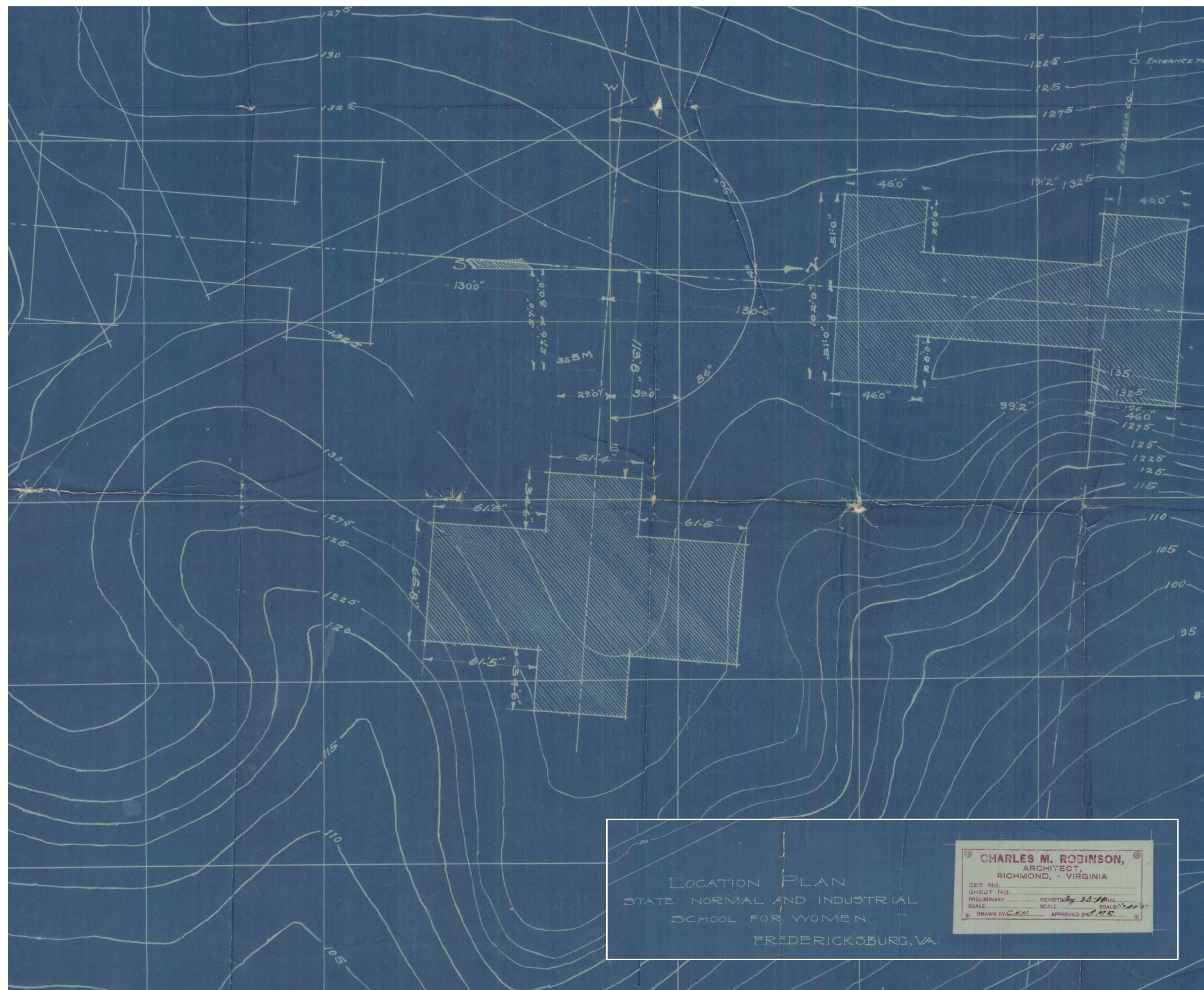


HISTORIC VIRGINIA HALL

DESIGN ♦ CONSTRUCTION ♦ RENOVATION

Campus Plan and Balustrade



Site plan blue print, 1910, Charles Robinson. Image: UMW Special Collections

The blueprint shown here illustrates architect Charles M. Robinson’s plan for the campus of the State Normal and Industrial School for Women (now UMW) in 1910. Set on a hill above downtown Fredericksburg, each of the three original buildings (Monroe, Willard, and Virginia Hall) face an inner grassy courtyard called “the lawn”, now known as Palmieri Plaza. This practical arrangement created short paths between the dormitories and classrooms. This inward focus also created a feeling of privacy, where the women on campus could be sheltered from distractions, reflecting early 20th century ideas about higher education.

In an aerial photograph from the 1940s, the H-shaped or “dumb-bell” plans of both Willard and Virginia Hall are clear. This formal master plan carefully aligned the dormitories along a north-south axis and provided a healthy living environment for students. Each student room received natural sunlight to supplement electric lights and took advantage of prevailing winds to maximize natural ventilation, key before air conditioning.

Using classical design elements familiar around Virginia, sometimes called “Jeffersonian Collegiate”, the red brick walls contrast the light stone and concrete. Though each building has a unique columned entrance portico facing the lawn, they all have low-sloped hipped roofs shielded from view by a balustrade of pressed metal, a detail that unifies the three buildings around the lawn.



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