

PENDLETON SCOTT CLARK:  
LIFE AND WORKS

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Pendleton Scott Clark was an active architect in Lynchburg, Virginia and surrounding areas from 1920 until his death in 1975. The firm Clark started in the 1950's; Clark, Nexen, and Owen; is still practicing in Lynchburg and Norfolk, Virginia. His works were mainly in the areas of scholastic institutions, banks, public buildings, commercial buildings and collegiate and domestic housing. During his earlier career, Clark concentrated mostly on domestic architecture in the Piedmont area, while the firm he formed later engaged almost entirely in institutional and naval defense work. Clark's contributions to architecture are by no means restricted to Virginia. Between himself and his firm, examples of his work can be found in many states but are concentrated in the southeast. Proof of the quality and proficiency of Clark's career is seen through his prolific involvement in his field, the works themselves, and the variety of honors and awards bestowed to him throughout his career. Mr. Clark's high standards and goals extended beyond his profession. He was very active in the community and the church, and a successful father and grandfather. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the life of Pendleton Scott Clark in both personal and career aspects. In handling his career, a more detailed look into two of his domestic designs is made.

Pendleton Scott Clark was born February 21, 1895, the son of a Lynchburg tobacconist, Robert Clark and his wife Bessie.<sup>1</sup> His

family had long since been prominent in Piedmont, Virginia, "counting among his ancestors the first settlers in Campbell County's Hat Creek."<sup>2</sup> Clark expressed an interest in his professional field at an early age. "Drawing things" had always been an enjoyment for him.<sup>3</sup>

Clark's lower education was received in the Lynchburg public school system. Upon leaving the Lynchburg school system, he enrolled in Augusta Military Academy in Virginia where he graduated. Here he was a member of the Kappa Alpha social fraternity.<sup>4</sup> Clark did not play any sports but was always interested from a spectator's point of view.<sup>5</sup> It was at some point in time at Augusta Academy that Clark decided to become an architect.

Clark graduated from Augusta Military Academy in 1910 and returned to his hometown. Upon <sup>where he</sup> return, Clark began his architectural apprenticeship, a common practice in his time, with the Lynchburg firm Heard and Caldwell. His stay with Heard and Caldwell lasted for one year. He then moved to the Preston Craighill firm where he received his apprenticeship certification.<sup>6</sup> At some point, probably after his apprenticeship and before graduate school, Clark traveled to Europe to study architecture.<sup>7</sup> Another practice common to that time.

Clark's next career step was to enroll in the University of Pennsylvania's architectural school. He chose the University of Pennsylvania because "at that time Pennsylvania was the leading school of architecture in the country. It had won several notable

prizes in architecture." Clark attended the University of Pennsylvania for three years before graduating in 1917. Clark was detained from practicing architecture for two years by World War I. He enlisted in the Navy in 1917 following graduation.<sup>8</sup>

The time he spent with the Navy in WWI started with naval training camp and tour in Louisiana. He then received officers' training at the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland. His first duty was served on the U.S.S. Missouri with the Atlantic fleet. He was then transferred to the U.S.S. Huron which was a U.S. troop transport service to Europe. Upon Clark's discharge, he returned to Lynchburg to start practicing architecture.<sup>9</sup>

When Clark started practicing in 1920, Lynchburg, like most of the country, was experiencing post World War I expansion. The population was approximately 30,000 and 15,000 in the immediate surrounding areas. The Lynchburg economy was being pumped by tobacco, warehousing, garment factories, mills and automobile sales. Extensive construction was prevalent across the city. The growth was particularly notable in residential sections. Clark started his practice during a very promising time.<sup>10</sup>

"There were only four architectural firms operating in 1920, so when I (Clark) went into business for myself, the competition was not as great as it is today." Clark also explained that the architectural profession was not as demanding at the beginning of his career.<sup>11</sup>

For two years, Clark practiced on his own. In 1921 he received the state architectural and engineering certificate.

The Virginia General Assembly had only passed such a registration in 1920. Clark was one of two architects to receive the certificate in Lynchburg. Walter R. Crowe was the other recipient.<sup>12</sup>

In 1922, Clark and Crowe became partners. Their focus was on residential architecture. The partnership was dissolved in 1936.<sup>13</sup> The same year the partnership began, Clark married. He married Alice Fleming, also a native Lynchburgian.<sup>14</sup> Business was slow until after World War II.

