June 1920

The Law Building at West Virginia University

Henry Craig Jones

West Virginia University College of Law

Follow this and additional works at: https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/wvlr

Part of the Legal Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Henry C. Jones, The Law Building at West Virginia University, 26 W. Va. L. Rev. (1920).

Available at: https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/wvlr/vol26/iss4/4

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the WVU College of Law at The Research Repository @ WVU. It has been accepted for inclusion in West Virginia Law Review by an authorized editor of The Research Repository @ WVU. For more information, please contact researchrepository@mail.wvu.edu.
THE LAW BUILDING AT WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY

By Henry Craig Jones

Since its establishment in 1878 the College of Law has been a tenant by sufferance of a small portion of Woodburn Hall, where its quarters from year to year became more cramped, inadequate and unsafe, and its presence a matter of increasing inconvenience to the College of Arts and Sciences which occupied the remainder of the building. As the course of study was lengthened from one to two years, and, in 1913, to three years, with the consequent increase in the personnel of the law faculty, and as the library grew from 1700 volumes at the close of 1902 to 14,000 volumes in 1920, it became increasingly apparent that only by the erection of a fireproof building specially adapted to the needs of a modern law school, could the future progress and usefulness of the College of Law be assured. Efforts by graduates and former students of the College of Law, The West Virginia Bar Association, and the officers of the University finally led the West Virginia Legislature in 1919 to appropriate $125,000 for a building to house the law school and its valuable library. Funds for the site and for equipment were provided from other sources.

Charles W. Bates, of Wheeling, was appointed architect and directed by the Board of Control to prepare, with the cooperation of the President of the University and the law faculty, suitable plans for the erection of a first-class law school building containing every feature necessary to make the structure safe, adequate, and convenient. In preparing the plans and specifications every practicable facility was used. The architect and the dean of the College of Law, either together or separately, visited and inspected the new and modern law school buildings at the University of Chicago, Harvard, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Cornell, and Columbia. Complete plans of several other modern law school buildings were secured and a questionnaire calling for information and suggestions was sent to and was answered by the deans of many other well-known law schools. The advice of law librarians and experts in library construction was freely sought in order that the library
facilities might be made modern, safe and satisfactory. As the plans developed, drafts were submitted for the advice and criticism of those best qualified to pass upon them. Every effort has been made by the Board of Control, the architect, and all others concerned to plan a building which will be of high credit to the lawyers and people of West Virginia as well as to the University and the College of Law in particular. The result is a plan which, as finally approved and submitted for bids, has generally been declared by those best qualified to judge as providing, in view of the needs of the situation, as well arranged and as modern a law building as there is in the country.

The plans, as finally approved by the Board of Control, provide for a building 138 feet in length, 56 feet in minimum width and three stories in height, with a mezzanine floor in addition extending throughout one-half of the third or library floor. It will accommodate comfortably 250 law students and is constructed so that an addition can readily be joined on at the rear which would double the capacity of the building. The class-room floor follows in its main features the arrangement of the same floor in the University of Chicago law building; the library floor contains the salient points of the same floor in the new law building at the University of Oklahoma. In several respects the building contains features which are original and practically new in law-school building construction.

The general construction of the building is of reinforced concrete, making it fire-proof throughout. One solid cement slab constitutes the ceiling for the first story as well as the floor of the second story; another furnishes the ceiling for the class-room story and the floor for the library story, while a third constitutes the ceiling of the third or library floor. The girders supporting the floors are of steel or reinforced concrete. The floors in the corridors, vestibules and landings on the class-room and library floors are to be of Riverside Vermont marble. The portico floor is of quarry tile and the stairway from the class-room floor to the library floor is to be of steel with Vermont marble treads. All partitions are of hollow tile. The style of architecture is the modified Renaissance, thus matching in general appearance the more recently constructed University buildings. The exterior will be hard red brick, trimmed with Indiana lime stone and terra cotta. A wide portico supported by four large stone columns
gives the building a style rather common to the Virginia and West Virginia court houses of the past century.

The heating will be by steam supplied from the University's central heating plant, thus avoiding the use of a separate steam supply. The woodwork on the class-room, library and mezzanine floors, and all furniture specially installed, will be of birch mahogany. Practically all of the book shelving will be metal. All fittings in the building will be of the best material. All floors will be of cement, those throughout the library floor and in the court room being covered with battleship linoleum.

