

A Certain Style of "Quaker Lady" Dress

B R Y N M A W R

Bryn Mawr had a great advantage. Opening in 1885, a decade after Smith, it drew on the Northampton college's experience and advice. Yet the narrow confines of Amherst did not limit its conception. Coming as it did after the founding of the Annex and shaped by a woman familiar with Cornell, Johns Hopkins, and German universities, Bryn Mawr offered its students a unique blend of university and women's college.

In 1877, when Joseph Wright Taylor decided to found a Quaker college for women, he had a ready group of advisors.¹ He had pondered questions regarding the education of young men since 1854, when he joined the Board of Managers of Haverford College, founded by orthodox Quakers in 1833. Born in 1810, and trained as a doctor, Taylor prospered in his brother's tanning business in Cincinnati. A bachelor, he retired in 1851 and moved with his sister to Burlington, New Jersey, where members of his family had settled. His fortune grew with wise investments. Taylor came to know his colleagues on the Haverford board: the Baltimore banker Francis T. King and James Carey Thomas, King's physician cousin. In 1876, when Johns Hopkins, a Baltimore Quaker, left \$3.5 million to found a university and an equal sum for an affiliated hospital, King and Thomas became members of his board of trustees.

In 1877, these men called a conference in Baltimore to discuss Quaker education, and Taylor attended. He asked himself an important question: Who educated Quaker women? Swarthmore College outside Philadelphia was co-educational from its beginning in 1864, but, founded by the Hicksite Quakers, it was no place for conservative Friends. A bright daughter, such as Martha Carey Thomas, one of James Carey Thomas' many children, had to venture to Cornell, a thoroughly secular university linked to the faith only by the religion of its founder, for the higher education she wanted. Joseph Taylor

talked this over with Francis King and decided to found a Quaker college for women. Taylor consulted with President Thomas Chase of Haverford and with President Daniel Coit Gilman of Johns Hopkins. On one of his trips to Baltimore to see Gilman, he visited with James Thomas and talked with his Cornell daughter. She discussed her pessimistic fear that a coeducational institution would never include women on the faculty, despite their importance to women students.² In 1877, Taylor made up his will, which set the outline of his future college. He named a board of trustees to gather after his death, designating Francis King president. Taylor appointed James Thomas and several of his relatives to the board: in addition to King, his cousin, there was Thomas' wife's brother, James Whitall, and another cousin, David Scull, Jr.

As president of the Johns Hopkins Hospital board, as well as a Hopkins and Haverford trustee, King naturally became Taylor's closest advisor. In addition King had a talented daughter just returned to Baltimore from the Howland Institute, a Quaker boarding school, where she had roomed with her cousin and closest friend, Martha Carey Thomas. Taylor saw his college as a female Haverford placed near his New Jersey estate. Aware of Girton at Oxford, King initially suggested that Taylor's college adjoin Haverford, repeating to Taylor the suggestion of an Oxford graduate that the two "use the same observatory, lectures, laboratory, gas, and water—but have separate courses of study, charter, endowment, and management . . . [and] divide the time of certain professors who can repeat the same lessons." Such a college had the advantage of "a large city" and "kindred influences," unlike Vassar "which in its isolated situation . . . will never rise to a high position."³ King later questioned the wisdom of such close association between Haverford and its female copy and urged a spot five miles away. Another advisor, later to play a very important part in the life of the college, James E. Rhoads, saw the value of propinquity to Philadelphia "where the benefit of professors and literary and scientific aids could be had, also some social influences." He wanted some separation from Haverford, where he, too, was a trustee. Rhoads did not want Taylor's college to be an annex, but fully separate, allowing "more untrammelled and vigorous growth of both Institutions."⁴

King helped Taylor select a site, a thirty-two-acre parcel in Bryn Mawr adjacent to the Pennsylvania Railroad and five miles from Haverford. King also recommended Addison Hutton, a Quaker architect who had just designed Barclay Hall at Haverford, a source of great pride to its trustees. King did not, however, approve of Hutton's Bryn Mawr residences in "very fancy style."⁵ In June 1879, in a letter to Hutton, King expressed the trustees' wishes for college buildings, hoping to tone down any excesses:

There is a certain style of "Quaker lady" dress, which I often see in Phila, which tells the whole story—she has her satin bonnet—her silk dress—her kid gloves—

her perfect slippers—but they are made to harmonize with the expression of her face which is both intellectual and holy—so may "Taylor College" look down from its beautiful site upon the passing world and we hear them say "just right."⁶

President Gilman suggested to Taylor that he travel north to visit Mount Holyoke, Smith, and Wellesley. Taylor made two such trips, accompanied on the first occasion by King and James Thomas, and on the second by King and Hutton. On the later trip, the three men "conferred very fully with President Seelye of Smith upon plans for building."⁷ King was convinced that Smith had the best plan. Answering Taylor's query "as to merits of Cottages or a congregated building," King wrote, "I think Barclay hall is adapted to boys—but Cottages for girls—as they have less nervous strain."⁸ After his return Taylor wrote to Seelye for advice on academic and domestic organization. Seelye replied in a long, detailed letter of November 27, 1878, of great interest both because of its summary of Seelye's intentions for Smith and because of its influence on the future Bryn Mawr.⁹

Seelye emphasized the importance of adequately prepared students and the traditional liberal arts course. Smith had insisted upon requirements equal to Amherst. Though few currently met this standard, if women's colleges persisted "good preparatory schools will speedily arise."¹⁰ Seelye believed Taylor's college ought to require Greek for entrance and base the college course in classics and mathematics, with electives in language and natural science, music and art. Seelye urged against preparatory departments, such as at Vassar and Wellesley, which required seminary discipline, in turn harming the collegiate program: "The lower school degrades the higher."¹¹ The design of Smith assumed adult women, who needed little formal supervision. College students set the right tone at the outset: "It is a great advantage to a college to have its traditions, its social and literary influences created exclusively by those who are prepared for its culture."¹²

Seelye advised Taylor against Wellesley's policy of hiring only women faculty. He found it difficult to get qualified women and keep them. Because "marriage . . . makes the vocation of women naturally more uncertain," a mixed faculty proved "more permanent and efficient."¹³ Having men on the faculty in no way lessened the moral responsibility of the college, however: "It does seem very important, especially in a woman's college, that manners and morals as well as learning should determine to a great extent a teacher's fitness for the position."¹⁴

Smith's president wrote with great confidence about its plan for building, adopted after "a careful study," its "excellence" proven by experience.¹⁵ "Our plan has been to erect central academic buildings which shall be devoted to the more distinctive intellectual work of the institution" and around them "at con-

venient distances, in grounds laid out as a private park, smaller dwelling houses, . . . as homes for the students. Each dwelling house is organized as a private household," presided over by "a lady of culture and refinement to direct its social and domestic life."¹⁶ Everything about this plan spoke to its advantage. Beyond the strong practical aspects, such as flexibility and less danger from fire, Seelye stressed the moral effect. While a women's college should adopt "studies which have been of greatest benefit in the intellectual culture of men, I do not advise you to treat women as men." Smith's cottages, re-creating the "refined home," secured the "desirable moral and social influences."¹⁷ Small-scale dwellings gave students "greater comfort and less nervous excitement."¹⁸

