

THE ROTUNDA

ROTUNDA/LANDSCAPE CHRONOLOGY

The following chronology is a summary of the Rotunda and landscape histories. In comparing the two narratives, it appears that work on the landscape around the Rotunda has only correlated with work on the Rotunda during major building campaigns: the stone rampart was constructed with the Annex; the Annex was torn down and the north portico and terraces constructed after the 1895 fire; and the Garden Club of Virginia extended the north terraces to University Avenue in 1976, at the same time as the reconstruction of the Rotunda interior.

ROTUNDA	LANDSCAPE
May 1817	Board of Visitors approves purchase of land for the college and adopts Jefferson's layout.
July 1817	Latrobe sends Jefferson a sketch for the Rotunda and Lawn.
January 1819	The Virginia House of Delegates and then the Senate pass legislation stipulating that Central College be the site of the new university.
1819??-1821	Jefferson prepares floorplans, elevations, etc. for Rotunda.
1823	Shell of Rotunda completed; walls to settle in preparation for dome.
March 1824	Brockenbrough wrote Jefferson that Dinsmore and Neilson had "proceeded to purchase scantling and have framed the upper gallery floor of the library."
March 7 1825	University opens.

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October 1825		Board of Visitors agree to a faculty vegetable garden laid out in area extending from north side of Rotunda to the Corner.
November 1, 1825		Jefferson writes Brockenbrough. Letter states that Jefferson plans to erect fence in open field north of Rotunda, directing all traffic through south end of the grounds; Jefferson prefers grass to the North of the Rotunda, as trees would obscure the buildings.
July 4 1826	Jefferson dies	
1826-1827	Rotunda opens as library; interior completed.	
1827-1828	Clock and bell arrive and are installed.	
1827	Iron railing installed at east and west ends of south portico to prevent access to the south wing roofs.	Board of Visitors request planting of ornamental trees "to the north of the buildings and the public road."
1828	Faculty recommends that heating stoves be installed in lecture rooms.	A section of grounds north of the Rotunda enclosed by a post and rail fence.
1829	Fireplace in chemical laboratory to be modified to improve the draught.	
1832	South portico steps constructed	
1837	Board of Visitors direct that marble pavement to be laid in south portico.	
October, November 1838	New bookcases installed in library.	
1840	Glass and tin lantern installed over the skylight.	
1841-42	South wings enclosed and new lecture rooms created. New hipped roofs installed over wings.	

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July 1851-1854	Construction of Robert Mills' Annex.	Stone rampart constructed.
1853-1854	Rotunda steps repaired and reset.	
1854	Water tanks installed in northwest and northeast corners of Rotunda.	
1855		Artificial pond northwest of the Rotunda may have been created at this time to act as a reservoir as part new water system.
1858	Cisterns constructed "on either side of the Rotunda."	William A. Pratt becomes University's first superintendent of buildings and grounds. Plans made for two large parks east and west of ranges. Stables and professors' gardens between Rotunda and the Corner to be removed. 1858 Pratt map shows a semi-circular walkway extending from Staunton Pike (University Avenue) up to the arcade between the Rotunda and the Annex and then back down to the pike. Two cisterns behind the east and west terrace wings of the Rotunda, and a third cistern in the field northwest of Rotunda, also shown.
1857	William Pratt suggests that two wings be added to the Annex.	
1858-1860		Norway spruce and European beech planted north of the Rotunda, and trees planted in east and southwest areas of grounds (some of which survive).
1860	Lantern removed from oculus of dome.	
April 1861	Confederate flag raised over Rotunda.	
1861-1865	Rotunda and other University buildings conscripted for use as hospital space.	

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1870	Sections of Decayed cornice replaced.	1870 map shows areas east, west, and north of the Rotunda planted with many trees and criss-crossed with walks.
1873	Pipes installed on roof to prevent overflow of water tanks.	
1874	Gas pipes laid in Dome Room	
1880		Photograph shows two gas lantern fixtures on posts at foot of south steps.
1882	Tanks above Rotunda refilled and new connections made; affiliated steam-pump refitted.	
1884-1885	Sewers and new water supply constructed, included reservoir.	
1888	Electric lights installed on the University grounds and in its public buildings and dormitories.	
July 1891		Sanborn map shows a well northwest of the Rotunda (the well does not appear on the December 1896 Sanborn map).
October 27, 1895	Rotunda and Annex destroyed by fire.	With Annex demolished, area north of Rotunda again an open space.
1896	McDonald Brothers prepare documents for reconstruction of the Rotunda; reconstruction of southeast and southwest wings begins.	
1896	McKim Mead & White hired to reconstruct Rotunda and to design buildings at south end of Lawn.	McKim Mead and White propose a series of terraces, a parterre, and octagonal paths for the area north of the Rotunda. Symmetrical formal paths proposed for the east and west courtyards.
May 1896-June 1898	Reconstruction of Rotunda	Construction of the new north terrace wings and the colonnades creates garden courts on the east and west sides of the Rotunda; no formal landscaping completed in the courtyards. Rampart wall retained and filled in. Simplified plan for

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		area north of the lawn results in steps leading from north portico to a north terrace.
October 1896	Section of northeast wing collapsed	
1902		1902 photograph of the west courtyard shows only a grassy area and no plantings.
1905		Granolithic walk had been laid from Rotunda to post office.
1906 (circa)		Two flagpoles (one for the US flag, and one for Virginia flag) donated and erected on north lawn.
1910		Moses Ezekiel statue of Jefferson placed on north terrace.
1913		Sun-dial and two stone benches donated by class of 1910 and placed on north lawn.
1916-1922		"Alleys and drives between the West Lawn and West Range" paved with "concrete and brick."
1918		1918 photograph of the west courtyard shows that gravel path around perimeter surrounding a privet hedge defining a grass center. Three magnolia trees are shown as well as what appears to be a locust tree.
1921-1922	Heating system installed in Rotunda	
1930s		First boxwoods planted in the terrace to the north of the Rotunda.
1938	Library collection moved to Alderman Library	

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1938	University applies for federal Public Works Administration grant for improvements to the Rotunda; architect Stanislaw Makielski prepares plans of the northwest, northeast, and southwest wings.	
1938-1939	Marble steps and paving in north and south porticos replaced; wing balustrades replaced with	
January 13, 1955	Professor Frederick D. Nichols meets with Buildings and Grounds Committee of the Board of Visitors, proposing restoration of Rotunda to Jefferson's design.	
November-December 1957		Stone rampart wall dismantled.
1959		Brick terrace to north of Rotunda extended to sidewalk near Main Street.
1960		Fountain installed in east courtyard to honor Colgate W. Darden.
September 25, 1965	Rotunda Restoration Committee appointed.	
December 20, 1965	Rotunda designated as a National Historic Landmark.	
December 29, 1970	The University enters into contract with Ballou and Justice.	
1971	Ballou and Justice prepare full set of drawings for restoration of Rotunda.	
1973	McKim, Mead & White interior demolished.	
1976	Restoration of the Rotunda completed. Dedication held on April 13, 1976, Thomas Jefferson's 23rd birthday.	The Garden Club of Virginia donates the Rotunda "forecourt," extending north terraces to University Avenue. Work includes demolishing four rectangular beds with hedges and groundcover, laying new brick paving, installing concrete benches, and planting Japanese holly,

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		Delaware Valley white azaleas, and English ivy in curvilinear beds around the paving.
1977	Glass doors installed in ground floor and main floor south entrances.	
1978		West courtyard paved with brick and dedicated to Edgar F. Shannon.
1981		Sidewalk east of Rotunda widened for food-service trucks.
1984	Terraces above wings rebuilt.	
December 1987	University of Virginia, together with Monticello, added to World Heritage List.	
1990s		Grass on embankment north of the Rotunda replaced with mondo-grass groundcover; American boxwood replaced with dwarf English box. Laripe planted as groundcover in east and west courtyards. Long Walk widened again to accommodate catering trucks.
1992	Office of Architect of the University officially established.	
1998	Three access ramps installed: one at the southwest corner, one on the south side between Pavilion I and the south steps of the Rotunda, and one at the southeast corner.	
Spring 1998	Stone paving of terraces above southwest wing replaced. Steel-and-brass guardrails installed at each side of the main stair leading from the Rotunda deck to the Lawn level.	

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1999		Steps and ramp to be built in place of worn earthen path on hillside northwest of Rotunda.
2000	Plinth beneath southwest pilaster in south portico removed and replaced; and 1865 two-cent piece and 1879 one-cent piece found beneath plinth.	
2000-2003	Improvement of Rotunda decking.	
2005	Improvement of Rotunda decking.	Only remaining indigenous tree in the area (large white oak) destroyed during storm.
2006-2007	Historic Structure Report prepared.	