In general it should be noted that those planning the building have always borne in mind that it is erected for law school use exclusively and is planned with the expectation that the law students will do practically all of their studying in the building as well as attend their classes there. Modern law school instruction demands frequent and almost constant use of the law library and the advantages which arise from the continuous and exclusive association of students with the law faculty and with other students pursuing similar professional courses can scarcely be over-estimated. A still further increase in the well-recognized tendency of law students to "talk shop" is to be encouraged so that to "think legally" may become a habit and not simply a veneer.

GROUND FLOOR

The ground floor of the building will contain three student rooms for men, the men's locker room, the men's toilet room, the librarian's packing room, the storage room and the machinery room. Entrance to the corridor on this floor may be had underneath the front portico by coming from the front steps or from a walk leading from the alley which separates the law building from the Methodist Church.

The largest of the student rooms for men will be a club-room in which men may smoke, read the daily papers, or engage in conversation which cannot be permitted in a library reading room. The second room for men will probably be a study room where smoking will be permitted. The third room for men is planned to be a typewriter room. The use of typewriters by law students is much on the increase, with the result that this room was arranged for at the request of the students themselves. The locker room
has capacity for 250 full length, steel lockers in which men students may with safety place hats, overcoats, umbrellas, and books which are not in use. Experience in high-grade law schools has demonstrated that the existence of suitable lockers aids probably more than any other single feature in getting students to use the law library and to do their studying in the law building rather than at their rooms. Each locker will be provided with a Yale lock and the locker room will be adequately lighted and ventilated.

The librarian’s packing room will contain an electric book lift running through the court room on the class-room floor to the librarian’s room on the library floor. Books will be unpacked by the janitor or the librarian in the packing room and carried by the lift to the library. Books requiring rebinding or repair can be sent by the lift from the librarian’s room on the library floor to the packing room and there repaired or boxed for shipment. The storage room will serve the purpose indicated by its name. In the machinery room will be located the pumps, heaters, etc. needed in connection with the heating system and the supply of hot water for the various lavatories. A stairway leading from the corridor connects the ground floor with the class-room floor, with the rear entrance to the building and with the stairway leading to the library floor.

Class-room Floor

The class-room floor contains two large class rooms, one moderate-sized class room, a modern, completely-equipped court room, a clerk and sheriff’s office, a jury room, a stock room, and a rest room and toilet room for women students. Entrance to this floor may be had from the front portico, or by the rear entrance, or by the stairway from the ground floor.

The two large class rooms extend entirely across the two ends of this floor, thus giving an opportunity for bilateral lighting by the six large windows on each side of the room. This enables each room to be well lighted without either the students or the instructor facing the windows. The students will sit on chairs placed behind benches arranged in semi-circular style on successively higher levels so that no student’s view of the instructor will be obstructed by the person sitting in front of him. These benches will be 18 inches in depth and the space allotted to each student is 31 inches. The necessity, as well as the convenience to
students, of benches on which to write and to rest the case book, as compared with the use of chairs with projecting arms has been demonstrated by the almost universal adoption of the former in the best law schools. The space between the back of each bench and the front of the bench behind it is 2 feet and 1 inch, thus giving ample space for the chairs and for other students to pass between the backs of the chairs and the front of the bench behind. The interior dimensions of each of these end class rooms is 53 feet by 34 feet 6 inches, and the capacity of each for classroom purposes is about 130. For use as an auditorium the capacity of each is approximately 200.

Considerable thought was given to the question whether the two large class rooms should be arranged with the instructor's desk near the entrance or at the opposite end of the room, facing the entrance and bringing the rear seats nearest to the doors leading from the corridor. The latter arrangement prevails in the splendid law buildings of the University of Chicago and at Harvard and has the advantages that a student who enters late will cause less disturbance because he enters at the rear of the room and the instructor will not be annoyed by sounds from the corridor. It was finally decided, however, to adopt the former arrangement for three reasons. In the first place, it was felt that students will be less likely to come late if they must enter at the front of the room beside the instructor's desk than if they may "sneak" in at the rear of the room; and, in the second place, that the occasional student who may be tardy, will drop into a front seat near to the instructor rather than a long-range rear seat as he probably would if the other arrangement prevailed. The third reason is based on the desirability and tendency of students to remain after the class period to discuss with the instructor questions not made clear or unanswered during the class period, which will be suggested and promoted when the student must pass the instructor's desk in leaving the room. It is desirable not to schedule one class period immediately after another in the same class room and where this is possible it often happens that the instructor spends a considerable part of the ensuing hour in further discussion with students who voluntarily remain.

