

Walking Tour of Oxford's

***Western  
College  
For  
Women  
Historic  
District***



## Walking Tour of the WESTERN COLLEGE FOR WOMEN HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Western College for Women Historic District, designated by the City of Oxford in 1995, is one of the city's three historic districts and is the only one entirely on a college campus. This self-guided walking tour covers several acres of what was chartered as the Western Female Seminary in 1853. The booklet provides brief descriptions of the history of 24 sites and biographical information about the people whose names are connected with those sites. Modeled after Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in South Hadley, Massachusetts, Western was named for its geographic location, since Mount Holyoke is in the eastern United States. In 1904, this private women's school was re-named The Western College for Women, and the buildings featured in this tour are those used during the years that the school was in operation, from 1855-1974. Most of the campus was listed as a district in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. Western College closed in 1974, and after Miami University took possession of the property, some older buildings were razed and new ones constructed.

### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

To take the walking tour, begin at Peabody Hall on the south end of Western Drive. (Parking on the campus requires a permit from Miami's Parking Services Office located in the Campus Avenue Building on South Campus Avenue.) The circled number next to each building named in the booklet corresponds to a location on the foldout map in the back. The tour takes approximately one hour, before adding the optional sites at the end.

For more information on Oxford history contact the  
Lane Public Libraries'  
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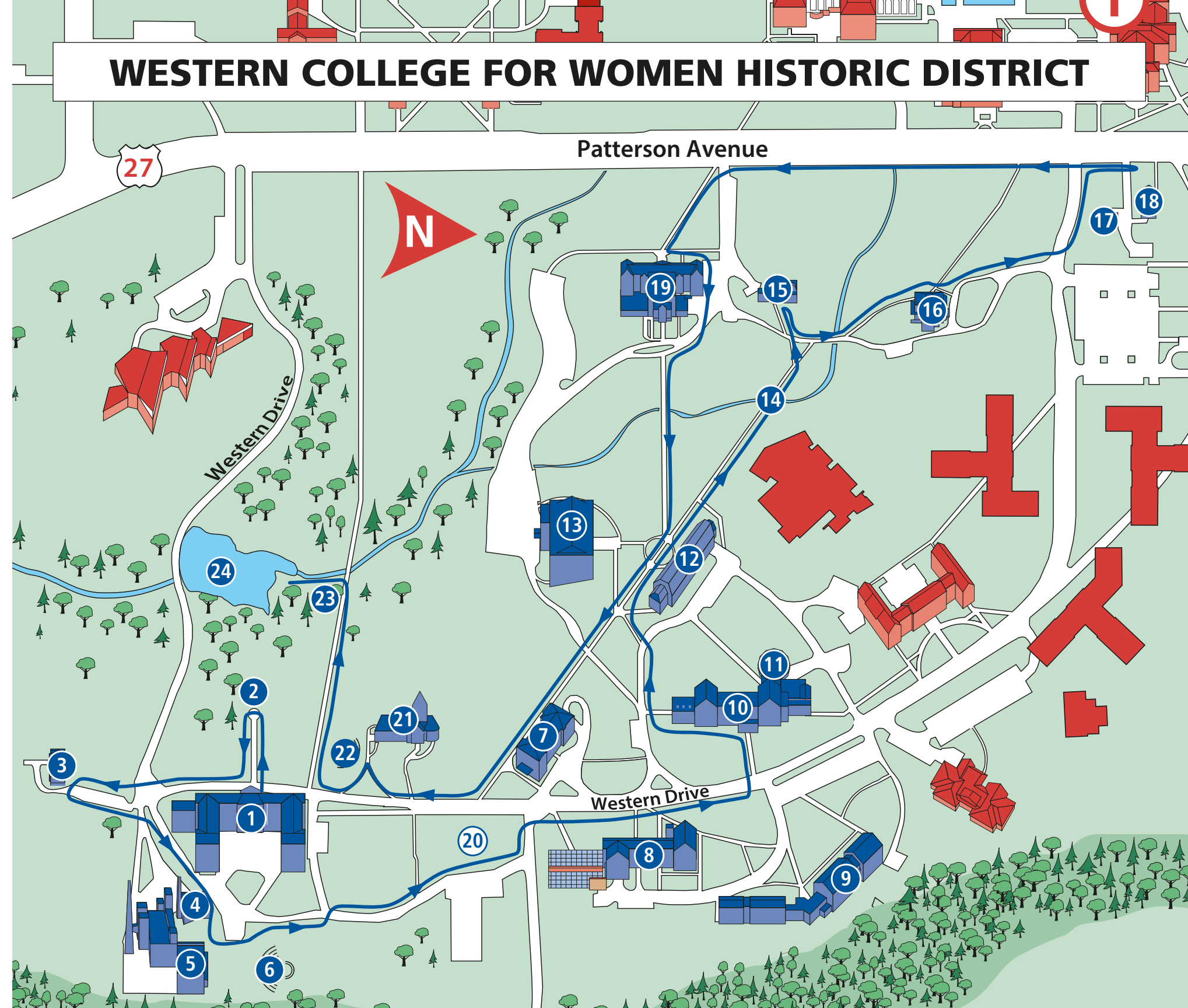
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**Peabody Hall**

**1** Called “Seminary Hall” for many years, this is the oldest building remaining on the Western campus. The first building on the site, a five-story edifice, burned in 1860. The second one, designed by Walter and Wilson of Cincinnati, burned in 1871, but the exterior walls and enough else remained to be incorporated into this third iteration, when the building was reconstructed later the same year.