Seelye's letter confirmed Taylor's intentions. He had already instructed Hutton to design buildings "similar in its purposes and appliances" to those of Smith College.¹⁹ Hutton's three buildings for the new college re-created Smith in the appropriate dress of a Quaker lady. Imitating Smith, he sited the academic building on high ground, open not only to the campus but to the surrounding community. King had stated very clearly his feeling that he "would face the building as it is on the Smith plan, towards the hotel, the depot, the town, and the natural approach," giving a good view from the railroad coming from Haverford.²⁰ Like Peabody and Stearns' College Hall, Hutton's Taylor Hall is a strongly vertical building. In its more muted gray tones of local Fairmont stone, it lacks the rich polychromy that accentuates College Hall's Victorian Gothic, but it shares steeply pitched roofs ending in gables, tall chimneys, and varied window treatments. Tall square clock towers, irregularly placed, dominate both. Taylor Hall copied College Hall's internal plan. Taylor's irregular rectangular form does not make College Hall's dramatic L, but like its precedent, the first floor originally held lecture rooms, and the second, the primary assembly room with the president's office at one end. Taylor also had a full third story from the outset, with administrative offices and classroom on both sides of the top of the assembly room.²¹

Partway down the hill, the first cottage also demonstrates Smith's influence. As had Peabody and Stearns in Hubbard House, Hutton designed Merion as a large vernacular dwelling with steeply pitched roofs and gables. While local gray stone replaced brick, Merion had similar welcoming porches, trimmed in wood. The internal arrangement of rooms, with public areas on the first floor, partly resembles the Smith houses, but important differences mark Bryn Mawr's distinctiveness. Because of Taylor's commitment to "the higher and more refined classes of Society," from the beginning Bryn Mawr paid greater attention to privacy than any of the other women's colleges, allocating much more space to student rooms. Hutton's Barclay Hall offered to Haverford students a choice of suites for two students, with a study connecting two bedrooms, or large rooms for individual students.²² Similarly, his Merion had 19 suites and large single rooms, several of unusual size. In contrast to Washburn

House at Smith, built in 1878 with 28 rooms for 50 students, Merion at Bryn Mawr had 75 rooms for 55 students.²³ In addition, Hutton followed the usual plan of the men's dormitory, eschewed by most women's institutions: Merion had two entries, a principal one leading to the hall and drawing room, a secondary one to the dining area. Student rooms on the first floor connected these public areas, an unusual arrangement in a women's college where generally a single entrance opened on to public areas, and private spaces remained quite separate.²⁴

Seelye advised putting the gymnasium and music rooms in a different building. While Smith initially provided for both within College Hall, the noise from these activities made them incompatible with academic work. While it would be a long time before a Quaker college allowed space for music, the trustees recognized that the health of students required a gymnasium and Hutton designed a simple structure in red brick.²⁵

In 1882, Hutton submitted to the board a plan for a symmetrical grouping of four cottages, not unlike the siting of the Morris, Lawrence, Dickerson, and Hubbard houses at Smith. While the board adopted Hutton's scheme, it never went beyond paper. Between 1882 and the actual opening of Bryn Mawr, a new and unpredicted force emerged to transform the "female Haverford" into a quite different—and unprecedented—institution for the higher education of women. M. Carey Thomas created the college of 1885. While Bryn Mawr retained its initial Smith-influenced "Quaker lady" design in Taylor and Merion halls, the buildings constructed in the years that followed gradually gave architectural form to Thomas' quite different conceptions.

Taylor died in January 1880, and his board gathered the following May to ponder his lengthy will. Taylor envisioned his college as a small one "for the advanced education and care of young women and girls of the higher and more refined classes of Society." He wanted to offer them an orthodox Quaker education, "the doctrines of the New Testament as accepted by Friends and taught by Fox, Penn, and Barclay." Taylor specified that orthodox Friends "in a close corporation" control the college.²⁶ He never envisioned a denominational college, whose ruling body was appointed by the Meeting. In the Women's College of Baltimore, later renamed Goucher, the Methodist Episcopal Conference established such a college in 1885: the conference itself founded the college and appointed one-third of the trustees.²⁷ Rather Taylor conceived of his board as a self-perpetuating body whose initial members he selected. Meeting after his death, this board chose as vice president James Rhoads, a retired physician, active as an advocate for the American Indian, as the editor of the *Friends Review*, and as a Haverford trustee. They turned to the first business at hand, the completion of the buildings. Rhoads and David Scull, Jr., took over Taylor's supervisory work, which occupied the next four years.

In 1883, Rhoads got a remarkable letter. M. Carey Thomas, who had just

received her Ph.D. *summa cum laude* from Zurich, wrote to suggest herself as "a candidate for the presidency of Bryn Mawr."²⁸ It was a bold step, but one thoroughly characteristic of a woman unusual since her girlhood.

In March 1872, when she was fifteen, Minnie Thomas confided to her journal the dream of the future that she shared with her cousin and closest friend Bessie, the daughter of Francis King. They had gone to the Sewing Meeting of the Society of Friends, and because there were no "horrid boys," after supper they went into the Meeting House alone. In the "solemn gloom" and "dim uncertain shadows" of the quiet room "it was just the very time to build air castles and we walked up and down the aisle and talked of what we wanted to be and do and formed plans." The daughters of prominent Quaker families, their ambitions soared far from the domestic accomplishments of their mothers. These two hopeful and spunky girls exchanged their given names for ones more suited to their imagination. Young Minnie Thomas took the tough, energetic name Rush; Bessie, Rex. The two decided that they would go to Vassar and win high honors and "would do everything." Rush and Rex would become scholars and "live together, have a library with all the splendid books, with a bright wood fire always burning, dark crimson curtains and furniture, great big easy chairs where we could sit lost in books for days together." They would have a "great large table covered with papers" and a laboratory for scientific experiments. "There we would live loving each other and urging each other on to every high and noble deed or action and all who passed should say 'their example arouses me, their books ennoble me, their ideas inspire me and behold they are women!'"²⁹

What is extraordinary is not the dream of adolescent friends, but its relation to the reality that Thomas created. Details changed: the tough name became Carey, not Rush; Mamie Gwinn and Mary Garrett came to hold a more intense claim on her affections than Bessie. But Carey Thomas acted out the larger dream, her "wildest fancies," on a national stage. The library and laboratory emerged as the remarkably beautiful Bryn Mawr campus. She had the aid of a distinguished faculty to arouse by their example the well-qualified students who passed through, to ennoble them by their books, and to inspire them by their ideas. She always kept the purpose in mind: "behold they are women."

Carey Thomas did not go to Vassar.³⁰ After two years at the Howland Institute, a Quaker school for girls outside Ithaca, New York, Cornell seemed to offer the greater challenge. The university had just completed Sage Hall, the residence for women, and Thomas entered in its first class of women, graduating in 1877. In its early years of coeducation, Cornell offered to its women students the full freedom of the elective system and the excitement of a young but excellent university.³¹ Carey Thomas thrived.

Thomas' Cornell years were followed by that painful period of indecision

and anxiety that so many educated women of the late nineteenth century endured. Reluctantly, Johns Hopkins accepted her as a graduate student, though denied her access to the graduate seminar. Undeterred, she got private tutoring from a willing professor, but found that without the fellowship of other students and the stimulation of the seminar, she could not carry out her program of study. The home years gave her one critical element of her later success. Carey Thomas' close friendship with Bessie King expanded to include Mamie Gwinn, Mary Garrett, and Julia Rogers. Bonds of affection among the five women lent Thomas crucial support; in later years the five collaborated on a number of educational projects for women, not the least of which was Bryn Mawr.

