NPS Form 10-900
(3-82)

VLR Listed: 10/14/1986
NRHP Listed: 1/29/1987

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Exp. 10-31-84

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received JAN 2 1987
date entered JAN 29 1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic MAIN BUILDING (DHL File No. 112-57)

and/or common SONNER HALL (preferred)

2. Location

street & number 3rd Street N/A not for publication

city, town Front Royal N/A vicinity of

state Virginia code 51 county Warren code 187

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	X occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
X building(s)	X private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	X educational	___ private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	X yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
	N/A	___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Col. Trevor D. Turner

street & number Randolph-Macon Academy

city, town Front Royal N/A vicinity of state Virginia 22630

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Warren County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Front Royal state Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Survey (File No. 112-8 & No. 112-57) has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes X no

date 1985, 1986 ___ federal X state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Division of Historic Landmarks, 221 Governor Street

city, town Richmond state Virginia 23219

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	X unaltered	X original site
X good	___ ruins	___ altered	___ moved date N/A
___ fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Summary Description

Sonner Hall, historically known as "Main Building" at Randolph-Macon Academy, is situated on a small hill off 3rd Street in Front Royal. The imposing, 3½-story brick edifice was erected in 1927 after the plans of John P. Pettyjohn of Lynchburg. The building still functions as the principal structure of the school, serving as a multipurpose facility for faculty and student housing, classrooms, and administration. The nomination consists of one contributing building.

Architectural Analysis

Sonner Hall was built in 1927 after the plans of John P. Pettyjohn of Lynchburg. The structure replaced an earlier building of 1892 that was destroyed by fire. The present structure is reputed to have been built on the stone foundations of the 1892 building and incorporates a swimming pool from the original building. In plan, Sonner Hall is "U"-shaped and consists of a central passage with radiating lateral passages.

The main elevation of Sonner Hall faces east. The 3½-story facade is executed in stretcher-bond brick and is nineteen bays in length and contains the main entrance. The principal entrance occupies the central bay of the building and consists of paneled double doors topped by a semi-circular fanlight. The first-story entrance is surrounded by rusticated brickwork and flanked by 6/6 hung-sash windows. A tetrastyle pedimented portico sits on the projecting one-bay entrance area. The portico is distinguished by Greek Ionic columns and a full entablature with "Randolph-Macon Academy" in the frieze. The portico's tympanum is embellished with ornamental decoration and contains a circular window. The two-story portico shelters three bays of 6/6 hung-sash windows. The central second-floor window is set within an arched niche and has rich ornamentation. The center entrance pavilion is flanked on each side of the first story by four bays of triple-grouped windows with 9/9 hung sash. The second and third stories have 6/6 hung-sash windows. The roof line is broken by gabled dormers with 6/6 hung-sash windows. A slate-covered gambrel roof shelters the main section. The central portion has a ribbed dome with a balustrade and lantern.

The rear elevation is relatively plain when compared to the facade. It has a segmental arched doorway with a fanlight and sidelights and is now sheltered by a contemporary glass enclosure. Fenestration of the rear elevation consists of hung-sash windows in a variety of sizes. The second-and third-story windows of the northernmost bay have been blocked. The side elevations contain 6/6 and 9/9 hung-sash windows and double-door entrances within segmental arch openings.

Projecting to the west of the main block are two parallel three-story wings. The wings are separated by an open courtyard. Fifteen bays in length, the wings contain 9/9 and 6/6 hung-sash windows. Side entrances are provided on the north and south elevations. The rear wall of the north wing has an exterior chimney while the south wing's rear wall has a projecting stair tower.

The interior of Sonner Hall is relatively plain. The main entrance leads to a hall that is distinguished by pilasters topped by a cornice. The main stair runs from the entrance hall to the third floor. A guard room and false doorway flank the main stair on the first floor. Located to the north of the entrance hall is the visitor's lounge. It

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis

is divided into two spaces by a double archway. The remaining rooms along the first-floor passage are classrooms and administrative offices. The library is located on the first floor of the north wing while the pool is found in the south wing. The pool is all that survived after a fire destroyed the 1892 building. The pool area has since been refurbished. The dining room is situated in the basement. It has square posts that support a beamed ceiling. The posts and beams were originally stained and are now painted.