The smaller class room has a capacity of over fifty and will have benches arranged in semi-circular style on risers as in the larger class rooms. This room is lighted from the side so that,
neither students nor instructor face the light and is so arranged that the forenoon sunlight will come in over the student’s left shoulder.

The court room will be modern and court-room-like in every particular. There will be a judge’s bench large enough to accommodate three judges, a jury box, witness’ stand, clerk’s desk, counsel tables, and a bar rail enclosing the space reserved for members of the bar. Only a small amount of space is allotted for spectators since the purpose of the room is utility in conducting trials rather than show. The advice of the circuit judges who preside in the practice court has been freely sought and has been most helpful in settling the arrangement of this room. It is intended that the court room shall be so appointed and conducted that the student when he enters a real court room after graduation will not find himself in unfamiliar surroundings. The electric book lift and buzzer connection give ready facilities for securing the transfer of books needed in the court room from the law library on the floor above. The court room may also be conveniently used for classes of small size.

The clerk and sheriff’s office and the jury room will contain all the facilities necessary to make them efficient and familiar adjuncts to the work of the practice court.

There have been four women students in the College of Law during the past year and there are prospects of a larger attendance hereafter. The secretary to the dean and the librarian will usually be women. It was thought best to make arrangements for them on the main floor rather than on the ground floor, particularly in view of the fact that the space needed is comparatively much less than for men students. Lockers will be placed in the women’s rest room and, should the number of women students largely increase at some future time, the space devoted to the stock room can be added and the stock room removed to the ground floor. The women’s room may be entered only by the use of the key supplied to each woman student, thus preventing its use by women attending other departments of the University.

**Library Floor**

The chief units on the library floor are the main and mezzanine reading rooms, the stack room, the Law Quarterly room and
the private offices for members of the faculty, the dean, the secretary, and the librarian.

The stairway leading from the class-room floor to the library floor will be in keeping with the monumental style and high standard of the entire building. The construction will be of steel and cement and the treads will be of Vermont marble. At the landing, halfway up, are wall spaces for life-size oil portraits of Professors Brooke and Willey, the first two and for many years the only members of the law faculty. These portraits are now being painted by a competent artist and will be ready before the building is completed. A statement respecting these portraits appears elsewhere in this issue of the Quarterly.

From the landing at the head of the stairway, one may pass to the left into the secretary’s office and through it into the dean’s office, or, one may go in front directly into the library. This arrangement has several advantages. In the first place, it frees the library rooms proper from the disturbance of those who come to the library floor on administrative matters, such as registration, handled by the secretary or the dean. Secondly, it obviates the necessity for separate administrative offices on the class-room floor where the entire space is needed for other uses and makes the dean’s office as convenient to him for study purposes as are the offices of other members of the faculty. Since all law school deans do a considerable amount of teaching in addition to their administrative duties this arrangement avoids useless stair-climbing and economizes both time and space.

All persons who enter or leave the library must pass the librarian’s counter, located in the library room immediately in front of the triple entrance doors at the head of the stairs. This fact and the additional facts that practically the entire main reading room and the stairways leading to the mezzanine reading rooms are in full view from the librarian’s counter, render the librarian’s problem of supervision of minimum difficulty.

The interior dimensions of the main reading room are 53 feet by 59 feet 6 inches. Book shelves 6 feet 4 inches in height extend entirely around three sides of the room, thus shutting off opportunity for distraction from the outside and furnishing shelf space for 5,000 volumes of such law books as will be in most constant use. The room is lighted by 48 windows, arranged in two tiers, one immediately above the book shelving and the other not far
from the ceiling. The lighting of the entire floor is further facilitated by six skylights arranged in sets of two above the reading room, the librarian’s station, and the stack. The height of the ceiling on the library floor is 20 feet.

The main reading room is furnished with ten study tables, eighteen feet long by four feet wide, with individual table lights for each two readers. Twelve readers can be comfortably accommodated at each table.

The mezzanine reading rooms are above the professors’ offices and are reached by short stairways leading from the main reading room floor near the librarian’s counter. Adequate lighting is assured by the arrangement of windows whose sills come about five feet from the floor, thus furnishing more space for wall shelving. The study table capacity of the mezzanine floor is figured at seventy-two, thus giving, including the main reading room and the small tables placed at the windows at the end of the stack, a total reading room capacity of practically two hundred. Should it be necessary, one or more additional offices for faculty members or student conference rooms after the style of cubicles may be built on the mezzanine floor. Inquiries as to the desirability of student conference rooms on the library floor show that those deans and librarians who most desire such conference rooms are those who do not have them.

One-half of the main library floor is devoted to the stack, private offices for members of the faculty, the secretary, and the librarian, the vault, the Law Quarterly room, and the faculty toilet. The stack will be of standard type and constructed entirely of metal. The first tier will be nine feet in height and will hold approximately 20,000 volumes; the second tier will not be constructed at present because it will not be needed for several years. When in place it will extend over the entire first tier at the same height as the mezzanine floor over the professors’ offices, thus, when finally completed, making the mezzanine floor cover practically one-half of the third story. Adequate light for the stack room is assured by the four end windows on the first tier, the row of windows on three sides of the mezzanine floor, the double skylight above and the glass floor between the two tiers. The book capacity of the second tier is the same as the first, thus giving a stack capacity of over 40,000 volumes. Altogether the book capacity of the library floor is upwards of 55,000 vol-
umes. Several small tables placed by the windows at the end of the stack will be convenient for those using books located in that part of the room.

The location of the private offices of members of the law faculty close to the stack will promote the efficiency of their work by placing the entire library within easy reach. Students desiring to confer with instructors can easily go to the offices of the faculty members from the reading room by passing through the space in front of the librarian’s counter. All the books, whether on the reading-room shelves or in the stack, excepting only those in the librarian’s room are freely accessible to all students. This fact should strongly promote the use of the library.

The librarian’s office is located back of the librarian’s station and contains space for two thousand reserved books. A view of the counter is obtained from the librarian’s office by the use of clear glass in the partition and door opening from the librarian’s office into the space behind the counter. The electric book lift gives an easy method of transferring books to or from the court room on the second floor and the packing room on the ground floor. A fire-proof vault with a steel door and a combination lock affords protection for rare volumes and records which demand security. A special lavatory for the librarian has been provided. The faculty are provided with a special toilet and lavatory on this floor.

LOCATION

The location of the building has been fixed on the Dr. I. C. White tract of five acres which was purchased last year and lies between the old campus and the business portion of the town. Since the building is to be devoted exclusively to the law school and since law students seldom carry courses in other colleges of the University it was decided to locate the law building at the farthest distant part of the tract. This places it beside the Methodist Church, facing Willey Street, and within ten rods of the junction of Willey and High Streets. This will also make its location more convenient for members of the local bar who desire to use the library. In this location, it is the first University building which will be seen by persons approaching the University from the business portion of Morgantown. The front of the building will be a few feet farther from the street than the church,
thus giving an opportunity for an easy succession of steps and terraces up to the front portico which will be approximately twelve feet above street level. Every effort will be made to make the setting and appearance of the building an appropriate introduction to the University.

COST AND TIME OF COMPLETION

At the time the sum of $125,000 was appropriated it seemed sufficient to complete the building exclusive of land and equipment. When bids were called for in April, 1920, it was found that the rise in cost of labor and materials had made it insufficient, and the Board of Control was unable to go ahead without a contractor by reason of inability to procure some of the essential materials. It now seems possible that construction may not begin before the spring of 1921 and it is certain that the Legislature which convenes next January must be asked to make a deficiency appropriation. Those in charge feel that the need for the building is so urgent and the plan so satisfactory that it must be completed in the style and manner contemplated even though the cost may prove greater than was expected. It is the work of the bar of the state and of the former students of the College of Law to see that the additional funds necessary to complete the building are secured.