In 1879, sobered by her difficulties in obtaining graduate education and troubled by the mounting conflict with her parents over the loss of traditional Quaker faith, Carey Thomas set sail for Germany with Mamie Gwinn. The three-year absence toughened her considerably as she tested her talents and independence abroad. In 1883, when she passed her doctoral examinations *summa cum laude*, she felt she had fulfilled her promise. Relishing her victory, she immediately sent off letters to promote her candidacy for president of Bryn Mawr. To her mother, Carey Thomas wrote that as president she could make Bryn Mawr "the very best woman's college there is."³² She planned her campaign well, enlisting her influential family in her behalf, including her powerful aunt, Hannah Whitall Smith. Carey Thomas even suggested that she had returned to the Quaker fold, a timely, if not altogether sincere, profession.³³ What an extraordinary coincidence: the opening of a Quaker college for women at the moment that a brilliant, determined, feminist Quaker woman returned from Europe with a Ph.D. in philology, the daughter, niece, and cousin of members of the board of trustees.

How could the Bryn Mawr board resist? In retrospect, it all seems inevitable. Yet at the time Carey Thomas had three strikes against her. She was a woman, and the board was and remained for many years all male; she was untried; and there was some perception by the trustees that she was not quite the Quaker daughter that she appeared to be, a suspicion time proved true. So the board hedged: in a plan worked out by Hannah Whitall Smith, they chose James Rhoads president and M. Carey Thomas the first member of the faculty and dean. Rhoads and Thomas enjoyed a congenial, effective collaboration, largely because Rhoads gave Thomas full authority on important matters while he protected her from a sometimes questioning and querulous board of trustees.

Carey Thomas took as her first task a tour of the prominent existing women's colleges to learn everything that she could about their methods, buildings, strengths, and weaknesses. She was not an altogether unprejudiced witness: she had chosen Cornell over Vassar on the advice of her Howland teacher that Cornell offered the better education; and her journal abroad is sprinkled with

at the prospect of becoming "a wretchedly paid, overworked shadow of a professor at Wellesley or Smith like Miss Whitney."³⁴ The diary that she kept on this fact-finding trip and her letters to Mary Garrett provide a splendid view into the other women's colleges from the perspective of a harsh, feminist critic.

Thomas fumed with rage at Smith, which she described to Garrett as "a chance wasted. I dislike to think about it—these 250 girls getting husks." The spirit of the students impressed her; but this just caused her to "despair over women, so clever, so enthusiastic & so little chance." They did not come with adequate preparation; and at Smith "their education is in the hands of men who *do not care*. There is not one strong woman in the place not even one really well educated woman." "I am conscious of a strong impulse . . . to wring the necks of most of the profs. & teachers in Smith College."³⁵

Carey Thomas admired practical aspects of Smith, however. She initially approved of the cottage system of student residence. Her diary noted that while Vassar's Lady Principal felt that the "Cottage syst[em] has not proved itself yet," a clear "place where strain felt is in din[ing] hall. If possible break up dining room into six rooms for 50 each."³⁶ In Stone Hall, Wellesley had set up four dining rooms of twenty-five "so had the nervous effect of eating in a crowded dining room been felt in the Central College Building." Thomas also learned that applicants to Wellesley favored Simpson Cottage and that it was requested by "the parents of delicate girls."³⁷ While Carey Thomas might later wish that Bryn Mawr had selected another architect initially, upon her return home she expressed her satisfaction with the plan of Bryn Mawr's first cottage, declaring the bedrooms and studies of Merion Hall "far beyond any woman's college."³⁸

She also approved of the manner in which Smith separated tuition from self-supporting room-and-board fees. Unlike Wellesley, Smith charged different rates for different room accommodations, arguing that as "the principle" governing "all other matters of the student's lives," economic inequality created no unnatural distinctions. Carey Thomas' own experience in Sage Hall at Cornell served as an example: "It made no social difference whether a girl had one, two, or three rooms. I had three: many of my friends had but one."³⁹

Carey Thomas returned from her tour filled with useful information: gentlewomen supervised cottages more effectively than housekeepers; varnish covered floors better than other finishes; Smith had a "very nice kind of bench in one recitation room."⁴⁰ Her report to the trustees acknowledged this technical aid at the same time that it asserted that the women's colleges had nothing to offer when one turned to the curriculum and faculty.

Vassar and Wellesley held a surprise. At Vassar, Carey Thomas rankled at the rules and loathed the Lady Principal ("little souled, not lit[erary] or scholarly—too f[on]d of rules & system"),⁴¹ but found it nonetheless "monastic &

charming. I can't express how it impressed me, but unlike anything else I have ever seen." She had the thrill of sitting opposite Maria Mitchell, the astronomer, and going to her study to see "her lying on the couch at full length speaking sarcastic, rather bitter, wholly loyal things."⁴² Wellesley affected her powerfully: she sat in chapel and looked down "upon a woman president, reading prayers to an audience of 500 women and 70 profs. & teachers—all women, not a man's influence seen or felt" and observed the gym with "the girls in trowsers swinging on rings, twirling on bars, a newer race of athletes—ushers in a new day." She was impressed by "the devotion to study of these girls & women profs. in this Princesslike community of Wellesley."⁴³ Carey Thomas' trip heightened her sense of the possibilities of a college dedicated to the higher education of women. For the first time she experienced the potential power of a community of women. Yet the poor quality of the faculty, the constraints placed upon them, and the weakness of their teaching distressed and saddened her. "In none of the three colleges; Smith, Wellesley and Vassar, are there many professors who can lay claims to original scholarship, or who are fit to guide the students in original work."⁴⁴

Carey Thomas ended her tour in Boston. Stella Gilman, the wife of Arthur Gilman, gave a reception for her, where she met the professors connected with the Annex. While Thomas made no comments on the Annex in her letters to Mary Garrett, her report to the trustees candidly summarized her views. The Annex had the benefit of Harvard, which, like Columbia, Yale, and Johns Hopkins, offered students "higher teaching" with professors immersed in original work. While the Annex provided the best education available to women, it could not serve as a model, for it contained "none of the attractions of college life."⁴⁵

M. Carey Thomas composed a clever solution for Bryn Mawr: she created a college for women that adapted the best elements of its sisters and yet had the standards, curriculum, and scholarship of Johns Hopkins. This was an astounding new element. Carey Thomas did not hope to re-create Smith, the equivalent of the best colleges for men. Rather she intended to offer to undergraduate women the highest standards of university training available in the United States. She recruited a young, largely male faculty, newly trained in the German universities. She limited their teaching time to encourage study and research, and she added a graduate school to keep them stimulated and aware of new research in their fields. To matriculate, a student first presented a comprehensive preparatory course which included Latin and Greek, and then passed a rigorous set of examinations, modeled on the Harvard exam. An upper-class student elected her courses, grouping them in two related specialized areas. Thomas offered to a new generation of women what she had been denied seven years before. Yet, aware of that special something she could not describe at Vassar and Wellesley, she consciously shaped Bryn Mawr into a

female community where women's influence predominated. While insistence on graduate training required a faculty of young, single men, her presence as dean, the careful selection of residence supervisors, and the establishment of fellowships for talented young women scholars would encourage the best efforts of the young undergraduates.

It was a grand scheme. However, it hardly matched the vision of a "female Haverford" that Joseph Taylor bequeathed to his board. Carey Thomas was not certain that she could convince these Quaker gentlemen to substitute Johns Hopkins as their model. She confided to Garrett that she would write her report and print it and "endeavor to be resigned if the Trustees do not vote affirmatively to each resolution," happy to return to her books.⁴⁶ She did not have to practice the arts of resignation. She won on every major issue and spent an intense summer rounding up an extraordinarily capable faculty, taking pleasure in the abundance of talent from which to choose. She gloated to Mary Garrett that she had "to decide between two men & three women all with Harvard or Cornell degrees[,] high recommendations & at least one year's study abroad. . . . Which of them will teach Latin the best?"⁴⁷ Each appointment, each decision, had the firm support of President Rhoads and carried the board, liberally sprinkled with members of Carey Thomas' family, two of whom were on the Johns Hopkins board. In 1884 and 1885, Thomas convinced them of the value of scholarship linked with female influence, and from this Bryn Mawr never retreated.

