

NATIONAL PARK SEMINARY, VILLA
(Walter Reed Medical Center Annex, Building No. 119)
Northwest corner of campus, near Capitol Beltway (I-495)
Silver Spring
Montgomery County
Maryland

HABS No. MD-1109-T

HABS
MD
16-SILSPR,
2T-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Seminary, Villa
(Walter Reed Medical Center Annex, Building No. 119)

HABS No. MD-1109-T

Location: The villa is located in the far northeastern corner of the campus, not far from the beltway.

Significance: The dormitory was added in 1907 to accommodate an expanding student population. In this regard, it is a testament to the school's success and popularity. Its Italianate design is one of the many exotic styles that was common in the late nineteenth century.¹ It was popularized in the U.S. by the renowned architects Andrew Jackson Downing and Andrew Jackson Davis, among others. Wealthy Americans' "Grand Tour" of the citadels of western civilization, especially Italy, also inspired the use of the style in domestic architecture. An Italian-like villa was not only aesthetically pleasing but also brought forth illusions to Old World grandeur. Italianate architecture was used in many building forms, including resort hotels, commercial buildings, and houses.

Like the many other architectural forms on campus, the design was meant to titillate and to educate. The school's flamboyant description of the dorm is quoted in full below.

This building has all the charm of a Florentine mansion. With its tiled roof, its columns, archways and plaza, its patio and pergola bridge (connecting it with the Seminary buildings) it stands as an exponent of the simplicity and beauty of Classic design. The architecture was chosen expressly for its subtle suggestion of Italy--the land of Story and Song. The entrance is a Venetian hallway, appropriately decorated and furnished, cheered by a great open fireplace of quaint Tuscan design. In this building reside teachers and students in all the close comradeship of common pursuits and aims. Here, too, are studios and practice rooms, properly isolated from living rooms. In fact, we have attempted to produce a physical environment that will suggest, and a fertile atmosphere that will germinate, the *artistic ideals* which we her pursue."²

Since the proprietors' intention was to keep a watchful eye on their pupils, it seems incongruous to locate the living quarters so far from the rest of the campus. On the other hand, the site offered convenient access to the train station for girls arriving and departing with heavy loads. The villa was likely to be the first building that students and visitors saw on campus. Because of

¹ See also Campus Planning section in HABS No. MD-1109 for further explication of the Italianate style.

² NPS catalog, 1907.

The columns are no longer extant.

The north facade has a first-floor six-bay arcade that is now boarded over. Except for the northeast corner tower, the typical window is double-sashed. There is a two-bay balcony similar in design to that on the front facade at the second story's center and its east end. The third floor has a six-bay balcony of typical design with an overhanging roof above it. To the northeast, the later addition abuts the original structure at a slight angle. The typical window of this later section is a diamond pattern-over-single light design. This section also has a simple parapet. There is an brick Army exterior fire stairway at the southeast side of the addition.

The south facade has a four-story bell tower with a pyramidal roof with overhanging eaves and an open bell cote. There is a bay window at the east side of the third floor. A round-arched door

³ Ruth Ann Hummer, "People Who Have Molded National Park College," in Chewning, *The History of*

is located on the first floor below the bay. The typical window on this facade is round-arched with a double-sash. There is a single-window balcony on the third floor and two false balconies, one each on the second and third floors. A round-arched door hood overs a small window where a full door and door surround like that on the west facade were once located. During the school's tenure, there was a terrace along the west and south facades of the building. It is no longer extant.

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