

HISTORY

Albemarle academy,” probably the one that Jefferson had prepared in 1814. According to the minutes of the meeting, this plan provided for “erecting a distinct Pavilion or building for each separate professorship, and for arranging these around a square, each pavilion containing a schoolroom & two apartments for the accommodation of the Professor with other reasonable conveniences.”⁷ This drawing showed three pavilions connected by dormitories along both the east and west sides of the Lawn and three more equally sized pavilions, also flanked by dormitories, across the north end.

At the same May meeting the Visitors also agreed that “one of those pavilions shall now be erected,” and they directed the proctor “so soon as the funds are at his command to agree with proper workmen for the building of one, of stone or brick below ground, & of brick above, of substantial work, of regular architecture, well executed, and to be completed if possible during the ensuing summer & winter.” The Visitors were also concerned with the positioning of this first building and the grading of the site: they directed that the pavilion be constructed so that its floor would be “in such degree of elevation from the ground as may correspond with the regular inclined plane to which it may admit of being reduced hereafter.” The proctor was also authorized, funds permitting, to build up to ten dormitories adjoining each side of the pavilion; the dormitories were to be constructed “of brick, & of regular architecture according to the same plan proposed.”⁸ This first pavilion would be known as Pavilion VII, and eventually Pavilion IX would be its neighbor to the south.

SOLICITING ARCHITECTURAL EXPERTISE FOR THE PAVILIONS

Meanwhile, just four days after the May meeting of the Board of Visitors, Jefferson wrote to William Thornton, the first architect of the U.S. Capitol, soliciting his advice about the design for the college. Jefferson first explained his overall concept and some details about the pavilions:

We are commencing here the establishment of a college, and instead of building a magnificent house which would exhaust all of our funds, we propose to lay off a square of about 7. or 800. feet on the outside of which we shall arrange separate pavilions, one for each professor and his scholars. each pavilion will have a schoolroom below, and 2 rooms for the Professor above and between pavilion and pavilion a range of dormitories for the boys, one story high, giving to each a room 10. f. wide & 14. f. deep. the pavilions about 36. wide in front and 24. f. in depth.

the whole of the pavilions and dormitories to be united by a colonnade in front of the height of the lower story of the pavilions, under which they may go dry from school to school. the colonnade will be of square brick pilasters (at first) with a Tuscan entablature.