In the fall of 1885, Bryn Mawr opened its doors to thirty-six young women whose initial faculty included Paul Shorey, Charlotte Angus Scott, Edward Keiser, Edward Washburn, and Woodrow Wilson. In the years that followed, M. Carey Thomas fought to strengthen the intellectual quality of Bryn Mawr's faculty and academic offerings and demanded a new architectural setting as an appropriate symbol of the life within. The Jacobean quadrangles that emerged at Bryn Mawr at the turn of the century gave new architectural expression to the women's college.

In 1885, this lay still in the future. Bryn Mawr opened with its building and its academic programs premised on incompatible notions of higher education for women. University training of the highest quality, modeled after Johns Hopkins, took place in college buildings designed to look like Smith in the dress of a Quaker lady. Taylor and Merion remain today as reminders of the original intention of the founder. They symbolize the opposition M. Carey Thomas faced as she turned what began as a Quaker college for women into a secular and cosmopolitan institution.

Behold They Are Women!

B R Y N M A W R

M. Carey Thomas built in stone as effectively as she did in academic policy. She shared her era's belief in the power of the physical environment to shape communal spirit and individual character. She brought to Bryn Mawr a strong, feminist commitment to the needs of young women scholars. However inimical to Quaker traditions, she added a love of pageantry and drama. All of this is visible in the Jacobean quadrangles of Bryn Mawr.

In 1885, Carey Thomas convinced the board of trustees of the value of original scholarship in a college for women. She had the full support of Bryn Mawr's president, James Rhoads, who advocated her views to a body liberally sprinkled with her relatives. In 1893, when Rhoads' failing health forced his retirement, Carey Thomas staked all on becoming president. After a bitter and intense struggle, she won the following year. Mary Garrett offered Bryn Mawr \$10,000 a year if the board chose Thomas, a gift that her beneficiary called "a sweet & clever attempt to use Mammon for righteousness."¹

During her long incumbency, M. Carey Thomas fought and refought the same issues. Increasingly her protection on the board disappeared, as age and death removed her father, uncle, and cousins. At stake was the commitment of the college to scholarship in an increasingly secular and materialistic age. As devout Friends, certain members of the board repeatedly sought to return Bryn Mawr to James Taylor's original conception of a female Haverford. They tried to redefine the college as sectarian, to block its physical growth, and to restrain its profane communal life. Carey Thomas never relented. She insisted that only growth could sustain the standard Bryn Mawr had set and that identification with contemporary thought and life—not adherence to Quaker traditions—made the college a powerful force in the higher education of women.²

The resignation of a senior trustee followed M. Carey Thomas' accession

to the presidency, and, until 1902, the board refused to appoint her as a member of its body, a position her predecessor had held. The board fought unsuccessfully to keep costs down and to change the language of college publications to express Quaker commitment. While Thomas tried to contain public expression of student hedonism, such as smoking and nude swimming, the growth of pageantry on campus and the acceptance of theater clarified what Bryn Mawr had become. Ultimately her building program caused the dissident trustees to try to bring her down.

The Bryn Mawr campus remains as a monument to M. Carey Thomas' hopes for women. During her deanship and presidency the talented young Philadelphia architectural firm of Cope & Stewardson gave form to the residence, library, and laboratory of her adolescent daydream.³ In the two decades following Bryn Mawr's opening, building after building encircled the original Taylor Hall, creating splendid spaces for living, studying, teaching, and playing. Walter Cope—the nephew of board member Francis Cope, brother of a member of the first class, and a Friend—was the ideal designer for Bryn Mawr. While he worked as an apprentice in Addison Hutton's office, Cope had a more cosmopolitan and sophisticated sensibility. He travelled in Europe and on his return formed a partnership with John Stewardson. The two were from a similar Quaker background, and Stewardson was also related to members of the Bryn Mawr board. He had trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. With Cope as the major design partner, the firm of Cope & Stewardson gradually came to its mature style, a Jacobean Gothic that combined dignity with a festive air. Bryn Mawr offered Cope and Stewardson their first experience with college buildings. Well-publicized success led to important commissions at the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Washington University in St. Louis.⁴ The firm worked in close collaboration with Carey Thomas, who always guided and, at times, fully outlined the plan.⁵ Cope and Stewardson created a fitting setting for the realization of her girlhood dream of a life as an exemplary woman among women.

At fifteen, "Rush" Thomas had envisioned surroundings that hardly suggested a woman's parlor. Her dream library had "dark crimson curtains and furniture" and "great big easy chairs," a "bright wood fire always burning" and a "great large table covered with papers."⁶ Unlike the men who planned domestic places at Smith or seminary settings at Vassar and Wellesley, Carey Thomas had no desire to adapt feminine spaces to academic uses. Rather, she wanted to appropriate the library and the laboratory of men. Though her closest relationships were with women and she became the moving force behind a women's college, Carey Thomas held no belief in a separate women's culture. The curriculum of Bryn Mawr made no genuflections to women's special nature or domestic future. She argued that courses generally deemed appropriate for women either lacked the necessary intellectual content, as did domestic

science, or they equally fit men and women, as did infant psychology. The life of the mind was neuter: "Science and literature and philology are what they are and inalterable."⁷ Bryn Mawr created special opportunities for women to enter the sacred groves of scholarship, but the groves had no gender. "Given two bridge-builders, a man and a woman, given a certain bridge to be built, and given as always the unchangeable laws of mechanics . . . it is simply inconceivable that the preliminary instruction given to the two bridge-builders should differ in quantity, quality, or method of presentation because while the bridge is building one will wear knickerbockers and the other a rainy-day skirt."⁸ As the visible sign that truth had no sex, the Bryn Mawr campus gave no clue as to the gender of its student body.

Nothing about Bryn Mawr suggested a home. Smith's President Seelye linked domestic forms and scale with women's college residence in the cottage. But domesticity in all its forms was anathema to Carey Thomas. After she returned from her years abroad, she had felt acutely uncomfortable in her parents' house with its informal, child-centered ways and its lack of privacy and order. The college that she envisioned had nothing of home. Unlike Mount Holyoke and Wellesley, students performed no domestic work during their four years, not even the making of their own beds. They wore a special dress on campus, the traditional mark of scholarship worn by men, the cap and gown.⁹ They enjoyed privacy unusual to young women: each student had a single room at the minimum. Carey Thomas carried from the visit to Girton the standard of a bedroom and sitting room, with wood-burning fireplace: whenever possible Bryn Mawr's halls contained two-room suites.

Like Smith and the Annex, Bryn Mawr eschewed the structure of rules and the daily schedule bequeathed by the seminary. Bryn Mawr had no desire to imitate the Annex's avoidance of common residence, but Carey Thomas needed an alternative to Smith's simulation of family governance. Because young, unmarried men largely composed the faculty, she could not give them rooms within college residence halls or any responsibility over students' lives. More strikingly, Carey Thomas never considered such an abuse of women faculty. She insisted that female as well as male professors have full control of their time outside the classroom for the pursuit of scholarship. Following Smith's lead, Bryn Mawr installed a gentlewoman as resident mistress of Merion, in this case a Quaker lady; but in time Thomas replaced her and added to the other residence halls young Bryn Mawr graduates, increasingly outside the fold.¹⁰ In 1901, she renamed the mistresses "wardens," in imitation of their British counterparts.¹¹ In addition, the graduate fellows, women despite the appellation, lived among the undergraduates to inspire them by their scholarly example. The students themselves regulated behavior, at least in principle. In 1892, when growth in numbers made the informal system of the first years unworkable, Bryn Mawr instituted the first plan for student self-governance



The economics and history library in Taylor Library; n.b. students in academic dress
Bryn Mawr College

in a women's college.¹² Students held only limited power: collegians never made rules, they only enforced them. Controversy remains over their actual control even here. Carey Thomas' need to protect the college from the outside caused her to intervene to uphold conventions in which even she did not believe. For example, while she had to halt nude bathing, she confessed to Mary Garrett, "there is really no harm in it."¹³ Her love of power may have led her to create a spy system among students, a charge her critics made.¹⁴ But, however limited, self-government remained an ideal and took architectural form. Cope & Stewardson designed halls for Bryn Mawr scholars as distinctive as their caps and gowns, bearing the same mark of scholarship as the traditional colleges for men.

This signalled the critical divide in the building history of the women's colleges. Before M. Carey Thomas' leadership at Bryn Mawr, women's colleges had distinctive structures designed to protect young women as they received the higher learning. With Bryn Mawr's decision to take the forms of traditional male institutions of higher education, buildings at the women's col-

leges entered into the mainstream of collegiate architecture. Architects accepted college commissions, indifferent to the gender of the student body. Cope and Stewardson moved from their triumphs at Bryn Mawr to Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, and Washington University.

But what were these collegiate forms to be? In the past, at such colleges as Harvard and Yale, men had received their education in separate buildings dotting the center of the campus. Yale had "Old Brick Row," two lines of buildings that opened to the campus and then to the New Haven Green. In the 1870s and 1880s, Russell Sturgis designed buildings at the perimeter of the campus. Yale tore down "Old Brick Row" and built the Old Campus, a wall of buildings separating gown from town. Sturgis argued in the *Nation* and elsewhere for colleges composed of quadrangles, based on the English model of Oxford and Cambridge. He was America's most articulate follower of John Ruskin. Carey Thomas proclaimed herself a Ruskinian.¹⁵ As a reader of the *Nation*, she would have been aware of Sturgis' arguments. Moreover, she shared with Sturgis the Ruskinian beliefs that buildings expressed the life of the community, that they had the power to shape that life, and that organic medieval forms had a special beauty.

Ruskin, however, found the early years of Gothic the most compelling, years when religious fervor united craftsmen and turned them into artists. To him civilization slid on a downward arc and Europe moved toward decadence in the later Middle Ages. Carey Thomas savored just these years. She took special delight in the Jacobean period with its love of theater and pageantry and an architecture that evolved from theatrical stage settings at the hand of Inigo Jones. What a curious choice for one who professed Quakerism, a faith born in rejection of the popery and worldliness of those same years, the practice of which required abjuring theater. Carey Thomas was no Quaker, at least not on the inside. During a time of conflict with her board, she became increasingly sour about her heritage. When a generous donation went to another women's college, she remarked to Mary Garrett, "I think most people really dislike Friends. Indeed I do not see how they can fail to."¹⁶ Carey Thomas professed the faith in order to gain control of Bryn Mawr. Her testimonials of religious loyalty were of a piece with abjuring smoking and requiring abstinence from cigarettes of students and faculty in public settings. When retirement freed her from the necessity of appearances, Carey Thomas joined the Episcopal Church and returned to cigarettes.¹⁷

Carey Thomas loved the theater. Her correspondence with Mary Garrett is filled with her passionate responses. Sarah Bernhardt in *Cleopatra* "was divine . . . the very serpent of old Nile, the courtesan. . . . I think I told you of my desire, granted once that I were a man, & to a man fallen from grace, to have her once for my mistress; well, the long act in her Egyptian palace where

Anthony & she, in her diaphanous robe of course, lavish countless caresses upon one another entirely satisfied my desire."¹⁸ In 1900, after some initial scepticism, she enthusiastically endorsed Bryn Mawr's initial elaborate May Day festival, an Elizabethan extravaganza staged by students under the supervision of Evangeline Walker Andrews, a recent alumna, married to Charles MacLean Andrews, a Bryn Mawr professor. First observed at Earlham, a co-educational Quaker college in Indiana, this re-creation of English traditions, complete with Maypoles and theatricals, gave students an acceptable alternative to the dancing forbidden by religious practice.¹⁹ Carey Thomas admired Shelley and the Romantic poets and delighted in opera.²⁰ The three offspring of her aunt, Hannah Whitall Smith, brought Carey Thomas into the international circle of aesthetes: Mary Smith lived with and married Bernard Berenson; Alys Smith was Bertrand Russell's first wife; Logan Pearsall Smith became a minor literary figure in his own right. Thomas' Smith cousins provided her with her natural aesthetic habitat, available during her travels.²¹

In her mature years, as Carey Thomas came to love Mary Garrett deeply and passionately, she must have sensed a sharper cleavage with a faith which placed such an emphasis on family life. All Thomas' energies, including her sexual ones, focused on women. A reading of her daily letters to Mary Garrett makes it unmistakable that though she professed sexual attraction to men as well as women, she felt committed to a professional life that excluded marriage. This did not mean a life without intense and committed love. By the mid-1880s, Carey Thomas regarded herself as bound by love to Mary Garrett exclusively and forever.²² Earlier commitments to Mamie Gwinn stood in the way, but, in 1904, Gwinn eloped with Alfred Hodder, freeing Thomas. Mary Garrett moved into the Deanery, and the two realized the joint life so long desired. As a side consequence, as the wealthy daughter and heir of John Garrett, Mary Garrett provided Carey Thomas with the means to indulge fully her love of acquisition both in private and in the college setting.

Bryn Mawr gave Carey Thomas a landscape in which her non-Quaker aestheticism took solid form. The initial building designed by Cope and Stewardson suggested a few signs of what followed. Radnor Hall forsook the domestic imagery of the cottage. This frankly institutional building bore some resemblance to Taylor in its verticality, but its façade of irregular stone was much cleaner. The shape of the building gave a slight feeling of enclosure over the entrance. The great octagonal room carried battlements. However, following the lead of Hutton's initial buildings, Cope & Stewardson sited Radnor in the middle of the campus. Bryn Mawr had asked Calvert Vaux, the experienced landscape architect who designed Central Park with Frederick Law Olmsted, to create a plan for the campus. He reaffirmed earlier locational decisions, though he suggested encircling the campus in trees as an arboreal barrier to the surrounding neighborhood.²³



May Day, 1900: Maypole dancing; Taylor Hall in background; *Bryn Mawr College*



May Day, 1900: The St. George Play; *Bryn Mawr College*



Denbigh Hall; Bryn Mawr College

The real breakthrough occurred in 1891. Cope & Stewardson designed Denbigh, the third student's residence, as a long, low, elegant structure placed at the perimeter of the campus. Its irregular gray stone façade was punctuated by the bay windows of the students' sitting rooms; its roof, by their chimneys. The cornice line carried the battlements that established most clearly its English antecedents. One entered on the side, into a three-sided bay topped with battlements. Despite its decorative emphasis at the roofline, Denbigh is a calm horizontal building with clean lines and repetitions conveying order and regularity. Most important of all, its placement created courtyards between Denbigh and Taylor and between Denbigh and Dalton, the science building. With Denbigh, Bryn Mawr not only shed its Victorian skin, but bones as well; monumental masses gave way to walls that enclosed.²⁴

Cope & Stewardson reached their mature style with the building of the double dormitory Pembroke East and West. The long line of buildings of the two residence halls walled off the campus on the south. At the joining of the two residences, an arched gateway framed the carriage entrance on to the campus and created a strong perpendicular axis. This powerful square entry carried Jacobean decoration and four battlemented towers. Its impressive windows sheathed the great dining hall of the double residence. A more vital composition than Denbigh, Pembroke Hall is a courtly building, dignified yet festive. It formed a wall that defined the campus from the outside and enclosed it from the inside. With the library, it shaped handsome courtyards.