When the Western Female Seminary opened in 1855, and for almost forty years thereafter, the school had only one building, which was typical of women’s schools of the time. This sole building included classrooms, dormitory space, chapel, dining hall, kitchen, library, administrative offices, and living quarters for the female faculty. The reconstruction after the second fire added a front porch, a separate chapel wing, a rooftop tower, a bay window, and a partial fourth floor. The chapel was sometimes used for gymnastics, and in the 20th century the space was converted to a theatre named for faculty member Gertrude Leonard. In 1905 the building was named “Helen Peabody Hall” in honor of the woman who had presided over the school from 1855-1888. The small tower, a prominent feature at the peak of the roof, was removed in 1927. From 1943-1972, the building also accommodated local children in a Nursery School provided by the Home Economics Department and later assisted by the Psychology Department. Peabody Hall has been renovated several times, most recently in an historically appropriate rehabilitation by Miami in 1994-96. The Western College Memorial Archives are located on the lower level.

**Helen Peabody** was born in 1826 in Newport, New Hampshire, the youngest of fourteen children in a farming family. She attended Concord Literary Institute where her brother was principal and then taught at Kimball Union Academy in Meriden, New Hampshire. In



In 1848 she graduated from Mount Holyoke Seminary, where she had been a student of its founder, Mary Lyon. She taught at Mount Holyoke, the first of the prestigious "Seven Sisters" schools, before coming to Oxford in 1855 with a small faculty of women who had also earned degrees at Mount Holyoke. She retired from Western after thirty-three years as principal and moved to Pasadena, California, where she died in 1905. Her ashes were buried in the Western College section of the Oxford Cemetery.

"No one who has ever been a student at The Western can forget the spring days on our lovely campus; the rows of blossoming cherry and apple-trees bordering the walk over to Alumnae Hall; the soft blue film which touches the wide reach of country upon which we look out southward; the gorgeous sunsets seen from the front-room windows, and the wild flowers of the beech woods, east of the college, which have been gathered and rejoiced over for more than forty years by Western girls."

*The Western-Oxford, May 1897*



Heath Chime

**2 (now in the Molyneaux-Western Tower)**

The Heath Chime, a set of eleven bells, was a gift of Elizabeth McCullough Heath in 1924. The bells originally hung in the tower of Alumnae Hall, just north of Peabody Hall, and called students to chapel, academic ceremonies, and special events for half a century. After the demolition of Alumnae Hall, the Molyneaux-Western Tower (53 feet tall) was constructed for the Heath Chime with three additional bells. Designed by James Cooper and fabricated by the Verdin Company, the Tower was intended to symbolize the union of Miami and Western. The Molyneaux Foundation, a local philanthropic trust, along with Western alumnae, provided funds for the Tower, which honors John Molyneaux, trustee and an acting president of the College.

**Elizabeth (McCullough) Heath**, donor of the Chime, was born in Oxford in 1863. She was the daughter of Thomas McCullough, one of the town's most affluent residents, whose income came from banking, milling, insurance, livery, and grocery businesses. She attended Western for a year and in 1897 married Fletcher Heath, whose career took him from banking to the co-founding of a business that became the Pure Oil Company. Their lives included European travel and entertaining far from their Butler County roots. When she died in Daytona Beach, Florida, in 1937, she left money for the construction of a hospital in her hometown.

**John Molyneaux** was born in 1873 in New Richmond, Ohio, the son of a dentist. He attended Miami University from 1893-95, graduated from dental school in Cincinnati, and married Oxford College graduate Mary Rude. Molyneaux practiced dentistry in Oxford for many years and served as a Western College trustee from 1914-1953 and as acting president of the college in 1941. He died in Petoskey, Michigan, in 1953.





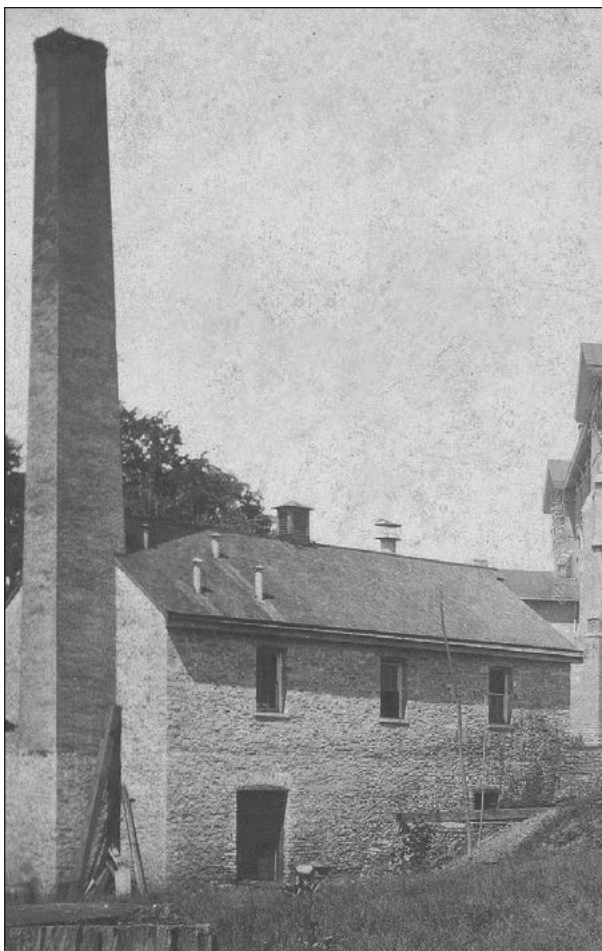
**The Lodge**

**3** Constructed in 1926, this rustic building was a gift of Colonel A. E. Humphreys, who was a college trustee from 1925-1927. The Lodge was originally intended as a gift to Fletcher and Elizabeth Heath for their farm west of Oxford, but the Heaths, who probably knew Humphreys through the oil business, suggested that it be donated to Western instead. The unhewn spruce logs were shipped from Humphreys' property in Colorado, and a replica of his Rocky Mountain hunting lodge near Wagon Wheel Gap was constructed at the top of Western's sledding hill. Inside is an imposing stone fireplace, created by Cephias Burns, a noted African American stonemason who lived in Oxford. First used as the YWCA headquarters on the campus, the one-story Lodge became the recreation center for a student body of several hundred.



