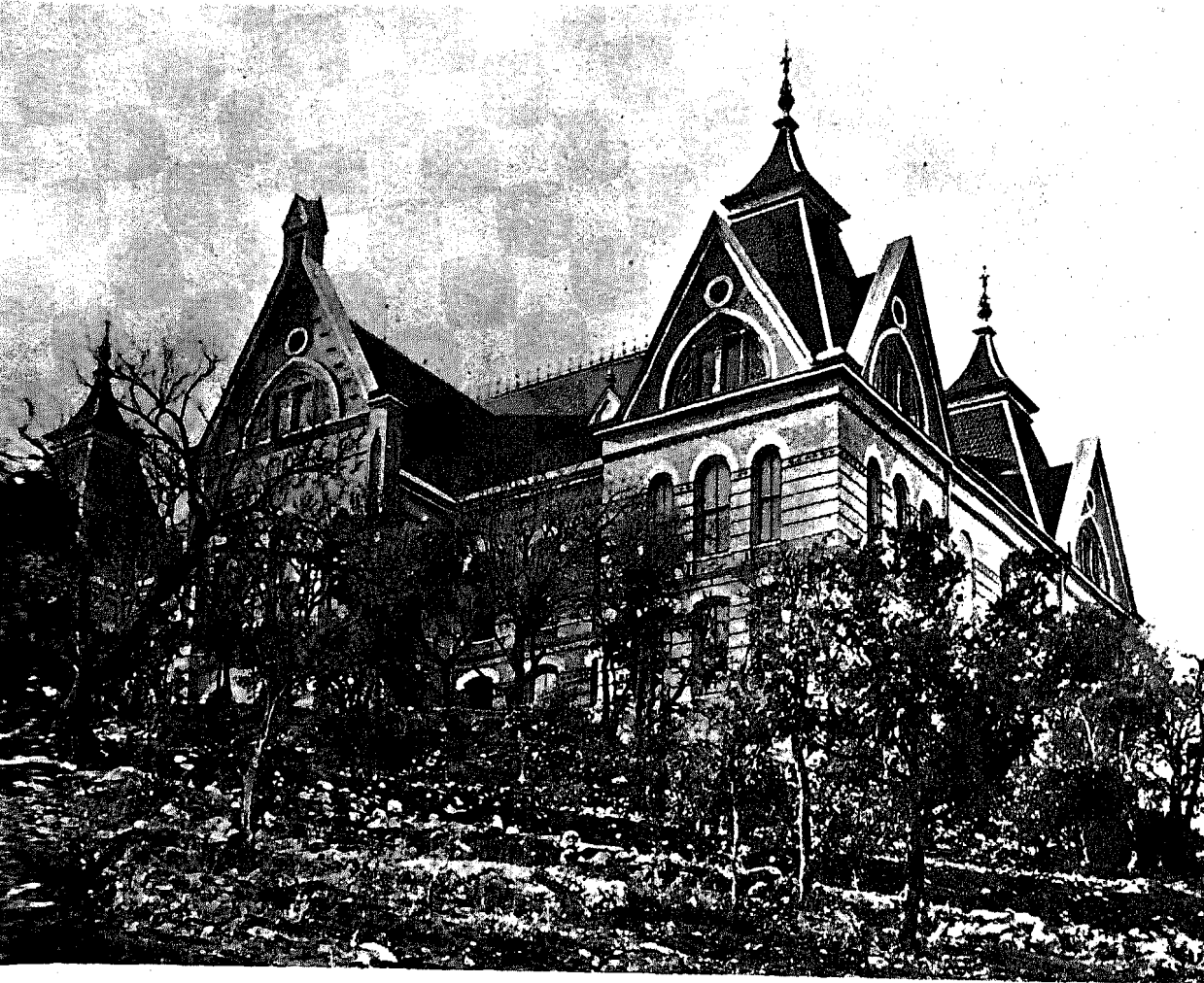


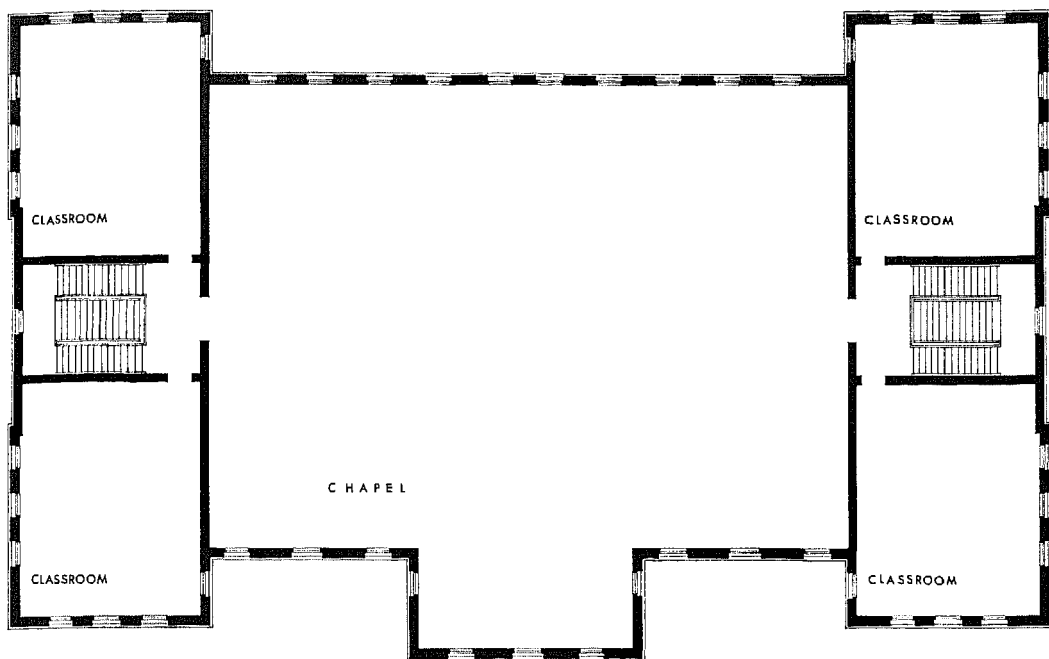
Figure 16

(right) Main Building, Southwest Texas State Normal College, plans. Drawings by author.

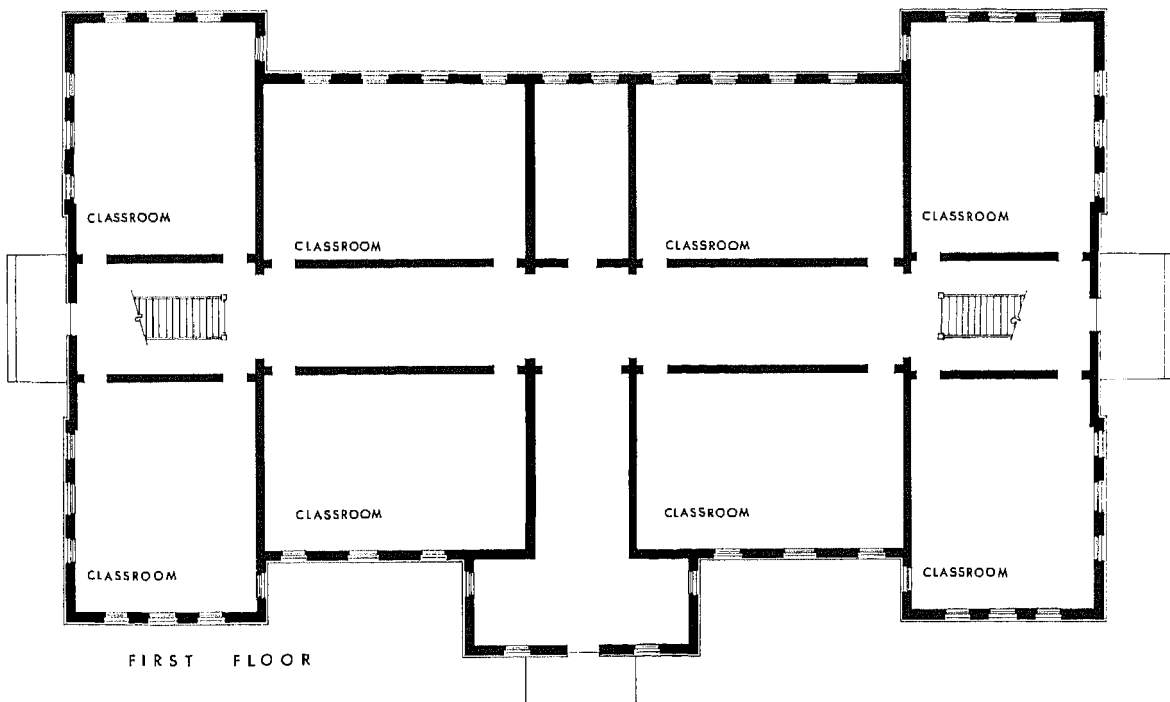
Figure 15

(below) Main Building, Southwest Texas State Normal College, San Marcos (1902-1903)—E. Northcraft, architect. Courtesy University News Service, Southwest Texas State University.





SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

Like the agricultural and mechanical colleges, normal schools were a post-Civil War development in Texas education. The concept of specialized training for teachers had originated in New England in part as a result of the efforts of Horace Mann. As early as 1839 a normal school was opened in Massachusetts and in the 1850s several others were established in other northern states. However, in part because of civil conflict, normal schools were tardy in establishment in the South and not until 1879 was one brought forth in Texas.<sup>37</sup>

Sam Houston Normal Institute was authorized by the state and opened with the assistance of a \$6,000 grant from the George Foster Peabody Fund,<sup>38</sup> a sum set aside to promote education in the southern and southwestern states. The academic program was commenced in the antebellum building which had been vacated by Austin College, purchased by the citizens of Huntsville, and donated to the state, with the provision that the normal college be located there. In 1890 the facilities were expanded through the completion of the new High Victorian Gothic edifice.<sup>39</sup>

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth, most—and in many cases all—of the academic activities of the young colleges were contained within a single building. On the ground floor of Sam Houston Normal and of Southwest Texas State Normal were eight classrooms to which a hall running north and south and one running east and west furnished communication (Fig. 16). On the second floor of the Sam Houston Main were additional classrooms and the large memorial chapel, a space enhanced by beautiful stained-glass windows commemorating memorable events in history (Fig. 17).

Typical spaces in late-nineteenth-century mains, chapels reflected the focus upon morality, religion, and ethics that typified the values of the

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a splendid French Renaissance work which he designed in 1888. See Howard Barnstone, *The Galveston That Was* (Houston, 1966), 155–166.

<sup>37</sup>David Edison Bunting, "A Documentary History of Sam Houston Normal Institute" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1933), 1, 14. Interestingly, as early as 1846 the need for a specialized education for teachers in Texas had been expressed. Hogan, *The Texas Republic*, 154–155.

<sup>38</sup>Gammel (comp.), *Laws of Texas*, VIII, 1482–1483; Bunting, "A Documentary History of Sam Houston Normal Institute," 14. The state was required to match the grant. During the early years the Peabody Fund also paid the salaries of the instructors. The act establishing the school specified that no fewer than two students from each senatorial district and six from the state at large were to receive free tuition, board, and lodging, if appropriations were adequate. In return, graduates were required to teach in the public schools of their district for at least one year following graduation and as much longer than one year as their time of attendance exceeded that year. Bunting, "A Documentary History of Sam Houston Normal Institute," 14, 37.

<sup>39</sup>Mary S. Estill, *Vision Realized: A History of Sam Houston State University* (Huntsville, 1970), 67.



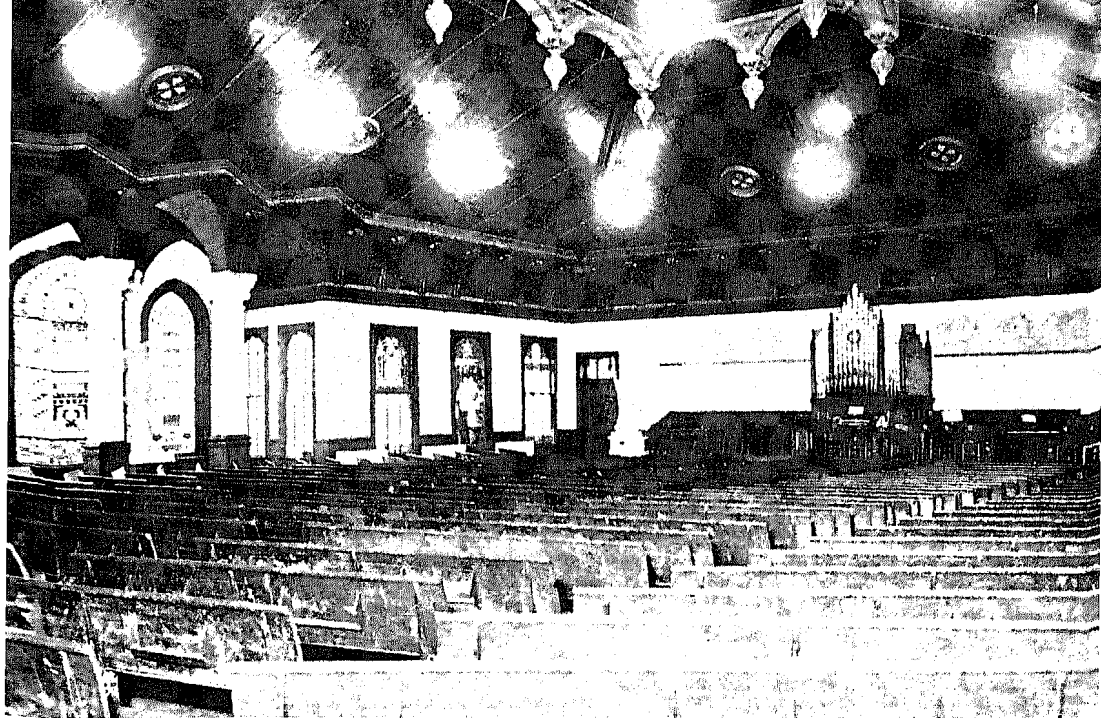


Figure 17

Main Building, Sam Houston Normal Institute, chapel interior. Courtesy Library, Sam Houston State University.

period. The function of the chapel at Texas Normal College and Teacher Training Institute, Denton (1891)—established as a private school<sup>40</sup>—was representative of the manner in which these assembly spaces functioned as an integral part of academic life. Daily chapel attendance was compulsory. To both student body and faculty assembled, the president made announcements and offered instruction. Religious programs, musical performances, and noted speakers were also featured from time to time.

On the exterior, the Main of Texas Normal was designed in the round-arched Romanesque Revival style, a mode popularized by the famous Boston architect, Henry Hobson Richardson (Fig. 18). Containing five classrooms, library, offices, reading room, and the chapel which seated two hundred,<sup>41</sup> it had walls of brick, trimmed with Denton sandstone. A heavy stone arch announced the entrance, above which rose the lofty seventy-five-foot tower containing the bell which regulated academic life. After the school became a state-supported normal college, the central section of the building

<sup>40</sup>The school was operated as a private institution until 1899, when it became state supported. In 1901 it opened as North Texas State Normal College. James L. Rogers, *The Story of North Texas: From Texas Normal College, 1890, to North Texas State University, 1965* (Denton, 1965), 32.

<sup>41</sup>The building was described and illustrated in the *Dallas Morning News*, February 22, 1891. See also Rogers, *The Story of North Texas*, 109.



Figure 18

(left) Normal Building, Texas Normal College and Teacher Training Institute, Denton (1891). This building, which had been financed by city bonds and later donated to the state for North Texas State Normal, was struck by lightning and consumed by flames in 1907. Courtesy North Texas State University Historical Collection.



Figure 19

Main Building, North Texas State Normal College, Denton (1904). The building was razed in 1923 after numerous structural weaknesses appeared in the walls. Courtesy North Texas State University Historical Collection.

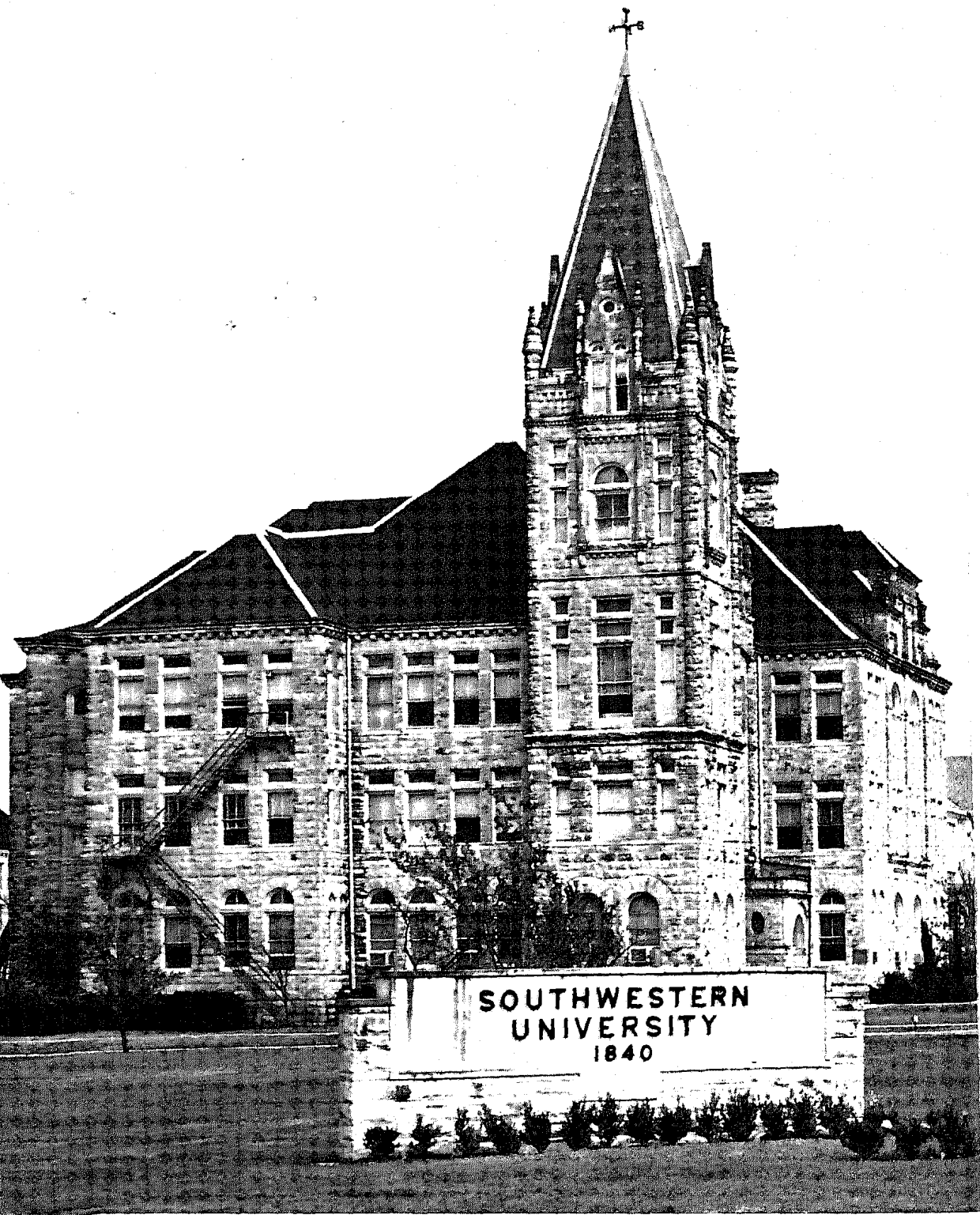


Figure 20

Main Building, Southwestern University, Georgetown (1898–1900). The architect was Robert Stewart Hyer, fourth president of the University at its Georgetown location. Courtesy Alumni Office, Southwestern University.

which replaced this Main shortly after the turn of the century was also in round-arched style, but much simplified in detail (Fig. 19).

Another handsome example of the round-arched mode appeared in the Main (1898-1900) of Southwestern University, Georgetown (Fig. 20). Contributing to the imposing character of the building were walls of coursed rock-faced ashlar—quarried near the town—the material of great Romanesque architecture. Placed in asymmetrical composition, the tower is noteworthy for its pinnacles, decorative billets and belt courses, and steep spire, all characteristic of the Romanesque Revival.

Early in the twentieth century, the style of much Texas college architecture continued to follow national trends, with several buildings displaying the formal Classicism that returned to popularity. As during the previous decades, in both state and private schools the historical styles furnished a mode for the communication of esteem and beauty, rather than the expression of function. At the Texas Girls' Industrial School,<sup>42</sup> Denton, the Main

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<sup>42</sup>For a history of the Texas Girls' Industrial School, see Caroline Barbee Bellamy, "A Study of Significant Changes in the Growth and Development of the Texas State College for Women" (M.A. thesis, Texas Woman's University, 1939).



Figure 21

Main Building, Texas Girls' Industrial School, Denton (1902-1903) —Dodson and Scott, architects. Courtesy Alumnae Association, Texas Women's University.

(1902-1903) was a neo-Classical composition—similar to the Coryell County Courthouse, which had been designed by W. C. Dodson,<sup>43</sup> one of the architects for the girls' industrial school (Fig. 21). At Southern Methodist University, the dignity of higher education was communicated by the Classicism of the Georgian Colonial style in the first red-brick building (circa 1915). The first buildings of Texas Christian University in Fort Worth and those of Wayland Baptist College in Plainview were also formal works with Classical composition and features.

While this universal Classicism was admired by many, regardless of location, others appreciated equally the reflection of the environment in the character of the Main. This point of view was expressed by one campus critic early in the twentieth century:

Situation, surroundings, topography and space will necessarily exert a strong influence upon the selection of the style of architecture of the ideal university; if in or near a city the argument is in favor of buildings of an imposing and monumental character . . . ; while in a rural site they may well be . . . picturesque. . . .<sup>44</sup>

The environmentalist architects, then, attempted to show associations between the character of the college building and its location. To accomplish this objective, historical styles which had been developed in response to particular physiographical conditions or by specific cultures were utilized to relate to the cultural background, climate, or terrain of the various regions of Texas. Interestingly, although the diversity of environments allowed considerable latitude of character when studying the past for inspiration, styles which had evolved in the Mediterranean countries commonly provided the vocabulary for the expression of "regionalism."

Representative of the intent to associate the character of architecture with the region was the Administration Building (1912) of Rice Institute (Fig.

<sup>43</sup>W. C. Dodson ranks among the most important architects in nineteenth-century Texas. Notable works which he designed included courthouses for Denton, Johnson, Coryell, and Kaufman counties.

While Dodson is recognized for the distinguished character he imparted into his designs, he also must be accorded a place in Texas history for his contributions to technology. In 1887 the structural work for his Fannin County Courthouse, Bonham, received statewide attention. To compensate for unstable soil structure, he designed concrete footings which were supported on pilings of bois d'arc, a technique which had been developed by United States military engineers, but which was then virtually unknown in the state. A resident of Waco, he served as president of the Texas State Architects Association in 1889. Houston *Daily Post*, November 18, 1887.

<sup>44</sup>John B. Pine, "Notes on the Building of a University," *American Architect*, CVI (December 2, 1914): 335-336. See also Charles Z. Klauder and Herbert C. Wise, *College Architecture in America and Its Part in the Development of the Campus* (New York, 1929), 17-19.

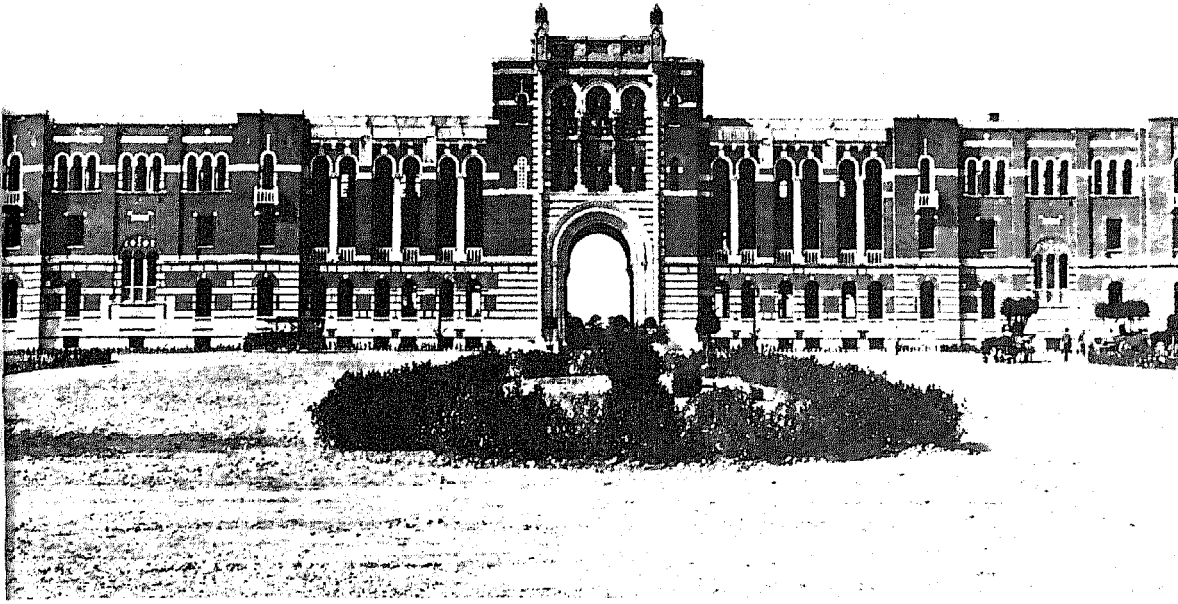


Figure 22

Administration Building, Rice Institute, Houston (1912)—Cram, Goodhue, and Ferguson, architects. From *American Architect*.

22). Designed by the New York firm of Cram,<sup>45</sup> Goodhue, and Ferguson—which was well known for its Gothic-styled Princeton Graduate College—the building was formal in composition and displayed a potpourri of details relating to the Houston climate. According to contemporary report, the composition was

a skillful blending of those motives of design that have been acknowledged by accepted precedents as suited to this southern climate, and have been gathered from Greek-Byzantine work in Greece, Asia Minor and Macedonia. With these there have been incorporated certain elements inspired by the early architecture

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<sup>45</sup>Associated with various partners during his career, Ralph A. Cram—born in 1863—was a distinguished ecclesiastical architect and author. He operated an office in Boston, Massachusetts, until his death in 1942.

In 1903 Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson won a competition to redevelop the campus of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. Included in the project was a large chapel in Gothic Revival style, a mode which was the subject of much of his writing.

Cram was also very active on other college campuses, serving as supervising architect of work at Princeton, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, and Wellesley College. See Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (Los Angeles, 1970), 145–146.



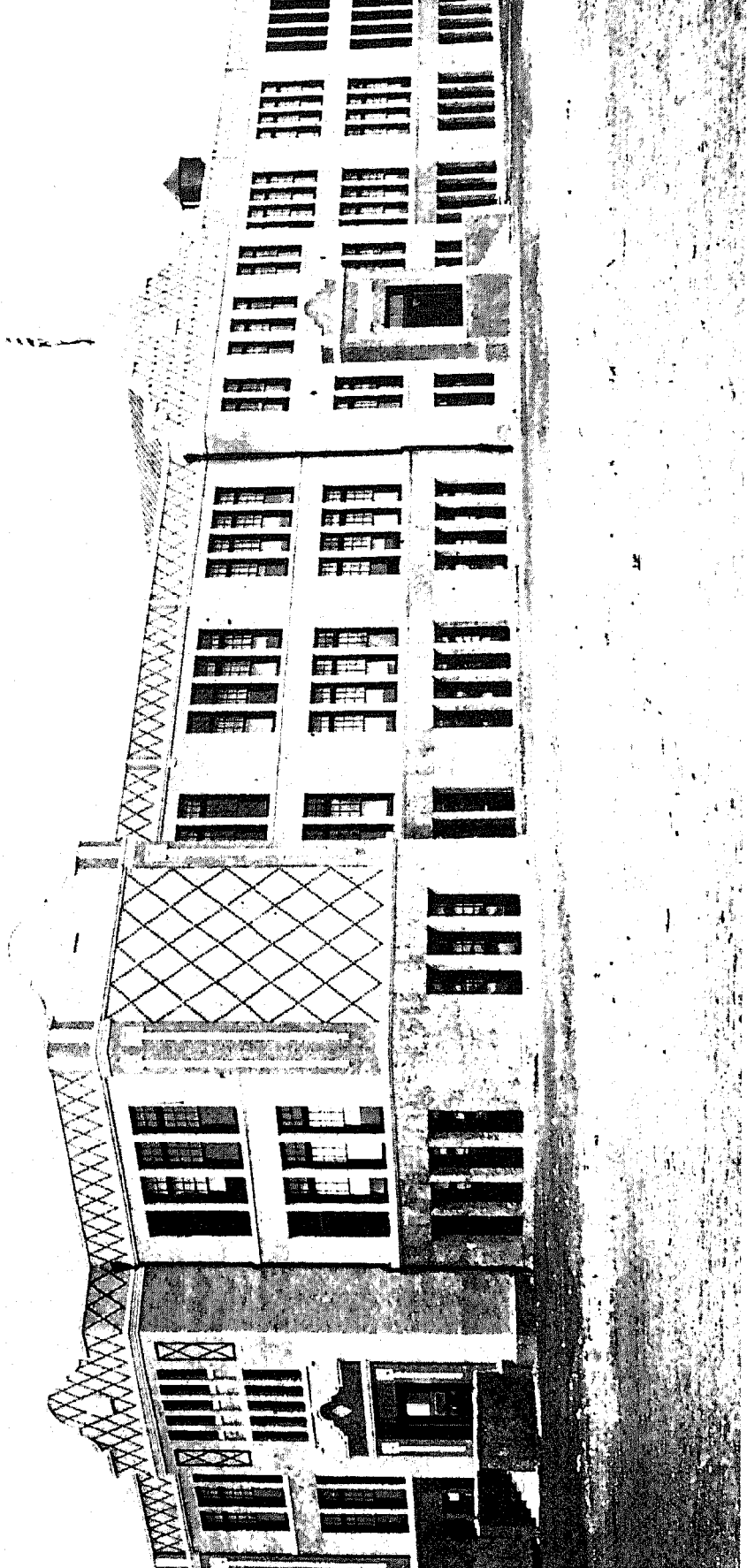


Figure 23

West Texas State Normal College, Canyon (1910). Courtesy West Texas State University.



Figure 24

Texas Technological College, Lubbock (1924)—William Ward Watkin, architect. Courtesy Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University.



of Syria, the north of Africa, Dalmatia and Venice, with suggestions from the Lombard work of northern Italy.<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile in West Texas some early colleges reflected the Latin cultural heritage of the Southwest while others suggested their settings. Those which expressed the history of the region, of course, were Spanish Renaissance in style. The first building of West Texas State Normal College (1909-1910), Canyon, was a large edifice identifying heritage through the opulence of this mode (Fig. 23). A contemporary description said the Spanish character gave "it an air of modest dignity and permanent beauty."<sup>47</sup> Over a decade later, this style also appeared in the first buildings of Texas Technological College (1924), designed by Boston-born William Ward Watkin, former employee of Cram, Goodhue, and Ferguson, and head of the architecture department at Rice Institute from 1912 until 1952 (Fig. 24).

<sup>46</sup>"William M. Rice Institute, Houston, Texas," *American Architect*, CII (December 11, 1912), 207. The Administration Building was also portrayed in the *Brickbuilder*, XXI (1912), 321-324.

<sup>47</sup>West Texas State Normal College, *Prospectus* [1910], n.p. For a description of the building, see J. A. Hill, *More than Brick and Mortar: West Texas State College, 1909-1959* (Amarillo, 1959), 45.

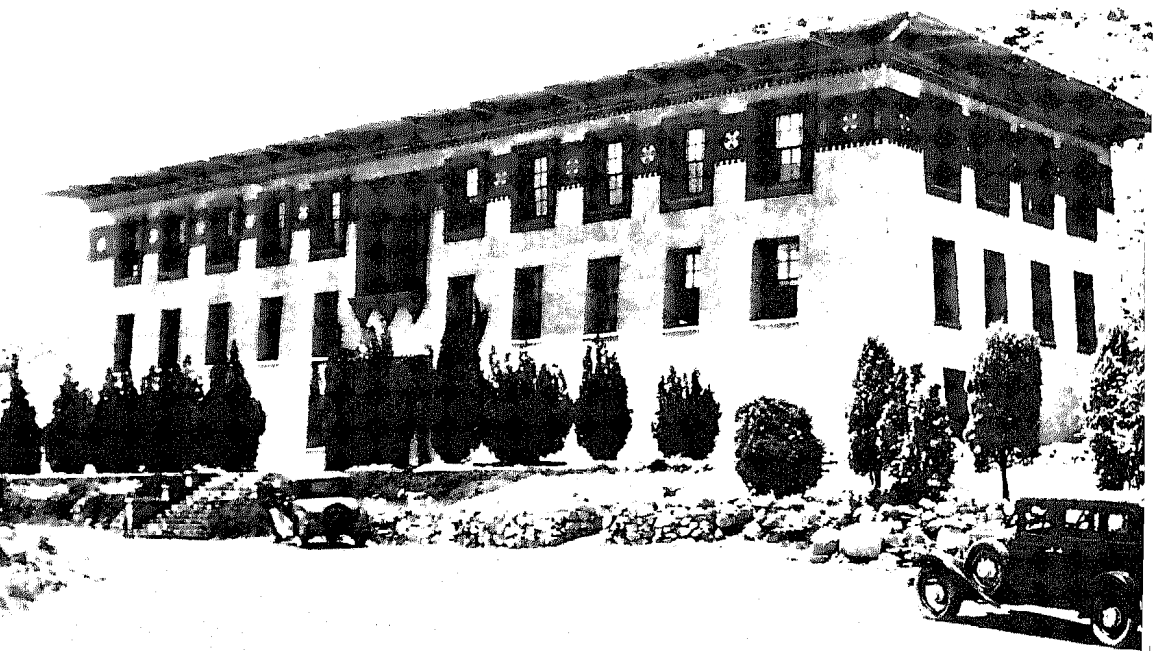


Figure 25

Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy, El Paso (1917)—Henry C. Trost, architect. Courtesy El Paso Public Library.

The style "fitted best into the southwestern climate and into the Spanish background of southwestern history."<sup>48</sup>

The regional association with geography was apparent in the early buildings of the Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy, designed by Henry C. Trost<sup>49</sup> about 1917 (Fig. 25). The craggy backdrop of the Franklin Mountains evidently reminded the architect of the Himalayas, scene of an ancient Tibetan monastery, and prompted the style for the El Paso campus, which was described as Bhutanese.<sup>50</sup>

All of this, then, indicates a wide diversity of stylistic expression in Texas temples of knowledge. Regardless of the variety, however, the early academic buildings expressed the cultural values of their builders; certainly the opulence of decorative detail expresses a strong desire to distinguish those activities which were highly regarded by society from those which were thought to be mundane.

The reactions of various generations to the esthetics of the diverse character of early Texas college and university edifices have been similar to the responses to other building types. Although college mains were esteemed by the era which erected them, they lost prestige with the generations immediately following. During the latter years of the 1800s Greek Revival structures were thought to lack fashionable character and were occasionally modified with additions in a different style—attested by the 1881 Mansardic-roof addition on the Main of Austin College. Then the critics of the early years of the twentieth century denounced the styles of the previous generation but renewed appreciation for the antebellum work. While those who constructed opulent works considered elaborate decoration an expression of importance, succeeding generations believed ornateness to be frivolous, un-

<sup>48</sup>*Bulletin of Texas Technological College*, I (December, 1924), 11. William Ward Watkin was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1886. He received a bachelor of science in architecture degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1908 and then worked for Cram, Goodhue, and Ferguson for two years. He moved to Houston in 1910 to supervise campus construction at Rice Institute. In 1912 he began teaching at Rice and became chairman of the Department of Architecture, a position he held until 1952, the year of his death. He wrote several books on architecture and designed a number of fine buildings in Houston, including the Museum of Fine Arts and the Houston Public Library. For a listing of publications and other buildings, see *Who Was Who in America* (4 vols.; Chicago, 1943-1968), III, 893.

<sup>49</sup>Henry C. Trost was a native of Toledo, Ohio. He began his practice of architecture in Tucson, Arizona, and also designed buildings in Phoenix and Douglas. Subsequently, he formed a partnership with his brother Gustave and established an office in El Paso. The office of Trost & Trost created buildings for many cities in Texas and New Mexico, including a courthouse for El Paso and the Franciscan Hotel in Albuquerque. Henry Trost died in September, 1933, at the age of 73. *American Architect*, CXLIII (November, 1933), 125.

<sup>50</sup>Texas Writers' Project, Works Projects Administration, *Texas: A Guide to the Lone Star State* (New York, 1940), 252.

dignified, even monstrous. This disregard for the late nineteenth century was well demonstrated by the selection of subjects for record in the Historic American Buildings Survey during the depression years of the 1930s: of nearly three hundred buildings in Texas, fewer than 5 percent dated after mid-century, and few of those were in styles other than Classical or indigenous. Today, however, while appreciation of antebellum work continues, admiration and interest in the postbellum years has been renewed. In the 1930s few evidently objected to the razing of the original Main at the University of Texas in Austin, but today, if it were still standing and threatened with destruction, efforts would certainly be made to save it.

It is indeed sad that so many early mains have been lost, leaving only a few photographs and drawings as graphic vestiges of their existence. Hopefully those colleges and universities which still retain their original buildings—now affectionately called “old mains”—will continue to preserve them, as has Southwest Texas State University, which recently rededicated its Main.<sup>51</sup> While adding charm to their campuses, the early temples of knowledge serve as ever-present reminders of the values which past eras held so dear.

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<sup>51</sup>On November 4, 1972, the “Old Main” of Southwest Texas State University was rededicated, following renovation of the interior and restoration of the chapel ceiling.