Rockefeller Hall dining room, 1910; *Bryn Mawr College*

Rockefeller, the last Cope & Stewardson residence hall, continued the line of Pembroke West, turning the corner to define the southwest point of the campus. Variations in setbacks and the resulting L-shape added a needed variety to the long building. At the turn, a tall tower held a massive arch that provided a pedestrian entrance, Owl Gateway, approached by stairs. When the library was constructed, the gateway framed perfectly its delicate form.

In 1895, Frederick Law Olmsted confirmed Cope & Stewardson's basic plan. In 1893, the college had purchased land to the west of the campus. Working with his stepson, John C. Olmsted, the great landscape designer laid out athletic grounds in the informal northerly section of the campus that sloped down to Roberts Road and determined that future buildings frame the western perimeter as they had the southern. While the college never carried out the many specific plans for athletic fields and plantings, the firm set the location of new buildings and roads until 1928.²⁵

Each dormitory grouped near its entrance a drawing room, student sitting room, and dining room. The college guaranteed to each student a single room, at the minimum. But beyond this and the common rooms, students lived under quite varied conditions. They had rooms of different shapes, sizes, and loca-

tions, some with a shared or an individual study. A modest single room in an unfortunate location went as low as \$100 for the year; a two-room suite or a room of unusual size cost as high as \$350.²⁶ In Carey Thomas' eyes, this great differential only mirrored students' experience in other realms. Recalling her own luxurious three-room suite in Sage at Cornell, she argued that differences in housing did not affect students' judgments about each other.²⁷ She dismissed the notion that students' economic backgrounds shaped college social structure because she identified with the affluent student, not the one forced to live in pinched surroundings. As time went on, Bryn Mawr attracted more wealthy students, and successive dormitories held an increased ratio of expensive rooms. Rockefeller, the most luxurious, had thirty-nine single suites, each with bedroom and sitting room. In addition, its basement had service rooms for sewing and hairdressing and a students' grocery store.²⁸ Carey Thomas always hoped to attract the daughters of wealth. Bryn Mawr became increasingly successful in doing so.

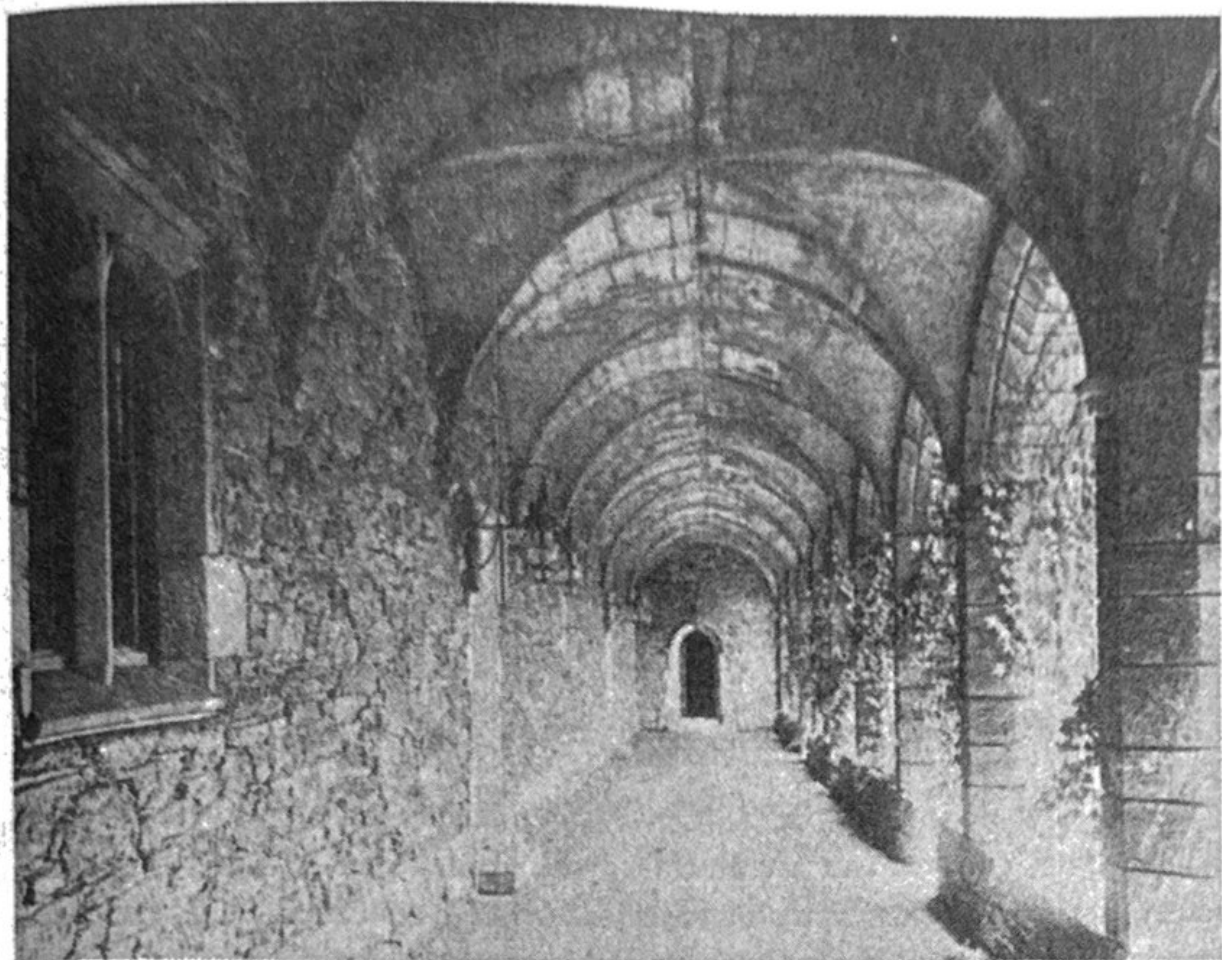
Joseph Taylor intended from the beginning that his college educate "the higher and more refined classes of Society,"²⁹ but he expected them to be Friends. By 1897, the incoming class had only two Quakers, the same number as entering Roman Catholics, in contrast to thirty Episcopalians and twenty-four Presbyterians,³⁰ a disturbing ratio to trustees committed to James Taylor's vision. Little wonder that they came into conflict with Carey Thomas. They fought her on a number of grounds; but because trustees held ultimate responsibility for buildings, they took their strongest stand there. By the turn of the century, they turned against her building program. While Thomas argued strenuously that buildings provided a preferred form of investment with a high annual return, the trustees forbade further use of Taylor's endowment for buildings.³¹ Yet, while trustees created hurdles, they failed to block Carey Thomas. The attempt to stop growth merely forced her to venture outside to beg for funds. A large gift from John D. Rockefeller built a residence hall with his name and encouraged alumnae gifts for the library, Thomas' most intense fund-raising effort.³²

In the library, Carey Thomas found her crowning symbol of Bryn Mawr. As she planned the library, her attention to detail became obsessive, and she came into conflict not only with her trustees but with her architects.

