

RESOLUTION 11:4 - # 11 OF 2020

WHEREAS, the Town Board of the Town of Poughkeepsie has received an application from Town Historian John Pinna and the Historic Preservation Commission, for the property known as Williams Hall Complex of Vassar College located on College Avenue, Poughkeepsie, NY and being said property with the Grid No. 134689-6161-12-795630-0000, to designate said property as historic landmark; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of Poughkeepsie does hereby authorize and direct the Town Clerk to publish notice of a public hearing to be held on the 2nd day of December, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. at the Town Hall, Town of Poughkeepsie, One Overocker Road, Poughkeepsie, NY; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of Poughkeepsie does direct and authorize the Town Clerk to forward notice by Certified Mail / Return Receipt Requested to the owner or owners of the parcel on which the proposed landmark site or historic district is situated and by regular mail to the owners of all property located within 300 feet of the exterior boundary lines of the subject parcel.

Dated: November 4th 2020

Moved: Jessica Lopez

Seconded: Michael Cifone

Motion passes/ fails: Ayes 6 Nays 0

Abstain 1

JEN/mem
t-10/29/2020
m-11/4/2020

* Via Zoom

| | | AYE | NAY | ABSTAIN |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------|-------|----------|
| X <u>PRESENT/ABSENT</u> | Councilman Renihan | <u>✓</u> | _____ | _____ |
| X <u>PRESENT/ABSENT</u> | Councilman Carlos | <u>✓</u> | _____ | _____ |
| <u>PRESENT/ABSENT</u> | Councilwoman Lopez | <u>✓</u> | _____ | _____ |
| <u>PRESENT/ABSENT</u> | Councilman Cifone | <u>✓</u> | _____ | _____ |
| <u>PRESENT/ABSENT</u> | Councilman Krakower | _____ | _____ | <u>✓</u> |
| X <u>PRESENT/ABSENT</u> | Councilwoman Shershin | <u>✓</u> | _____ | _____ |
| <u>PRESENT/ABSENT</u> | Supervisor Baisley | <u>✓</u> | _____ | _____ |

Town of Poughkeepsie

Historic Preservation Commission



ONE OVERROCKER ROAD

POUGHKEEPSIE, NY12603

Phone: (845) 485-3646

Fax: (845) 485-8583

October 30, 2020

To: Supervisor Jon J. Baisley

From: John R. Pinna, Historian

Topic: Landmark Designation of Williams Hall

The Historic Preservation Commission is recommending the Williams Hall to be recognized and designated as a local historic landmark by the Town of Poughkeepsie Council.

Williams Hall, located at 159, 163, 165-167-169,171 College Avenue, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603 is a significant historical site in the Town of Poughkeepsie. Attached are the reasons for this recommendation.

Respectfully,

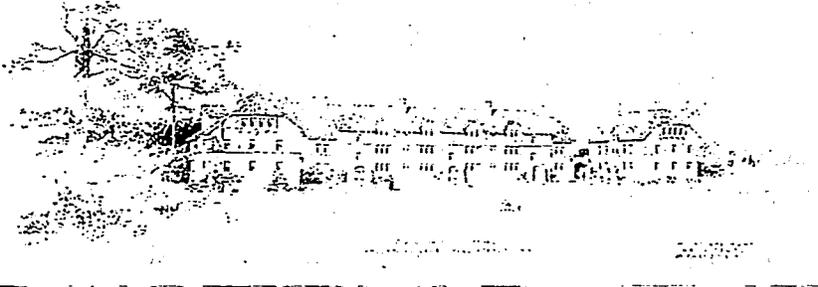
John R. Pinna

Town of Poughkeepsie Historian

Historic Preservation Commission Chairperson

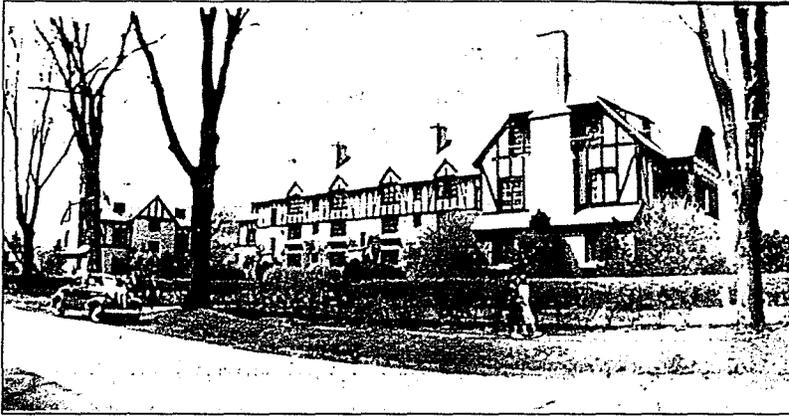
townhistorian@townofpoughkeepsie-ny.gov

(845)485-3646



Williams Hall, the new Faculty House. A corner of the Alumni House can be seen in the background to the left.

From the Vassar Quarterly, Volume V, Number 1, 1 November 1919



Williams Hall, Vassar College Library, Special Collections



Williams Hall ~ Vassar College

Landmark designation

The purpose and scope of the Commission for Historic Preservation for the Town of Poughkeepsie is a simple one as outlined in the Town Code Chapter 126. The HPC acts as a fact-finding advisor to the Town Board of Poughkeepsie whose vote establishes the final decision as to whether a building will or will not be granted Town Landmark status.

This means that the Commission's consulting role is to receive requests for Landmark status for buildings in the Town, and after extensive review, discussion, visits to the site, research into the property's architecture and history, and hearing testimony from surrounding neighbors, interested parties, and the owner(s) of the building, to render a decision as to whether said property is of sufficient value to be designated Landmark status, and to forward that recommendation to the Town Board for its consideration.

The HPC has carefully gone through this process for Williams Hall, and unanimously supports its Landmark designation based on three primary criteria:

- The architectural integrity and interest of Williams Hall,
- The historicity of Williams in terms of its original architect, landscape designer, and as a symbol of its importance to the freedom and worth of women professors in America's premier institution for women's advanced education, and
- Its sighting with regard to its sister building Alumnae House, and its placement and importance to Arlington and its surrounding public lawns and nearby private residences of similar architectural worth.

Architecture

The three Williams Hall buildings were designed by the acclaimed architectural firm of Hunt & Hunt, and constructed between 1921 and 1925. Established by Richard Morris Hunt, the first to bring "stick" style buildings to America, the Hunt firm continued by his sons Richard and Joseph who, with the design for the Metropolitan Museum of Art being their most famous work, were the architects for Williams Hall and its sister building, Alumnae House built 1922-1924. Williams is best described as Tudor Revival in style. As in most 'revival' styles of architecture, Tudor Revival was not imagined to replicate the precise dimensions, materials, or design of the period houses of the Tudor period in England, but rather to mimic and imply the artistic sense of the Tudors in structures wed equally to the ideals of an American late 19th and early 20th Century aesthetic. To that end, the long view of Williams shows wide rooflines with broad, brick chimneys, dormers cutting into slate roofs with multi-paned windows surrounded by the Tudor-signature straight and slanted wood boards outlining the stucco façade and quatrefoil wood ornamentation. Taken together they form an appealing, New York version in the 1920s of an English country house from centuries earlier. Although Alumnae House has a more impressive entrance structure given its importance to Vassar in attracting former students to be part of the well-being of the college, it and Williams are almost completely the same design with similar materials, and showing a near identical architectural intent and design. Each of these buildings are worthy in and of themselves to be preserved as good examples of the Hunt brothers' work as well as the Tudor Revival Style that was in great fashion in the America of the 1920s. More

important, when understood as near-twin sisters, Williams and Alumnae House form an architectural whole, a unity and a placement that the Commission believes should be preserved in full.

History

No building stands alone in and of itself. Who lived or worked in it, who slept in its guestrooms, and what marks of history score its walls can be of significant or greater value to architecture in determining if a building is worthy of being landmarked. The Commission believes that Williams more than fulfills that criteria given its importance and place to the progress and history of women in American education. Vassar College was founded with the sole purpose of providing women the equal quality education that were denied them at the other American 'Ivy League' colleges and universities. The graduates from the late 19th Century until the college became co-ed, were known to greatly cherish and take pride in their degrees from Vassar. It meant that they had had a first-rate training on the same level as their male counterparts, and considering that women had gained the right to vote only one year before Williams started construction, that history, that importance, this Vassar and its symbolic statement in building Williams Hall so that single women faculty would have the right to live lives private and separate from the college student dorms, makes Williams Hall a vital landmark for progress and women's equality that continues to this day.

Siting

As no building exists besides its history, no building stands singular or without context to other structures, landscaping, or its place in the community. Williams Hall is neither an orphan nor a stand-alone. It is part of the planned complex with Alumnae House and the open park space and landscape designs of the Olmstead brothers, the sons of Frederick Law Olmsted, the nation's primary sculptor of American parks and landscape design. All it takes is to spend a few minutes looking towards Williams and Alumnae House from the vantage point of the campus side of Raymond Avenue, and the overall structure and beauty of the original concept becomes overwhelmingly clear. The entrance to College Avenue opens to a world within and true to itself with vast stretches of lawn loved and habitually used by the Arlington community, two Vassar Tudor Revival buildings in park-like settings similar to their English cousins set facing rows of private homes that were designed to purposely mirror Williams and the Olmstead vision of a natural flow between human-made structures, and the nature-given beauty of place. Taking Williams away from this well-intentioned and carefully-planned for corner of the Town of Poughkeepsie, would leave a needless wound on the land and the history of Arlington. There are times when the works of other's hands and the vision of earlier residents of Poughkeepsie might be wiser and gentler than our own. The Commission believes that to be true in this case, and that preserving this picturesque and stately corner of our Town for future generations makes it, and Williams Hall, worthy to be protected and landmarked.