Clark returned to war to be a Lieutenant Commander of the Navy. His rank increased to Commander before his discharge in 1945. During his three year stay with the Navy, Clark was assigned to a Sea Bee Battalion. The Sea Bees were a Navy construction battalion. A large portion of their assignments concerned the design and construction of airfields. Clark served in Iceland, Hawaii and the Philippines while with the Sea Bees. For his work in the Navy, Clark received the Victory Medal with one star, American and Asiatic Theater Ribbons, Philippine Occupation Ribbon, Naval Reserve Medal, and the Bronze Star. The connections he had made with the Navy during World War II proved to be very advantageous for himself and his soon to be firm.<sup>15</sup>

In 1945 Clark was discharged from the Navy. He returned to Lynchburg and maintained a practice by himself for the next five years. In 1950 Clark became partners with Victor W. Buhr, a Norfolk engineer.<sup>16</sup> Clark and Buhr had been friends and co-workers in World War II.<sup>17</sup> The firm is presently called Clark, Buhr, and Nexsen. Most of their work is in naval defense. They

have been contracted to work in Alaska, Argentina, Bermuda, the Azores and Puerto Rico just to name a few places.<sup>18</sup>

Clark expanded in Lynchburg in 1956 by joining with John D. Owen, Jr., and Walter R. Nexsen to form the firm Clark, Owen and Nexsen.<sup>19</sup> The firm is presently in practice in Lynchburg. The Lynchburg firm handles institutional architecture for the most part. The firm has recently considered closing its Lynchburg office and combining with the Norfolk office.

"One of the ironic things about Clark's career is that it was drawing and creating that drew him into the architectural field. However, as he grows more successful he finds less and less time to draw. 'Most of my work now is in a supervisory capacity. I try to do a little work on the drawing board whenever time permits.'"<sup>20</sup> Clark's job started to shift from drawing to managing as early as the late forties when his personal business witnessed an increase of work.<sup>21</sup>

Due to Clark's work in architecture and engineering, he has accumulated many distinctions. He started the Lynchburg Historical Society, was former president and fellow of the American Institute of Architects, a member of the Southwestern Engineering Society, member of the Society of American Military Engineers, and president of the Virginia Foundation for Architectural Education.<sup>22</sup>

Clark had a variety of business interests outside of his profession. He was on the board and a stockholder of WLVA Radio and WLVA-TV. C. Lynch Christian, a friend, and Clark were

*explain  
context of  
quote*

jointly active in the Imperial Coltlery Company.<sup>23</sup> Clark also had financial interests in Virginia Hotel Company and Langhorne Apartments. He was also Director of the Operative Building and Loan Association.<sup>24</sup>

Outside of business, Clark was a former president of the Lynchburg Kiwanis Club, member of the Naval Advisory Committee for the Fifth Naval District, an elder and trustee of the First Presbyterian Church, and a dedicated father and grandfather.<sup>25</sup>

For rest and relaxation Clark enjoyed fishing and hunting. Mr. Clark and friends; usually Mr. Scott, Mr. Christian and Mr. Hancock all from Lynchburg; often traveled to Marysville, Virginia in Camels County for their fishing and hunting. Mr. Clark was particularly fond of bear hunting. He was a member of an outdoors club in Lynchburg called the Bob White Club.<sup>26</sup> Pendleton Scott Clark died October 25, 1975 at the age of 80.

Pendleton Clark's architectural work covered a variety of areas. He designed many traditional homes, in the twenties and thirties, contemporary public buildings in the fourties and fifties, collegiate planning of all kinds, commercial buildings and naval defense planning. Clark preferred institutional work, but his personal input became restricted by the growth of his firm in the late forties and fifties.<sup>27</sup> His most individualized and personal output is found in the many homes he designed during the early part of his career. Clark designed many homes in the Piedmont area in the twenties and early thirties until the crunch of the depression stifled almost all development. The depression

hit the Lynchburg architects hard.<sup>28</sup> In 1934 the firm of Craig-hill and Caldwell was dissolved and in 1936 Clark and Crowe did the same.<sup>29</sup> But during the productive years, Colonial and Renaissance homes were being built non-stop.