Cope & Stewardson designed the library according to very explicit instructions from President Thomas. Its main reading room copied the dining hall of Wadham College, Oxford, while Oriel College provided the model for the entrance. Thomas wanted an enclosed cloister at its center and seminar rooms adjoining professors' offices for graduate work. The architects agreed to work within these limits and to accept her requirement that the library could not be used in their designs for other colleges. (Cope & Stewardson had repeated their Bryn Mawr residence hall successes at Princeton and at Washington University



Reading room, Thomas Library; Bryn Mawr College



Cloister archway, Thomas Library; *Bryn Mawr College*

in St. Louis.)³³ The firm created an elegant plan, perhaps unsuitable for a library—the librarian complained that the central reading room was larger than that of the British Museum—but certainly befitting the dignity that Carey Thomas demanded for Bryn Mawr.³⁴

Walter Cope died before building began. While Carey Thomas was travelling abroad, Herbert Tatnall, the chairman of the buildings and grounds committee, decided that the proposed library was thirty feet too close to Taylor Hall and detracted from its dignity. Cope's successor agreed to shift the building back. When Thomas heard, she turned livid with rage: she insisted that laymen had no right to make decisions about location and that the college should trust Cope's judgment, not some unknown with whom it had never worked. Through a barrage of long, agonized letters, she sought and gained a delay and then the restoration of Cope's plan.³⁵ By 1904, Tatnall and the conservative trustees had lost on every major issue: the siting of the library was their last-ditch effort to protect the symbol of their vision of the college, Taylor Hall. A library built like a Jacobean college chapel with towers and battlements threatened to encroach upon the "Quaker lady."

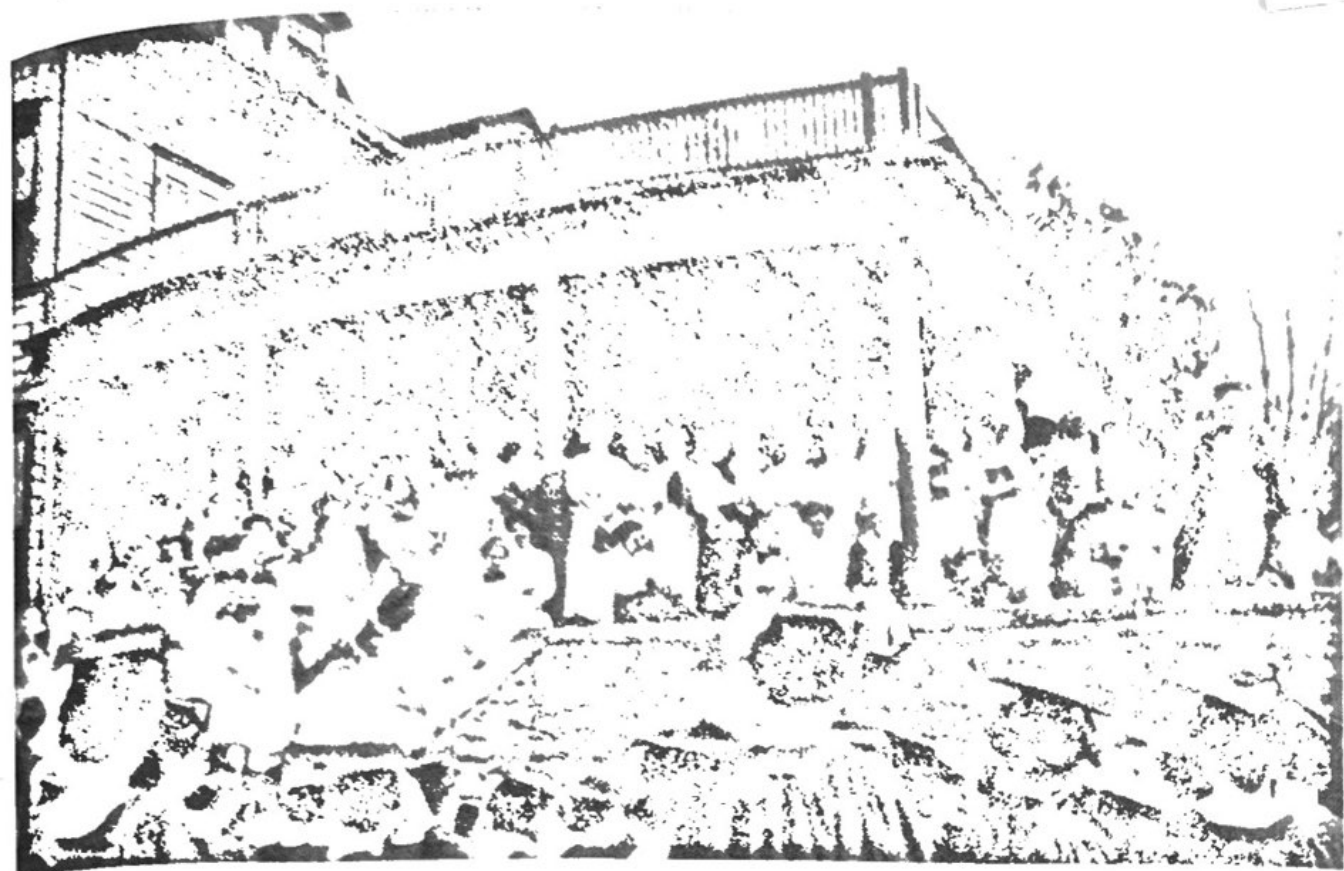
M. Carey Thomas won not only on the site but also on every detail. This

required both a change in architects and a messy lawsuit.³⁶ In Thomas' eyes the victory justified the struggle, for it produced a library that matched her pedagogy and taste. The Johns Hopkins-influenced seminar method, where professors and students gathered around a table in the presence of books to engage in mutual research, required seminar rooms in every graduate subject. Along with their long tables surrounded by chairs or laboratory equipment, the rooms contained shelves of specialized books for graduate students' use.³⁷ Senior professors' offices adjoined the seminar rooms, emphasizing by their location the importance of research and graduate teaching. Undergraduates read their books in a more splendid setting, at one of the 134 tall desks in the great and ornate reading room. This vast open space, reproducing an Oxford dining hall, with light pouring in from tall windows adorned with tracery, fit Carey Thomas' vision of the dignity of scholarship. The rectangular cloister with its handsome groined-vault passageway and courtyard arcade offered an appropriate setting for the monastic renunciation that Thomas associated with the life of the mind.

These were embattled years for M. Carey Thomas. She emerged triumphant against trustees and architects on the library, only to face, in 1916, a faculty uprising against her dictatorial rule.³⁸ She could no longer count on alumnae, who felt a different stake in the college. She confronted a new generation of students, whose goals she found difficult to understand. Carey Thomas herself changed as well. She remained a brilliant feminist; but where she had once moderated her materialism and sensualism by a Quaker upbringing, she now unleashed her desires. In time her enjoyment of power became an habitual exercise. What began as leadership became autocracy. In the twentieth century, M. Carey Thomas turned formidable. Her own dwelling, the Deanery, mirrored these changes.

Bryn Mawr had acquired several houses along with its land. These it used as homes for president, faculty, and dean. With her strong distaste for the life of the woman professor boarding in student residences, and perhaps in imitation of Maria Mitchell, Carey Thomas took one of the cottages at the outset and named it the Deanery. There she lived, saw students, and transacted college business. Mamie Gwinn, who joined the English faculty (with an appointment coterminous with Thomas' tenure), moved into the Deanery. When M. Carey Thomas assumed the presidency, the house proved too small. In 1896, she oversaw its first expansion. By this time, her own scale of living had grown, for Mary Garrett added \$5,000 a year to Thomas' Bryn Mawr salary.

The purchase of land on the western edge of the campus shifted the relative location of the Deanery from the border to the center of the campus. The library's placement meant that it almost adjoined the cottage, a symbolic touch that would not be lost on Carey Thomas. When Mamie Gwinn's marriage to



M. Carey Thomas greeting students from the porch of the Deanery;
Mary Garrett under the umbrella; *Bryn Mawr College*

Alfred Hodder opened the way for Mary Garrett to join Thomas, Garrett brought to the Deanery her handsome possessions. In 1907, she had the house completely rebuilt at her own expenditure of \$100,000. Lockwood de Forest, brought in to finish the library after conflicts severed the college's relationship to Cope and Stewardson's successors, redesigned the Deanery in the manner befitting a railroad heiress. The brother of Mary Garrett's close friend and a member of Tiffany's firm, de Forest was a turn-of-the-century aesthete who revelled in the intricate patterns of India and in the finishes and textures of wood. He once wrote that Americans needed to regain their sense of touch and learn to see before they think: "Design should appeal directly to our mind through our eyes."³⁹ He copied Dorothy Vernon's Gallery in Haddon Hall for the Deanery's vast entertaining room and made it a feast for the eyes. Carved chests from India, Persian rugs, and Tiffany glass filled a room decorated with the tile floors, leaded windows, and copper-beamed ceiling of the arts and crafts movement. M. Carey Thomas' biographer remembered it as having "the fairy-tale quality of an extravagant dream."⁴⁰

While the shingled cottage's exterior remained unpretentious, the Deanery grew to an immense size. A great rambling house on three floors, its bulk equalled Merion, which housed fifty-five. De Forest planned its sprawling

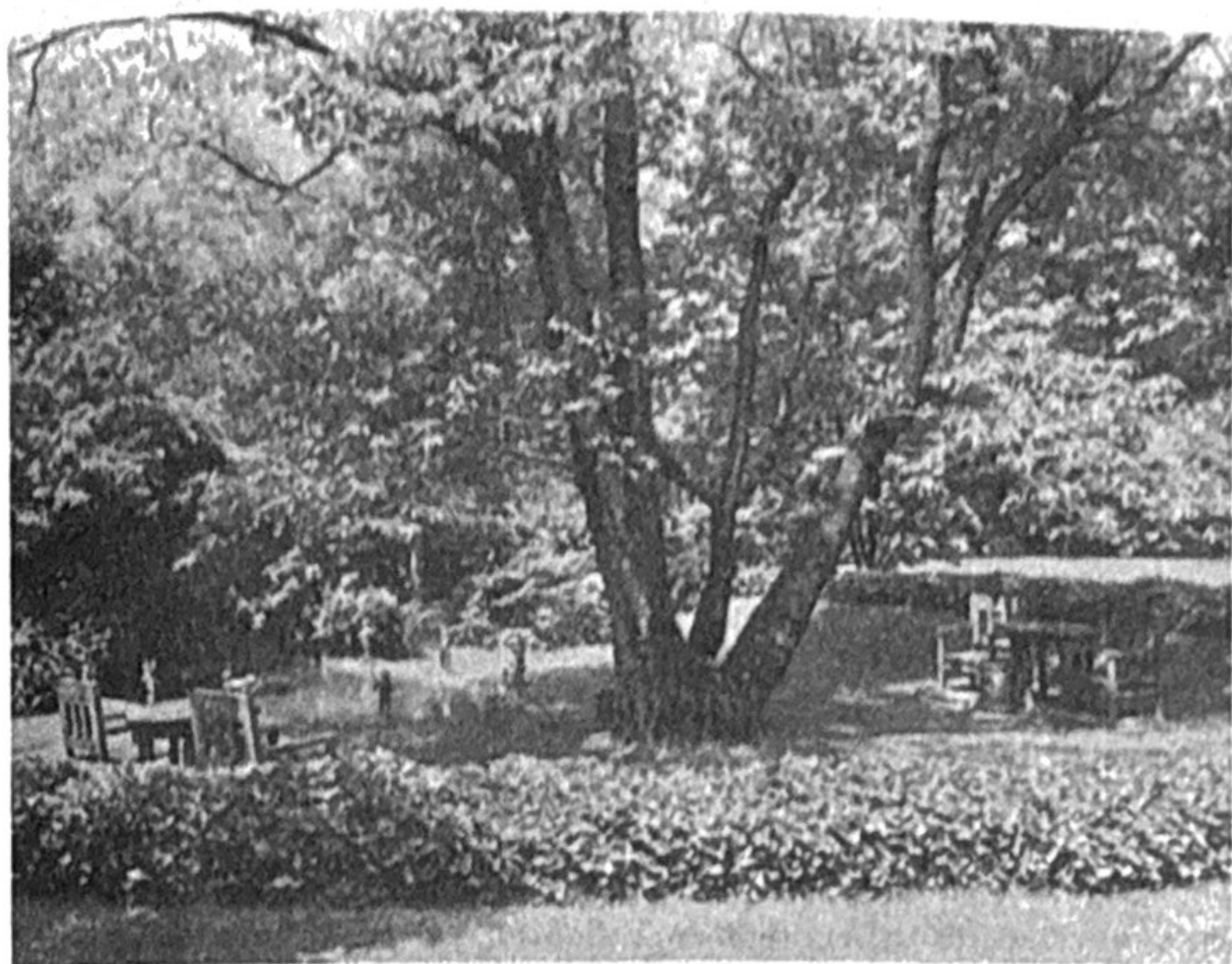


The Deanery's Dorothy Vernon Room; Bryn Mawr College

rooms for entertaining on a grand scale, something in the manner of an English country house. When converted to a college guest house in 1934, it slept eighteen persons on the second and third floors in addition to those sharing a large open "dormitory," probably the maid's quarters.⁴¹ Under Carey Thomas, the Deanery required a staff of six to clean, cook, and serve. Callers rang so constantly that though Thomas once hired a butler, she found he "got so exhausted that she had to give him an assistant," and turned to two "waitresses" instead.⁴²

However busy and public the Deanery, Carey Thomas and Mary Garrett possessed a retreat of quiet beauty, the Deanery garden. "Secluded, intimate and charming,"⁴³ the garden gave them that protected out-of-doors space, in which Thomas' generation of academic women took special delight. John C. Olmsted planned it and determined its evergreen plantings. De Forest, Garrett, and Thomas decorated it with statuary, fountains, and tiles from travels abroad, but kept the garden restrained and quiet.⁴⁴

The Deanery and garden gave Carey Thomas ample scope to indulge her acquisitiveness on her travels with Mary Garrett. It expressed Thomas' love of



The Deanery Garden; *Bryn Mawr College*

luxury and service. And yet it stands for more than self-indulgence. The Deanery made a statement about a woman's power in a materialistic society. Its grand scale and elegant furnishings gave frank avowals of the pleasures of success enjoyed by an extraordinary woman. M. Carey Thomas richly fulfilled her adolescent daydream.

Bryn Mawr's president had always exerted care to set and maintain the "Bryn Mawr standard," a phrase frequently found in her reports and addresses. The Bryn Mawr campus, created in her years, did just that. Its residence halls, groupings of buildings and spaces, late Gothic forms, library, and president's house set a new standard for the women's colleges. With its buildings and landscapes went Bryn Mawr's system of self-governance, which, however limited, opened up new possibilities for organizing communal life. Bryn Mawr broke with the building and governance traditions that had marked the women's college and claimed for women the academic setting and way of life of men. Bryn Mawr ended the distinctive building tradition of the women's colleges: within a short span, quadrangles rose in New York, Poughkeepsie, Wellesley, Cambridge, Northampton, and South Hadley.