**Albert E. Humphreys** was born in 1860 in what soon became West Virginia. He received the title, "colonel," from his service in the governor's guard as a young man. A decade after he married Alice Boyd in 1887, they moved to Colorado with their two sons. Known as the "King of the Wildcatters" for

his development of oil fields in Wyoming, Texas, and Oklahoma, Humphreys became a very wealthy man. In 1927, he shot himself and died soon after. Whether his death was accidental or intentional was not determined, but rumors persisted that he had committed suicide rather than testify about his business dealings connected with the Teapot Dome scandal. (His Denver home, known today as the Grant-Humphreys Mansion, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is open to the public.)



**Steam Plant**

**4** Although it appears to be a one-story building when viewed from the north side, this two-story steam plant of fieldstone construction with a broad hip roof is a 1924 enlargement of an earlier engine house on the site. Planned by Cincinnati engineer Walter Franz, the rectangular building housed the steam boilers that furnished heat for the college. A brick chimney of 95 feet can be seen at the rear, and a small frame porch remains on the front. Beginning in the mid-1950s, Western's Theater Department used the upper level as its workshop for stage design and set construction. (The large heating plant beyond was added by Miami in the 1970s.)



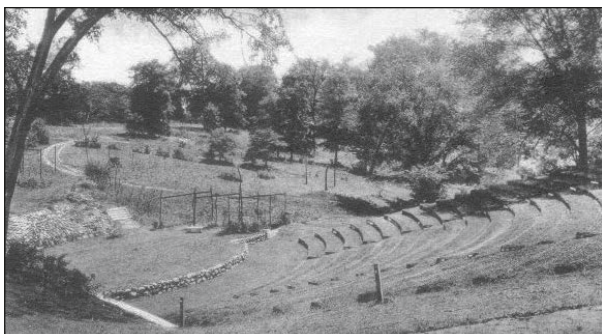


**Sawyer Gymnasium**

**5** Construction began in 1913 on the red brick mission-style structure that would be furnished with state-of-the-art equipment including rowing machines, flying rings, and the first swimming pool in Oxford. For many years Western students had to meet a swimming requirement to graduate. A two-story, frame, south wing was constructed as an overflow dormitory in 1919 and called the Barracks for its resemblance to military housing. Later used for other purposes (student union, infirmary, faculty apartments, visitor accommodations), the Barracks had other names before being removed by Miami in 1974. Sawyer Gymnasium was named for Mary Alma Sawyer, who was acting president of Western at the time of the building's construction and was instrumental in acquiring a pool for the College.



**Mary Alma Sawyer**, the daughter of a farmer, was born in Reading, Vermont, in 1854. She earned degrees from Mount Holyoke Seminary and studied at Harvard before receiving an honorary degree from Miami. She was also the last faculty member hired by Western's first principal, Helen Peabody. Sawyer came to Western as an instructor in Chemistry and Physics in 1887 and was recommended by President McKee in 1895 to serve as the first dean of the college, a position she held until her retirement in 1920. She also served as acting president of the College from 1906-1908 and from 1912-1914. Sawyer died in Chester, Vermont, in 1942.



**Ernst Nature Theatre**

**6** In a space between two small hills, the Ernst Nature Theatre was built into the landscape as an outdoor performance space in 1921. Professor Gertrude Leonard had appealed for funds, and college trustee Richard P. Ernst responded with a donation along with the stipulation that the theater be laid out by an architectural landscape firm. The site was chosen for the best acoustics and oriented so that the sun was not in the eyes of actors or spectators. Plans were drawn by Olmsted Brothers of Brookline, Massachusetts, but local men did the work under the direction of President Boyd. One stage was cut into the hillside with another smaller stage above it, and the displaced soil was used to create sod terraces for audience seating. A drainage system and underground lighting conduits were installed a few years later. The space was used for theatrical performances and the annual Tree Day ceremony. Alumnae of the college paid to renovate the theatre in 1997.

**Richard P. Ernst** was born in 1858 in Covington, Kentucky, the son of a bank cashier. He graduated from Centre College in Danville, Kentucky, in 1878 and later earned his law degree from Cincinnati Law School. Ernst served as a Western College trustee from 1890-1933. He was an attorney in Cincinnati and Covington, a U.S. Senator from Kentucky in the 1920s, and an advocate of women's rights. He died in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1934.





**McKee Hall**

**7** The first separate dormitory on the campus, McKee Hall was designed by architect Silas Reese Burns of Dayton. Built in 1904 in the Beaux Arts style, it was initially called New Hall and served as living quarters for some of the student body that was outgrowing the space in Peabody Hall. The attic was used as the school's gymnasium until Sawyer was built. The red brick edifice was originally constructed with wide corridors, open stairwells, large windows, and rooms placed to have sun at least part of the day. Later changes made in order to meet fire codes increased safety but eliminated the feeling of openness. The three-story building was named McKee for two people. The first was Leila McKee, the second principal of the Seminary, who was also the first president when the school became a four-year liberal arts college. It was under her administration that the curriculum was modernized, and a number of school traditions were started. The second person was her father, the Rev. John McKee, a trustee and friend of the school.



**Leila (McKee) Welsh** was born in 1858 in Danville, Kentucky. The daughter of a Centre College professor and minister, she was educated at Caldwell Female Institute in Danville and the Western Female Seminary in Oxford before earning degrees from Welles-

ley College and Centre College. She also received an honorary Ph.D. from Centre in 1892. During her tenure from 1888-1904, Western students started the class

flag tradition, selected blue and white as the college colors, and officially adopted the college hymn. She also brought the Tree Day ritual from Wellesley. In 1904 McKee resigned to marry businessman James B. Welsh of Kansas City. She served as a trustee of Western College for Women from 1909 to 1938, was the step-mother of two sons, and received an honorary degree from Western in 1927. She died in Kansas City in 1938. Her father, the Rev. John Lapsley McKee, born in 1827, was a graduate of Centre College and Danville Theological Seminary. In addition to being a minister at several Presbyterian churches in Kentucky, he was a professor and vice-president of Centre College for twenty-five years. He was married to Sarah Speake and died in Danville, Kentucky, in 1902.

“Whatever our recollections of Western, they are inseparable from the remembered loveliness of the campus: tall green pine trees and brilliant autumn leaves; snow-covered hills, the Chapel tower; valleys and stone bridges; evening chimes; bird songs; spring flowers and soft, rainy twilights; beauty to last in memory all our lives.”

Mariana Reed, Class of 1938



**Boyd Hall**

**8** Designed by Charles Cellarius, the architect credited with giving nearby Miami University its Neo-Georgian style, this 1947 building was designed in a contemporary style. Within the Science Hall, as it was originally named, were classrooms, laboratories, an astronomy terrace, and a science library. The library was called the Oxford Room because people from the town gave money to furnish it with walnut shelves and paneling. The two-story edifice, with a taller, flat-roofed tower, was built of native bluestone with a slate roof. In 1963, Science Hall was named for William W. Boyd, Western's president for seventeen years. A small attached greenhouse for botany research was replaced by a much larger Miami greenhouse in 1977.



**William W. Boyd** was born in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, in 1862, the son of a minister. He received academic degrees from Muskingum College and Miami University and worked as a teacher, principal, and superintendent before becoming a dean at Ohio State University. He married Mary Gates

in 1887, and they were the parents of two children. (Their daughter Marion, herself an author, was the wife of noted regionalist writer Walter Havighurst.) Boyd served as Western's president from 1914-1931, a period of notable growth in student enrollment, faculty numbers, and campus development. He built his retirement home of gray stone across the street from Western's Presser Hall, but after living a short time in Grey Gables, he accepted another position and moved to Columbus, Ohio, where he died in 1944.



**Thomson Hall**

**9** This residence hall, originally called “New Dormitory,” housed 166 women and provided offices for student organizations on the ground floor. Completed in 1963, it was designed by Oxford architects, Small, Wertz & Associates, and built by William Agee Construction. A contemporary two-story building of red brick, its north and south end walls are faced with limestone. The design avoided long corridors and provided study and discussion areas in central locations. In the early 1970s the college allowed pets on the lower floor, but this experiment was pronounced a disaster and soon ended. In 1970 the building was named for Mary Dabney Thomson, seventh president and also a trustee. The two wings were given separate names taken from President Thomson’s family—Brent and Dabney.

**Mary M. (Dabney) Thomson** was born in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1886. Her father served as president of the University of Tennessee and then of the University of Cincinnati, both of which she attended. In 1907, she married Alexander Thomson, who later became



president of Champion Paper Company in Hamilton. She served on the board of trustees of Western College from 1933-1953, except for the time when she was acting president in 1941 and president from 1942-1945. She resigned from the presidency for health reasons. In addition to receiving several honorary degrees, she was the mother of five children and was named American Mother of the Year in 1943. Her death occurred in Cincinnati in 1980.



**Clawson Hall**

**10** The first building completed after World War II, like others before, was funded in part by alumnae donations. A substantial bequest in the will of trustee and alumna Edith Clawson, Class of 1900, resulted in her name being selected for the new dormitory. The architect was Charles Cellarius, who designed an asymmetrical plan for the fieldstone building of three stories with a central three-arched entrance of Bedford limestone. With slate roof, leaded glass entrance, upper level sundeck, and rear terrace, the dormitory also included a basement snack bar, a large dining room, and a kitchen that served the entire campus. Student enrollment reached 566 the year after the building opened in 1946.



**Edith Clawson** was born in Hamilton, Ohio, in 1878, the daughter of one of the founders of Black & Clawson, a company that manufactured paper mill machinery. After receiving an A.B. degree from Western College in 1900, she earned a second A.B. degree from the University

of Chicago, studied at the University of Berlin, and did graduate work at the University of Chicago, where she subsequently taught. She also traveled extensively in Europe and East Asia. Returning to Hamilton, she was active in the Women's Club, the Methodist church, and the Red Cross, and when she moved to Los Angeles, she chaired the Mission Department of her church. She was an active alumna and served as a trustee from 1934-37. She died in Hollywood, California, in 1944.



**Alexander Dining Hall**

**11** Completed in 1962 and attached to Clawson Hall, this twelve-sided dining hall was designed to seat a projected student enrollment of 750. It featured cafeteria-style service for the first time in Western's history and was large enough to accommodate the entire college at one sitting. Designed by local architects Keppel Small and Willis Wertz, who were also Miami faculty members, along with associates C.H. Barcus and Frank Swift, it was the first new building for the college in fifteen years. W. E. Agee of Hamilton was the general contractor. The contemporary building was constructed of native fieldstone with large walls of glass and a flared roofline. It was named for alumna Bess M. Alexander, who bequeathed over half the funds needed for construction.

**Bess (Mason) Alexander** was born in Illinois in 1886. She graduated from Western College in 1906 and continued to be a loyal member of the Puget Sound Branch of the Alumnae Association, making numerous gifts to her alma mater. She married Ray Alexander, a lumber company



sales agent in 1909, and they spent most of their married life in Seattle, Washington, where she died in 1960. They had no children, and she remembered Western College in her will with a sizable unrestricted gift.





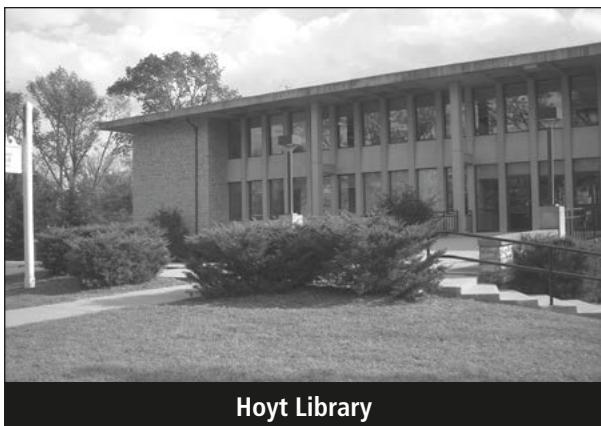
**Mary Lyon Hall**

**12** Constructed in 1925, this residence hall was originally planned as part of a quadrangle that was to include two other dormitories and a dining hall, but only this one was built. It was named for Mary Lyon in 1934 to honor the founder of Mount Holyoke College, who was still serving as its principal when Helen Peabody graduated in 1848. Designed by Hamilton architect Frederick Mueller and built by Oxford contractor Joseph C. Wespiser, the limestone dormitory included a ground floor recreation room and kitchens. Later classrooms and laboratories for the Home Economics Department occupied the space formerly used for kitchens.