"In what seems almost a literal attempt to forget the immediate past and return to safer, more established ways, Lynchburg's architects of the twenties turned more and more to styles that had been current centuries ago. The Tudor of Merrie England was quite acceptable to their clients. Even more so was the Georgian that their ancestors had built in Tidewater, Virginia. Spanish, French and Italian Renaissance forms were more exotic, but they too had the advantage of age and acceptability." Such trends could be found in many regions across the country but Lynchburg was generally more conservative.<sup>30</sup>



Belfield Estate  
Lexington, Virginia

In 1928, the firm of Clark and Crowe were contracted by Frank and Louise Gilliam to design the house that would be called "Belfield." The plans for the house were initially intended to be a combination of houses and gardens taken from a scrapbook that the Gilliams had kept over previous years. But the end result was almost entirely Clark's design. The house is basically an English Tudor style but has many varied details. It is located off of U.S. Route 60 on Liberty Hall Road, adjacent to Washington and Lee University.<sup>31</sup>

The elaborate gardens surrounding Belfield were not designed and constructed along with the house. They have grown and changed over many years. The principal landscape designer was Charles F. Gillette of Richmond. Gillette served as the chief garden architect for the Virginia Garden Club. Boxwoods are the main garden element. The gardens "range from a very formal boxwood garden with statues and a covered seat to an informal rock garden to a small goldfish alcove." The gardens are connected by numerous paths. The combined effect of the gardens is an important compliment to the house. The gardens were at one time, a major attraction to tourists and local residences.<sup>32</sup>

Belfield is basically a two story creative eclectic Tudor style design with full basement and attic levels. The structure is considered creative eclectic because it combines a wide range

of English styles. Some of these are noted by the Norman Tower, the Jacobian porte-cochere, and the Elizabethian paneling and plastered ceilings in the living room and dining room. The interior does not follow the English design and use the Great Hall plan. The interior uses a much more space efficient plan. <sup>33</sup>

The entrance opens into a 26' foyer. Directly adjacent to the foyer is the library, pantry, dining room, a short hall, and the stairwell. On the right is the library. It measures 11' x 15' and is finished in white paint and pine paneling. The room includes built-in bookcases, three closets and a front wall made mostly of leaded glass. <sup>34</sup>

To the left of the foyer, through a large red oak archway is the pantry, bathroom and cloak area. The pantry consists of a closet for storage and a built-in linen dresser. Connected to the pantry is the dining room, the kitchen and a passageway to the laundry room. The kitchen has a rear entrance for servants and utility purposes. The dining room has high ceilings with oak paneling at each end with wainscoting along the other sides. From the dining room one can overlook the patio and gardens. There is an access door to the patio. <sup>35</sup>

The Norman stair tower rises two stories. Three leaded casement windows and a Williamsburg reproduction candelabra are used for lighting. The tower stairs are made of reinforced concrete lined by a cast iron railing. The tower may also be entered through a large oak door in the rear. <sup>36</sup>

At the end of the hallway is a sunken living room. It is

decorated with oak paneling and handcrafted plaster ceilings. A small area to the right, at the front of the house, allows for approximately 8' of windows, and book and display space. The living room has one modest sandstone fireplace. "There were originally two designs for the living room calling for it to extend into what is now a porch area. Plan A called for that area to be enclosed and part of the main room with one giant bay window at the end. Plan B called for the end of the room to be rectangular with three windows--in much the same location as the current porch screens. However a third plan developed that saw the room end 12' earlier with the erection of a permanent exterior wall and a doorway that would lead out onto a patio area that was to be roofed but not enclosed." The doorway leading to the patio is of the finest wood craftsmanship. The wood panels in the room are decorated with an organic pattern.<sup>37</sup>

The second floor consists of a master bedroom and bathroom above the living room, two smaller bedrooms above the library and foyer, a bedroom over the pantry and kitchen, a bathroom above the first floor bathroom, and a fifth bedroom over the dining room. In addition to the Norman stairwell, the second floor is accessible by a small narrow staircase between the pantry and dining room walls. The attic is strictly used for storage, and the basement is used for furnace and storage purposes. Pendleton Clark was to design another notable home in Lexington a few years later.<sup>38</sup>

*What about  
the Gillams?  
Could someone new  
describe the plan  
here*

Denny Estate  
Lexington, Virginia

Another one of Clark's Lexington residential designs is the Denny Estate. In 1936, Pendleton Clark was contracted to design a colonial revival house for Mr. George H. Denny which includes the garage and joining wall. The house was constructed on a site on Borden Road (515) approximately 2 miles north on U.S. interstate 60 outside of Lexington.

Mr. Denny was president of Washington and Lee University for 10 years. He left the school upon accepting the University of Alabama presidency in 1912. More than twenty years later Mr. Denny decided to build a retirement home in Virginia. Construction began in January 1936. His daughter, Miss Francis Denny, received the house after his death.<sup>40</sup>

Like Belfield, the Denny Estate has large and impressive grounds and gardens. These gardens were also designed by the Richmond landscape architect Charles F. Gillette.<sup>41</sup> Although the Denny gardens are not English in nature like Belfield, ~~But~~ they do tastefully compliment the colonial house they surround. Overall the Denny Estate is <sup>more coherent?</sup> stricter in style and would not be considered as eclectic as Belfield.

Clark uses a colonial central block or I-plan. Symmetry is important to this type of plan, but in fact the Denny house is not perfectly symmetrical. Clark uses design illusions to make the house appear symmetrical. These illusions include an equal

number of windows on each wing and fake chimneys on the ends of the wings to match the functional ones. The functional chimneys use a Flemish brick bond while the fake ones have no visible bond.<sup>42</sup>

The eaves are decorated with a medallion cornice which stretches the length of the house including the garage. The garage has a hipped roof and a colonial cupola on top. A subtle division between floors is made with a string course of bricks. The windows are simple and use a jack arch above them. A water table between the wall and foundation is obvious.<sup>43</sup>

The front entrance is very modest. It is framed by pilasters and a typical colonial pediment which overhangs a fanlight.<sup>44</sup>

The interior is consistent with the central plan. There is a central hall with symmetrical rooms to each side--the living room and dining room. In the hall, the wainscoting and wallpaper are separated by chair rail. The ceiling is lined by cornice. Both the living room and dining room have fireplaces with projecting chimney breasts. The fireplaces are a rectangular shape and the mantels have a frieze and cornice below them. However, the living room is a federal style with medallion cornice and the dining room is Greek Revival with dental-work cornice.<sup>45</sup> The hall has an open stairway to one side. Clark used an open-strings and simple brackets, turned balusters, and simple newel on the stairway. The hall has a plainness about it.<sup>46</sup>

One of Clark's favorite domestic designs is the C. R. Pettyjohn house in Lynchburg, Virginia.<sup>47</sup> It was constructed in 1931.

The house was modeled after a Georgian mansion in Tidewater, Virginia. It has typical Georgian chimneys, dormers and roof. The house is a fine example of the period houses that were being built at the time.

Pendleton Scott Clark was one of the most renown architects in Lynchburg history. It was through hard work and a love for architecture that made him such a well known architect. In addition, he was a community leader and kind man. His work will continue to stand out in Virginia architectural history.

*Fit this into context of the period —*

*Need a conclusion to all this!*

*Law, as you know, this is a project that you need more attention than you gave it. You made a good beginning in your research on Clark but you didn't go far enough. You also needed to do more with his architecture & place him in the context of his time. Your paper also could stand some. Your good editing.*

*(C-)*

*D. King*

*This is a very nice...  
I am...  
I will...  
D. King*

OTHER WORKS

- 1) Clark House
- 2) Barksdale House
- 3) Westminster Presbyterian Church
- 4) Lynchburg Training School and Hospital
- 5) Guggenheim Memorial Hospital
- 6) Co-operative Building and Loan Association
- 7) First National Trust and Savings
- 8) E. C. Glass High School
- 9) Dunbar High School
- 10) Sweet Briar College
- 11) Hampden-Sydney College
- 12) Randolph-Macon College
- 13) Mary Baldwin College
- 14) Virginia Military Institute
- 15) Lynchburg College
- 16) Washington and Lee  
including:
  - Sigma Nu Fraternity House
  - Phi Delta Theta Fraternity House
  - Sigma Chi Fraternity House
  - Student Center
  - Evans Dining Hall
- 17) Virginia Episcopal School
- 18) U.S. Navy Fifth District and Foreign Facilities

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Bill Burleson, "Lynchburg Profiles: Boy Who Liked to 'Draw Things' Became Leader in Architecture," Lynchburg News, 17 Dec. 1959, Sec. B, cols. 2-5.

<sup>2</sup>S. Allen Chambers, Lynchburg An Architectural History (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1981), p. 432.

<sup>3</sup>Burleson, Sec. B., cols. 2-5.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Personal interview with Pendleton S. Clark, Jr., May 1985.

<sup>6</sup>Burleson, Sec. B., cols. 2-5.

<sup>7</sup>Clark interview.

<sup>8</sup>Burleson, Sec. B., cols. 2-5.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Chambers, p. 431-32.

<sup>11</sup>Burleson, Sec. B., cols. 2-5.

<sup>12</sup>Chambers, p. 432.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Burleson, Sec. B., cols. 2-5.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Clark interview.

<sup>18</sup>Burleson, Sec. B., cols. 2-5.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Clark interview.

<sup>22</sup>Burleson, Sec. B., cols. 2-5.



- <sup>23</sup>Clark interview.
- <sup>24</sup>Burleson, Sec. B., cols. 2-5.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup>Clark interview.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup>Chambers, p. 461.
- <sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 461.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 432.
- <sup>31</sup>Ben Sherman, "Belfield," Diss. