

HISTORY

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE PAVILIONS

Meanwhile, on July 18, 1817, Jefferson had begun the work of surveying the site, with a theodolite fixed at “the center of the Northern square on the point destined for some principal building,” the location where the Rotunda would later be erected. The land was divided into smaller rectangles, with each being “level within itself, with a pavilion at each end,” flanked by ten dormitories.²⁴ The next day he wrote John Hartwell Cocke, another member of the Board of Visitors, that “our squares are laid off, the brick yard begun, and the levelling will be begun in the course of the week.”²⁵ When the Board of Visitors met ten days later, they approved the “plan of the first Pavilion to be erected,”²⁶ and its cornerstone was laid in October. When the Visitors met that fall, they agreed that “the pavilions be correct in their architecture and execution, and that where the family of a Professor requires it, 2 additional rooms shall be added for their accommodation.”²⁷

In 1818, in a report written by Jefferson, the Rockfish Gap Commission recommended that Central College become the site of the University of Virginia, and this proposal was adopted by the Virginia senate early the next year. The commission’s report also noted that the pavilions should have in addition to the lecture room “two to four apartments for the accommodation of a professor and his family.”²⁸ Jefferson wrote in November 1818 that Pavilions III and VII were “nearly ready and as many will be erected the next summer as workmen can be procured to execute,” adding that “our buildings altho’ small, shall be models of chaste architecture.”²⁹

Immediately after the university bill was passed, Jefferson pressed his case for additional state funding so that additional construction could move forward during the approaching building season. He appealed to state Senator and Visitor Joseph Carrington Cabell in January 1819 to push for more state money; given the funds so far allocated, Jefferson told Cabell, “we shall be able to this present year to add but two pavilions and their dormitories to the two already in a course of execution, so as to provide but for 4. professorships; and hereafter we can add but one a year.”³⁰

The Visitors of Central College met a month later, on February 26, 1819, to prepare to turn over their responsibilities to their successors, the Board of Visitors of the University of Virginia. The Visitors of the college believed that it was important to push forward with construction in the months before the Visitors of the university held their first meeting; otherwise construction would be delayed. The Visitors of the college formally agreed in February that “it is expedient that all the funds of the University, applicable to the services of the present year, which shall remain after meeting all the other current & necessary purposes, shall be applied to the providing additional buildings for the accommodation of the