

HISTORIC VIRGINIA HALL

DESIGN ♦ CONSTRUCTION ♦ RENOVATION

Charles Robinson



Charles Robinson as an architect in Richmond, Virginia, photographed by Bagby. Image: Collection of David B. Robinson, CPA and Helen Robinson Parrish

Charles M. Robinson was born in 1866 in Hamilton, Virginia to James T. Robinson and Elizabeth Crockett. While Robinson received no formal training in architecture, he spent some time working for David. S. Hopkins, a prolific architect based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His training continued in Pittsburgh in the offices of Andrew Peebles. In 1889, Robinson formed his own practice in Altoona, and for the next 17 years would have a variety of partners before moving to Richmond, Virginia in 1906 with his family.

Robinson's first Virginia commission was the Louisa County high school in 1906. However, his break came in 1908 when he won the commission to design the Harrisonburg Normal and Industrial School, later James Madison University. This is where Robinson first employed the "dumb-bell" plan which helped maximize sunlight and airflow within the buildings. This same plan was used here at Mary Washington in the designs of Willard (1909) and Virginia (1914) Halls, just two of the seven structures on campus of which Robinson and his firm would have a hand in designing between 1909 and 1931. Seacobeck Hall (1931) was one of the last structures designed by Robinson's firm as in 1932 he passed away, leaving the practice to his understudy J. Binford Walford. Today the University of Mary Washington retains one of the most intact samplings of Robinson-designed collegiate buildings.



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