**Mary Lyon** was born in 1797 in Buckland, Massachusetts, the daughter of a farmer. Despite economic hardship, she was able to attend Sanderson Academy and Byfield Seminary in Massachusetts and taught at several schools before founding Mount Holyoke

Female Seminary in South Hadley in 1837. In establishing Mount Holyoke for young women of modest means, she combined rigorous academic requirements with Christian commitment. She created a system where costs were kept low by having students perform some of the domestic work. In addition to Western, several other women's schools were patterned after Mt. Holyoke, and other campuses have named buildings in her honor. She died in 1849 in South Hadley.



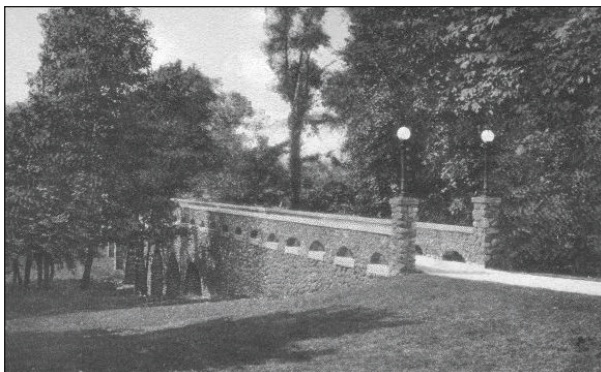
Hoyt Library

**13** By the late 1960s the library in Alumnae Hall was deemed inadequate, and students launched a fundraising drive for a new library. Oxford architects Small & Wertz, who also taught architecture at Miami, designed the modernist building, and Charles Adrian was the contractor. In 1971, two years after ground was broken, 70,000 books were moved into the new building. When it was dedicated the following year, it was called the Library Building, but after students petitioned the administration, it was named Hoyt Library in 1974 to honor the long-serving dean of the College. In 1981, Miami changed the name to Hoyt Hall because it was no longer used as a library.

**Phyllis Hoyt** was born in West Somerville, Massachusetts, in 1918, the daughter of a dentist. She earned an A.B. from Russell Sage College and a master's degree from Tufts University. She began her career as instructor and dean at Lasell Junior College before coming to



Western College in 1946. At Western, she served as professor of sociology, assistant to the dean, assistant dean, director of student activities, dean of students, and vice president of student affairs. After 28 years, she left Western in 1974 to be vice president of student affairs at her alma mater, Russell Sage College, in Troy, New York. She retired from there in 1983 and wrote a memoir of her years at Western, titled *Where the Peonies Bloomed*. She died in Peterborough, New Hampshire, in 2011.



**Stone Bridge**

**14** Between 1922 and the early 1930s, during the administration of President Boyd, Oxford mason Cephias Ashler Burns constructed ten handsome stone bridges across the ravines and small streams on the campus. Burns carefully selected cannonball stones from the local creeks for the bridges and lampposts, which he designed and built with his crew of African American workers. This 1922-23 bridge, which replaced an earlier wooden one, has 16 arches and six lampposts and was one of several of his bridges featured on postcards.



**Cephias Ashler Burns** was born in Oxford in 1871, the son of one of the first African Americans elected to Oxford village council. Burns received his education in the public schools and learned his trade from his father, who was a stone-cutter and mason. In addition to the bridges, he

did stonework on numerous Western buildings and gateposts, Miami's 1909 administration building, and other structures in Oxford. Cephias and his wife Carrie (Bruner) Burns had two children, one of whom died in childhood. After the death of his first wife, Burns married India Churchman, who also preceded him in death. He died in 1935 and was buried in Oxford's Woodside Cemetery.



**Stillman Kelley Studio**

**15** Western's graduating class of 1916 raised funds to build this combination cottage and studio for composer Edgar Stillman Kelley, the first artist-in-residence at any college in the country. He and his wife, Western music instructor Jessie (Gregg) Kelley, had come to the College in 1910 when Western offered him a resident fellowship to write music. The one-and-a-half-story house, designed by Columbus architect Wilbur T. Mills, shows Colonial-style influences in its clapboard siding, stone chimney, and gambrel roof. The Kelleys left Oxford in 1944, and in the following years the studio home continued to be used for faculty housing. Much of its charm, however, was later obscured by an obtrusive addition made by Miami in 1974.

**Edgar Stillman Kelley** was born in Sparta, Wisconsin, in 1857. His mother, an accomplished musician, was his first teacher, and he continued his study of music in Chicago. He graduated from the Stuttgart Conservatory in Germany, taught at universities in



New York, and married fellow musician Jessie Gregg in 1891. They lived in Berlin for eight years, where he composed orchestral scores and performed for European audiences. After returning to the U.S., they came to Western College, where he composed some of his best-known works, "The New England Symphony" and "Pilgrim's Progress." By the time he died in 1944, he was lauded as the "Dean of American Composers." The ashes of both husband and wife were later interred in the Western College section of the Oxford Cemetery.



**Patterson Place**

**16** Built in 1898 on the site of a house that burned decades earlier, Glenwilde was initially the summer home of James Patterson. Constructed by local contractor T. C. Lloyd on the site of what students called "The Ruins," the two-story house of dark brick with porches on three sides did not have central heat or hot water. The property, which included 70 acres, was acquired by Western College in 1914. After an addition to the rear and modernizing of the interior, the house was used as the home of all Western presidents until 1974. At that time it became the headquarters of a new alumnae association and still includes a museum of Western memorabilia.