Dormitory rooms are located on the upper floors, off the main corridors. Faculty apartments are found off the north ends of the corridors.

RCC

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	X architecture	X education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	
___ 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
X 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates 1927 **Builder/Architect** J. P. Pettyjohn

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Statement of Significance

Randolph-Macon Academy's Sonner Hall, with its large dome and distinguished entrance portico, is a visually prominent landmark overlooking the town of Front Royal and that town's best preserved building in the Colonial Revival style. Erected in 1927 by Lynchburg builder J. P. Pettyjohn after a fire destroyed the academy's original main building on the same site, Sonner Hall remains the heart of the last surviving preparatory school of the former Randolph-Macon System of academies and colleges. The system was established in 1890 as an auxiliary to Randolph-Macon College and at one time embraced three preparatory schools and two colleges. In the tradition of several other prominent educational institutions in the Valley of Virginia, the school has offered a regular course of military instruction since 1917. It is the only military preparatory boarding school in the nation operating under the auspices of the United Methodist Church.

Historical Background

In 1820 the General Conference of the Methodist Church meeting in Baltimore recommended to the various conferences that they establish "literary institutions." In 1830 the Virginia General Assembly granted a charter to the Virginia Conference which led to the establishment of Randolph-Macon College, today the oldest Methodist-related college in the United States.

In 1880 the President of Randolph-Macon College, W. W. Bennett, noted to the college board, "If it could be established and properly conducted, a good preparatory school would be a valuable auxiliary to this institution."[1]

Virginia's public school system, which had not been established until Reconstruction, so far had proved unable to produce students who were adequately prepared to enter Bennett's curriculum at Randolph-Macon.[2]

Bennett's successor, President William W. Smith, continued to urge the creation of a preparatory school. On January 3, 1889, the board agreed and in 1890 the original charter was amended to permit the establishment of related institutions of learning.[3]

The College's first preparatory school was established in Bedford, Virginia and its building dedicated on July 4, 1890. The immediate success of the academy resulted in considerable interest in the founding of a similar institution elsewhere in Virginia. The Winchester District Conference, four months after the dedication of Bedford proposed the establishment of an academy west of the Blue Ridge. Offers from Middleburg, Winchester, and Front Royal led to the consideration of several sites. The most appealing one came from Front Royal, offered through the good offices of the Front Royal and Riverton Improvement Company: "five acres of land and one-fourth of the construction cost, provided the conference spend not less than twenty thousand dollars and not more than one hundred thousand dollars on the academy."[4]

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Randolph-Macon Academy." Archives File Nos. 112-8, 112-57. Division of Historic Landmarks, Richmond, VA

Scanlon, James Edward. Randolph-Macon College: A Southern History. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approx. 1½ acres

Quadrangle name Front Royal, VA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	17	742870	4311750	B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

(See Continuation Sheet #5)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Division of Historic Landmarks

organization Division of Historic Landmarks Staff date September, 1986

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone 804/786-3143

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national X state ___ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature H. Bryan Mitchell

title H. Bryan Mitchell, Director
Division of Historic Landmarks date December 31, 1986

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register date 1-29-87

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Historical Background

By June, 1891, William W. Smith reported to his board that sponsors had raised $59,000 in cash and notes for the academy at Front Royal with promises of an additional $7,000 in land and a site of fifteen acres. The whole was valued at $90,000, the trustees pledging $10,000. William Poindexter, a Washington, D. C. architect, was hired to design the new school building. Poindexter had fashioned the academy building at Bedford and was thus a logical choice for Front Royal. By June, 1892 almost $50,000 had been paid out for the new building and $29,000 was owed. The school officially opened in September, 1892.

A ca. 1894 catalogue stated the mission of the school: "In establishing the academy, the board, choosing for it the field between the preparatory home school and the real college course, purposes to prepare youths for college or university, under discipline appropriate to their years and maturity and under the most wholesome moral influences."[5] Preparing young men for college, particularly Randolph-Macon College, the school form the outset also offered business courses for those who did not intend to go to college.

By 1897 the Randolph-Macon System embraced five institutions: the original college at Ashland; a women's college at Lynchburg; a female institute at Danville; and male preparatory academies at Bedford and Front Royal. It was governed by subcommittees of the local members of the board with William Waugh Smith as its first and only chancellor (1897-1912).

In 1917 the Front Royal school became a military academy. Professor C. L. Melton in an article in the Academy catalogue entitled "Military Instruction at Front Royal" made the following observation: "The world-involving war now in progress has drawn our nation into the contest. Congress will pass a bill for universal military training, and we must be able to guide and protect the interests of those students who are committed to our care."[6]

Disaster struck the school in 1927. On the night of January 10th, a fire of undetermined origin completely destroyed the main building which had been in service since the school's founding. Unfortunately, the board had only limited insurance of only $100,000 with the replacement cost calculated at $250,000. Undaunted, the board decided to rebuild.

In June, 1927, the J. P. Pettyjohn Company was hired to build the new structure at a cost of $254,000. Pettyjohn, a Lynchburg builder, had constructed the Main Hall of Randolph-Macon Women's College and assisted William Smith in raising funds for its endowment. Pettyjohn was also a contributor to the college in Ashland, thereby making his company a prime candidate for the reconstruction of the academy.

The loss of the familiar landmark led the citizens of Front Royal to rally to the school's support. They promised to raise $25,000 to reopen the academy. The board authorized the sale of one hundred $1,000 bonds with the mortgage held by the Lynchburg Trust and Savings Bank.

(See Continuation Sheet # 3)

8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Historical Background

The Main Academy Building, renamed Sonner Hall in the late 1970s, is suitable testimony to the trustees' ambition to keep the school in operation. In plan, the structure followed Poindexter's original scheme of a main hall concept found also in his buildings at Lynchburg and Bedford. Stylistically and functionally Sonner Hall is more up-to-date, however, the older plan being covered in Colonial Revival dress with careful attention given to modern fireproofing throughout the design. The building's crowning feature is its dome which is visible for miles due to the school's commanding site.

The depression fell especially hard on Randolph-Macon Academy. Enrollment declined and debts mounted. In 1932 the board came close to closing the school but ultimately decided to keep it open. Ironically, the decision to preserve the school came from its debt. If the academy was closed, the debt of $195,000 would come due taking a heavy toll on other schools within the Randolph-Macon System. To make matters worse the citizens of Front Royal had, according to the board's records, "repudiated their obligation (of 1927) and much vexatious litigation has followed in the attempt to collect."[7] Ultimately, the school recovered some of its pledges and the debt was reduced.

In 1953, Randolph-Macon Academy witnessed the end of the Randolph-Macon System, as each school within the system became independent. Since that time the school has stood largely on its own resources, receiving additional financial support from the Virginia (Methodist) Conference.

Sonner Hall continues to function as the principal building of the academy, which remains the only military preparatory boarding school in the nation operating under the auspices of the United Methodist Church.

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(See Continuation Sheet #4)

SIGNIFICANCE -- Historical Background

Notes:

1. James Edward Scanlon, Randolph-Macon College: A Southern History (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), p. 200.
Scanlon's book is the chief source from which the information in the Historical Background section was compiled.

2. Ibid., p. 199.

3. Ibid., p. 201.

4. Ibid., p. 203.

5. "Randolph-Macon Academy," catalogue, nd., VHLD archives.

6. C. L. Melton, "Military Instruction at Front Royal," nd., VHLD archives.

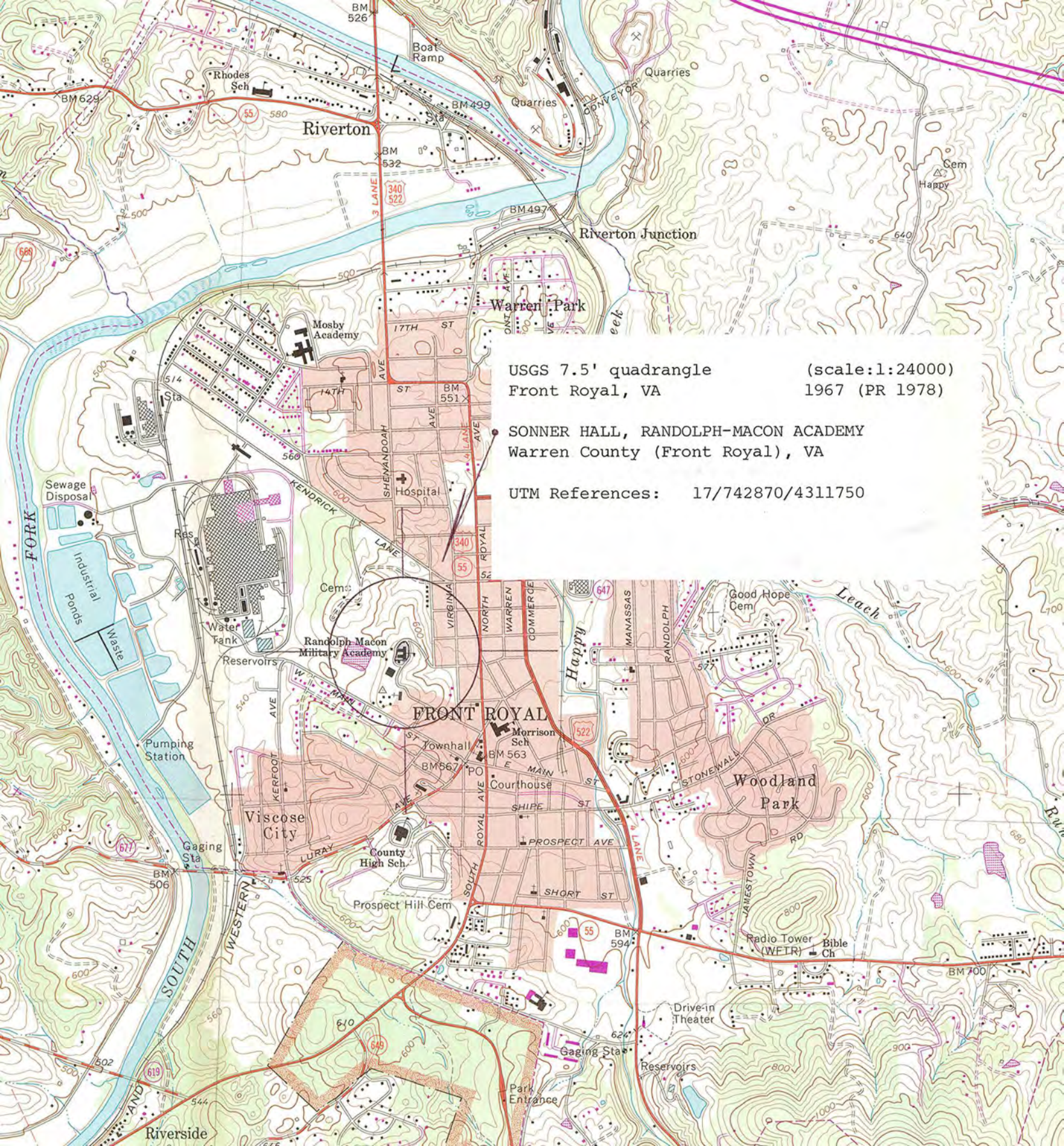
7. Scanlon, p. 340.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA -- Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point at the SW corner of the intersection of 1st and 3rd streets; thence following E side of 3rd Street approx. 100' SW; thence following said side of said street approx. 100' SSW; thence continuing along E side of 3rd Street approx. 250' S; thence approx. 200' E to a point on W side of 1st Street; thence following W side of 1st Street approx. 100' NE; thence continuing along W side of 3rd Street approx. 150' N; thence following said side of said street approx. 100' NNW to point of origin.

Justification

The bounds have been drawn to include only Sonner Hall, the main building on the Randolph-Macon Academy campus and a small amount of land immediately surrounding the building.


USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)
Front Royal, VA 1967 (PR 1978)
SONNER HALL, RANDOLPH-MACON ACADEMY
Warren County (Front Royal), VA
UTM References: 17/742870/4311750
Riverton
Riverton Junction
Warren Park
Mosby Academy
Hospital
Sewage Disposal
Industrial Ponds
Waste
Water Tank
Reservoirs
Randolph Macon Military Academy
FRONT ROYAL
Morrison Sch
Townhall
Courthouse
Pumping Station
Viscose City
County High Sch
Prospect Hill Cem
Woodland Park
Good Hope Cem
Radio Tower (WFTR)
Bible Ch
Drive-in Theater
Gaging Sta
Park Entrance
Riverside
Happy
Leach
SOUTH FORK
Boat Ramp
Rhodes Sch
Quarries
Cem
Happy
17TH ST
14TH ST
SHENANDOAH AVE
KENDRICK LANE
VIRGINIA AVE
NORTH ROYAL
WARREN
COMMERCE
MANASSAS
RANDOLPH
W MAIN ST
E MAIN ST
SHIPE ST
PROSPECT AVE
SHORT ST
STONEWALL DR
JAMESTOWN RD
KERFOOT AVE
LURAY AVE
SOUTH ROYAL AVE
WESTERN
3 LANE
4 LANE
CONVEYOR
BM 526
BM 629
BM 499
BM 532
BM 497
BM 551
BM 567
BM 563
BM 506
BM 594
BM 700

State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this _X_ additional documentation ___ move ___ removal
___ name change (additional documentation) ___ other

meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

Julie V. Langan 7-21-2020

Signature of Certifying Official/Title: Date of Action

National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

__ additional documentation accepted

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Sonner Hall, located in the Town of Front Royal in Warren County, Virginia, was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register in 1986 and the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. The property was listed under Criterion A in the area of Education and Criterion C in the area of Architecture with a broadly defined period of significance of 1900-_. A significant date of 1927 was identified, coinciding with completion of construction of the building.

In the original nomination, the architect is identified as John P. Pettyjohn of Lynchburg, Virginia. Research conducted by Carolyn Gills Frazier, author of *Stanhope, Chronologically: The Work of Stanhope Spencer Johnson, AIA, 1881-1973* (privately published, 2018), has identified Stanhope S. Johnson as the architect. For the project, Frazier consulted the Lynchburg Architectural Archive at Jones Memorial Library in Lynchburg, where most of Johnson's plans and papers are held.

Among the Lynchburg Architectural Archive holdings, Frazier identified elevation and floor plan drawings by Stanhope Johnson for Sonner Hall (Figures 1-2). These are cataloged under the call number LAA 2433. Sonner Hall also is featured in promotional books published by the architectural firm Johnson & Brannan in 1928 and 1931 (Figure 3)

Pettyjohn is known to have built numerous Johnson-designed buildings, especially institutional buildings, but was not himself an architect.

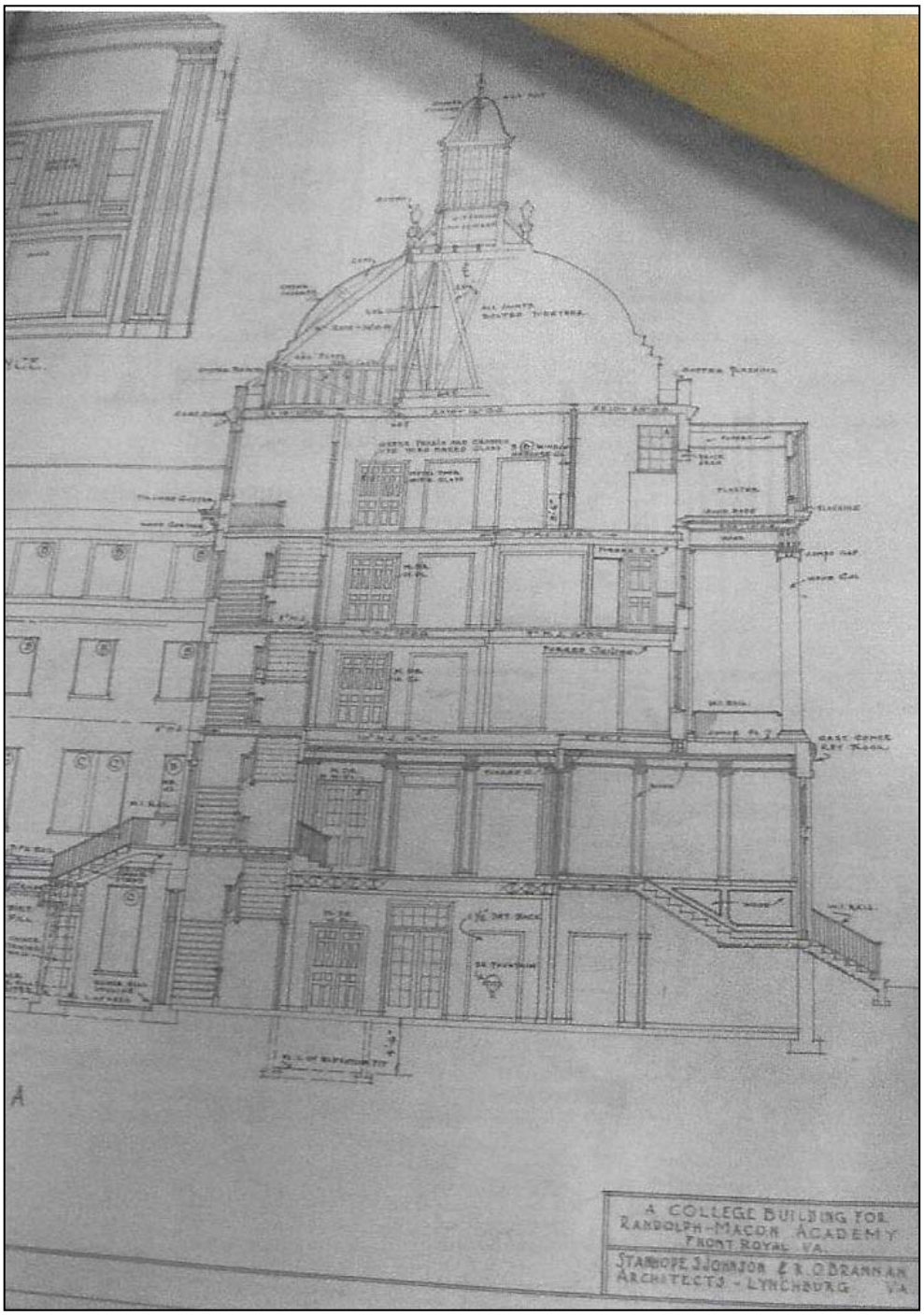


Figure 1. Architectural drawing by Stanhope Johnson of Elevation for Sonner Hall (original drawing held at the Lynchburg Architectural Archive, Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, Virginia)

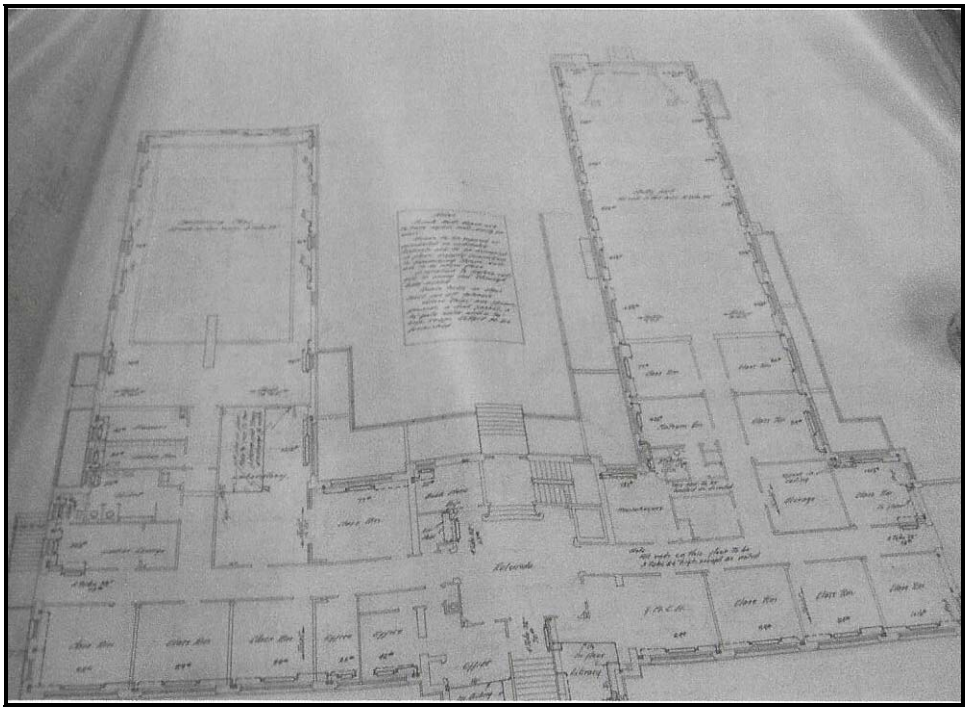


Figure 2. Architectural drawing by Stanhope Johnson of Floor Plan for Sonner Hall (original drawing held at the Lynchburg Architectural Archive, Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, Virginia)

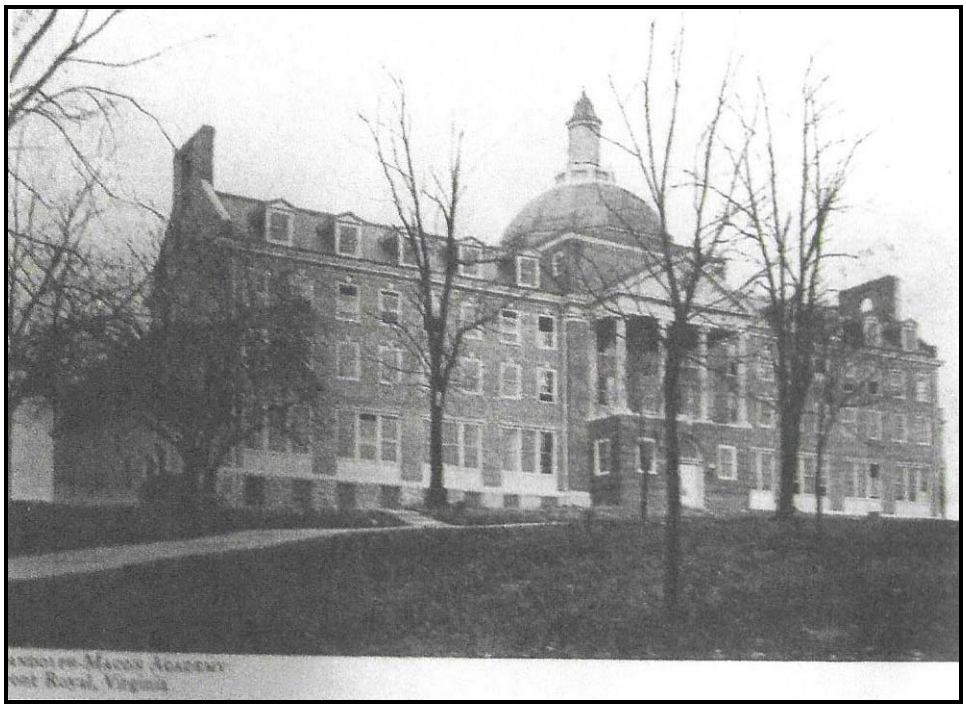


Figure 3. 1928 Photograph of Sonner Hall as published in promotional book by Johnson & Brannan (original publication held at the Lynchburg Architectural Archive, Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, Virginia)