**James R. Patterson** was born in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, in 1834, the son of a Presbyterian clergyman. The family moved to Ohio in 1851, and Patterson earned an A. B. degree from Miami University before becoming a Cincinnati businessman, newspaper correspondent, Louisiana plantation owner, and Miami University trustee. A bachelor, he and his unmarried sister spent

their summers in Oxford and winters in Mansfield, Louisiana. Patterson was a generous contributor to the Alumni Library at Miami and received an honorary degree from his alma mater in 1912. Patterson died in 1913 and was buried in the Oxford Cemetery near his parents and siblings. The following year, Glenwilde became the home of Western's president, and the dwelling took on the name "Patterson Place."



**Stancote House**

**17** This house was built in 1933 on Western property as the retirement home of Ida Windate, a Western professor, with the understanding that it would belong to the College after her death. The English style residence of rough-cut, mottled fieldstone was designed by architect Charles Cellarius of Cincinnati and constructed by Miami Valley Lumber Company of Oxford. Given an appealing and English-sounding name, "Stancote," it originally had casement windows and an attached garage that was later made into a room. Beginning with the owner's death in 1948 and until the school closed, the house was used as the official home of the Dean of Western College.

**Ida M. Windate**, the daughter of a blacksmith, was born in Fairhaven, Ohio, in 1860. She received both her A.B. degree and M.A. degree from Ohio Wesleyan University. After teaching in Ohio and Illinois and doing research at the British Museum, she came to Western College to teach English from 1915-1934.



During this time she also took students on travel seminars to the British Isles. Windate enjoyed her retirement years, receiving visits from friends and former students at Stancote House and practicing golf on the campus. She died in 1948 and was buried in the Western College section of the Oxford Cemetery. In 1991, an endowed writing center, located in Peabody Hall, was established in her name.



**Langstroth Cottage**

**18** This house was built in 1856 by the Rev. Edward Root, who was minister of Oxford's Second Presbyterian Church and of Western Seminary. The two-story red-brick house took its name from the next resident, the Rev. Lorenzo L. Langstroth who lived in it from 1859 until 1887. The nine-acre property was the ideal location for his beekeeping work, with room for hives and orchards. By the early 1900s, Western owned the property and used the dwelling to house workmen, and later faculty, after various remodeling efforts, including the addition of front and back porches. Professors of music, theatre, and writing were among those who lived there until the late 1960s when it was remodeled for use as the home of the Dean of Students, Phyllis Hoyt, until the College closed in 1974. The house was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1976, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1982, given an Ohio Historical Marker in 2002, and added to Oxford's Western College for Women Historic District in 2012.



**Lorenzo Langstroth**, one of eight children, was born in Philadelphia in 1810. He graduated from Yale's Divinity School and initially served as a Congregational minister and taught school. An early interest in insects became more than a hobby after he moved to Oxford, where he raised and sold bees, having invent-

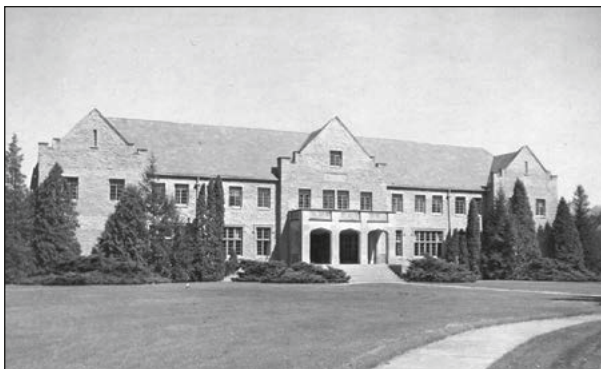
ed and patented a moveable frame hive in 1853. This invention and his book, *Langstroth on the Hive and Honey Bee*, made him known as "The Father of American Beekeeping." Living near Western allowed him to conduct services there occasionally, and he continued to preach after leaving Oxford. His wife was buried in the Oxford Cemetery, but he was buried in Dayton, where he had gone to live with a daughter a few years before his death in 1895.



"This school is a young sister of Holyoke; scarcely out of frock and pinafore to be sure, but a very promising child for all that. She already shows a most striking and daily increasing resemblance to her Eastern sister; and bids fair to grow in favor with God and man."

*Seminary Journal*,  
Mary O. Nutting, October 9, 1855





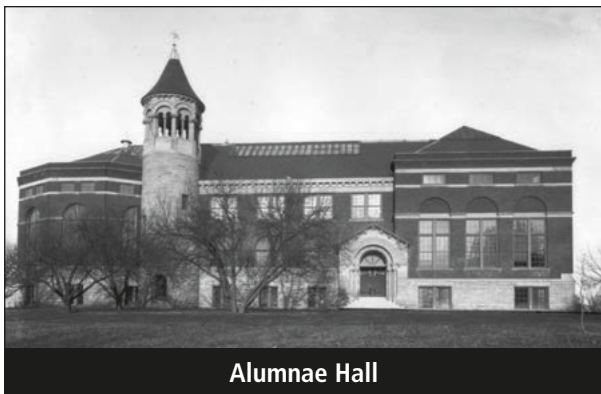
**Presser Hall**

**19** Constructed of gray stone with a sharply gabled roof, casement windows, slightly pointed arches, and rose decorations on the entrance porch, Presser Hall is reminiscent of the Tudor style. The architects were Geyer and Neuffer of Dayton, and the local contractor was Joseph Wespiser. Completed in 1931, Presser Hall was designed to house the music department of the College and included practice rooms, offices, classrooms, studios, recital rooms, a music library, and an auditorium (named for Edgar Stillman and Jessie Gregg Kelley). The building's name was chosen because half the construction expense was paid for by the Presser Foundation in Philadelphia, a philanthropic organization dedicated to music.



**Theodore Presser** was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1848, the son of a glue maker from Germany. He studied music at Mt. Union College in Ohio, the Northeast Conservatory of Music in Boston, and at the Leipzig Conservatory in Germany before marrying

Helen Curran in 1890. After her death in 1905, he married Elise Houston in 1908. He was in the music retail business before teaching at Ohio Northern University, Ohio Wesleyan University, and Hollins College in Virginia. He started *Etude*, a monthly music journal in 1883, established the Presser Home for Retired Music Teachers in 1914, and established the Presser Foundation in 1916. He died in Philadelphia in 1925.



**Alumnae Hall**

**20** From 1892 until 1977, Alumnae Hall stood on what today is a grassy open space. A memorial that includes bronze plaques and the building's cornerstone marks the site. This imposing edifice was the first to be constructed on the campus after the main building. Designed by architect Joseph Yost and constructed by contractor Thomas Jones, both of Columbus, the building plan appears related to an earlier proposed addition to Peabody Hall drawn by the firm of New York architect James Renwick, Jr. Exhibiting French Romanesque elements, the red brick building, accented with stone, included a turret in which the Heath Chime was installed in 1924. The new science labs, art galleries, lecture rooms, and art studios enhanced the college offerings, and a window designed by Mary Tillinghast and shown at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, was installed in the twelve-sided library. The name for the building was chosen because alumnae donations, led by Olivia Meily Brice, paid for its construction, plus later enhancements and repairs. After a new science hall and library were built, the basement of Alumnae Hall was used as a student center for a few years. It was razed by Miami in 1977 and the footprint of the building was later outlined with a border of flowers that bloom every spring.

"I have always been glad that my potato lands were put to such good use."

James Fisher to Mary Adams Draper, President of the Alumnae Association, May 15, 1895



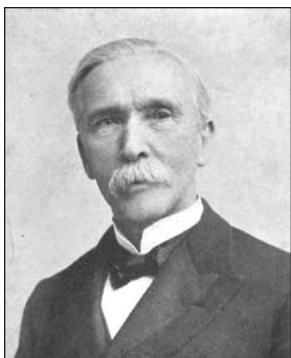
**Catherine Olivia (Meily) Brice** was born in Lima, Ohio, in 1840, the daughter of an agricultural implements dealer. In 1866, she graduated from Western, and in 1869 married attorney Calvin Brice, who later made a fortune in the railroad business and was elected to the U.S. Senate. She was president of the Alumnae Association before being chosen as the first woman to serve on Western's Board of Trustees. Her large gift was the first monetary donation for the proposed new library building. At the same time Alumnae Hall was being constructed, Miami University was erecting a new science building, Brice Hall, with money given by her husband, who graduated from Miami in 1863. The mother of five children, Olivia Brice died in New York in 1900 and was buried next to her husband in Lima.



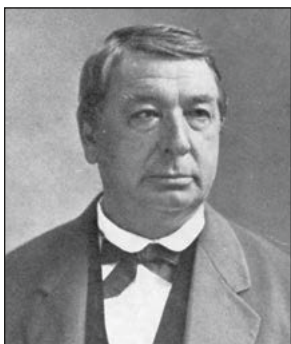
**Kumler Chapel**

**21** Dedicated in 1918, the Norman Gothic style chapel of gray stone was designed by Carriere and Hastings of New York and was inspired by a parish church in Normandy. The local contractor was Thomas Lloyd, who worked with master stonemason Cephas Burns and his crew. After the tower collapsed during construction, a structural improvement was made, and eight years later buttresses were added to the nave. Each stained glass window, including the Tillinghast Window, moved from Alumnae Hall, has its own unique

story. Kumler Memorial Chapel replaced the chapel in Peabody Hall and was used for church services, ceremonies, commencements, concerts, weddings, and lectures by such notables as Carl Sandburg and Thornton Wilder. The chapel was named "Kumler" to honor members of the donors' family.



Miami graduate **Jeremiah Kumler** (1830-1909), later the minister of Oxford's Second Presbyterian Church and a Western trustee, married Mount Holyoke graduate **Abigail Goulding** (1835-1912) of Massachusetts a year after she arrived to teach at Western. Their daughter Anna graduated from Western in 1879, and married John Wight, who was in the cement business. Ella, another daughter, married oil company manager William McKelvy and was awarded an honorary degree from Western in 1926. Together the daughters donated money for the college chapel in honor of their parents and their paternal grandfather.



**Elias Kumler** (1809-1873), grandfather of the chapel donors, was born in Pennsylvania, one of eleven children of a United Brethren Church bishop. He married Anna Clippinger and became a Presbyterian when he moved to Oxford, where he was a successful banker and served many

years as a Western trustee after helping to incorporate the Seminary. He and his wife were the parents of eleven children and known for giving most of them singularly unusual given names.



### Freedom Summer Memorial

**22** In June 1964, after Western students had gone home for the summer, their campus gained national attention when over 800 young civil rights workers came to train for what was then called the Mississippi Summer Project. Led by SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee), with support from COFO (Council of Federated Organizations), the young volunteers were taught survival skills before going to register black voters in what was considered the most racist state in the country. Three of the young people were murdered by law enforcement officials and KKK (Ku Klux Klan) members soon after arriving in Mississippi. These men, Michael Schwerner, James Cheney, and Andrew Goodman, along with the other civil rights workers, were memorialized with the amphitheater in 1999 designed by Miami University Architect Robert Keller. An Ohio Historical Marker was added in 2000.

“Here may a fountain spring today  
To bless this world of sin and guilt,  
And flow till earth shall pass away,  
And the new heaven and earth be built.”

Last verse of Dedication Hymn  
written by the Rev. Thomas Spencer  
for the Seminary, 1855



**Summer House**

**23** Before 1860, the Western grounds had a small, square structure with hip roof that students enjoyed as a shelter from rain and sun and as destination for campus strolls. The roof was originally supported by posts made of tree branches, but in the mid-1930s these were replaced with stone. The stairs on the west side of the Summer House lead to a small bridge from which the pond can be viewed. In earlier days, a footpath led from the Summer House to Patterson Avenue.



**Western Pond**

**24** The Western Pond appears in some of the earliest references to the Seminary and was used to supply ice in the years before refrigeration. A stone structure for storing ice stood at the southeast edge of the pond for many years until it was replaced by the boat house. The stone boat house was built by Cephias Burns in the early 1920s and has a flat top from which students can look out over the pond. At that time Burns replaced the wood entrance drive bridge with a stone one that was later reconstructed by Miami, most recently in 2009. Over the years the pond was dredged and enlarged. Used for ice-skating in winter, the pond attracted ducks in warm weather, and swans were sometimes placed there.

“...and the foot path chased down the hill by the little brook in the ravine that follows its windings...after crossing the rustic bridge I sat down on the bench under the trees at the foot of the steps leading to the summer-house...”

Helen Peabody,  
in a greeting to alumnae,  
January 18, 1885

## **Western College in Oxford History**

Oxford was laid out in 1810 to be the location of Ohio's second public university, chartered the year before. By 1856, the village was the home of five institutions of higher learning. Miami University, Oxford Theological Seminary, Oxford Female Institute, Western Female Seminary, and Oxford Female College made Oxford a true college town reminiscent of the city in England for which it was named. Before the end of the 19th century, the Theological Seminary had moved to Illinois, and the Female Institute and the Female College had merged to become Oxford College for Women. By the end of the 20th century, the two remaining women's schools had closed, leaving only Miami. Western College, however, had lasted 121 years.

The Western Female Seminary was chartered in 1853 and opened in 1855 as a western representation of Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, later Mount Holyoke College, in Massachusetts. Both had a vision of missionary zeal combined with high-quality, low-cost education. Strongly supported by the Second Presbyterian Church of Oxford, the Seminary opened with Helen Peabody, a Mount Holyoke graduate, as its first principal.

The Seminary was established on about 30 acres of land in Oxford Township on the east side of Patterson Avenue. The heavily wooded, rolling land with ravines and streams rose eastward to a low hill where Seminary Hall was placed. Students and faculty lived and worked in this building, later named for Helen Peabody. It was secluded from the village of Oxford and Miami University — both on the west side of Patterson Avenue.

The grounds included a barn and small farmyard behind Seminary Hall, and vegetable gardens and orchards where the Seminary raised some of its food. By the end of the 19th century, the college had acquired land from the present State Route 73 south to Chestnut Street as well as several farms, two of which would later become housing developments south of Oxford.

From the beginning, landscaping and building locations were important. Nationally known landscape



designers, engineers, and architects such as Walter and Wilson, Carrier and Hastings, Joseph W. Yost and Silas Reese Burns, whose buildings are today on the National Register of Historic Places, were consulted to create the campus. As with most early schools for women, and in contrast with many for men, buildings were sited harmoniously on the landscape instead of being laid out on a grid. Western developed along the brow of a hill.

The original entrance to the campus was on Patterson Avenue north of Chestnut Street at the White, or South Gate—now Tenney Memorial Gateway. From this entrance the drive curved uphill past the pond, ending at Seminary Hall. It was extended to the new Alumnae Hall in 1892 and in 1916 was extended farther to Patterson Avenue at Spring Street, where an impressive gate, Clark Memorial Gateway, was built in 1934. This gate was later razed for the construction of Miami's Bachelor Hall.

Western had three buildings in 1904, when New Hall, later named McKee Hall, opened as a dormitory. As new structures were built, they followed the topography of the campus and were placed westward along the drive on sites lower than Peabody Hall, moving the campus ever closer to Patterson Avenue. Wooden bridges, and beginning in 1922, stone bridges, were built across streams and ravines along the many paths crossing the campus to connect buildings. By then, the drive was continuous from both campus entrances. The architecture reflected the styles of the periods of construction, rather than a uniform or single style.

Pathways were especially important in early campus life, providing areas of outdoor entertainment as well as places to walk for young women confined to campus until the early 20th century. The first footpath developed when the Seminary opened and remained throughout the history of the college. It wound down the hill from Peabody Hall to the Summer House and pond, was gradually extended to Patterson Avenue, and in 1902 acquired its own stone gates. It provided a shorter walk to town before the drive was extended to Spring Street. A path through the Beech Woods, entered just south of Peabody Hall, ran behind the building toward Patterson Avenue. The Beech Woods was a place for student entertainment, walks and picnics—

even the trustees met and picnicked there. A Bird Sanctuary was located in the woods behind Alumnae Hall. In the 20th century the Beech Woods path was also used as a bridle path.

Under the leadership of the second principal and first president Leila McKee, in 1894 the Seminary became "The Western: A College and Seminary for Women," and in 1904, "The Western College for Women." It remained a private liberal arts college for 70 more years under nine presidents.

In the 20th century student life moved from 19th century seclusion closer to the Oxford community. Yet with its wooded landscape, winding paths and curving road connecting architecturally diverse buildings, the campus continued to contrast with the more uniform architecture and landscape grid plan exemplified by the now coeducational university across Patterson Avenue.

With President Herrick Young's administration in 1954, the college adopted an international focus, recalling in part a strong 19th and early 20th century interest in missionary work. Many international students and faculty were recruited, international travel seminars grew out of earlier foreign travel programs, and a global emphasis was added to the curriculum.

In 1970 an innovative interdisciplinary approach to education designated "Freedom with Responsibility" was initiated under the leadership of President William Spencer. Because men were enrolled in 1972, the school's name was changed to "The Western College," but only a year later, faced with major financial difficulties, Western's trustees entered into the "Agreement for Affiliation and Union" with Miami University. In return for resolving Western's debts, Miami acquired the campus, but very few of its faculty, staff, or students were retained. In 1974 the college became "The Western College of Miami University," and the campus underwent more changes in the following years.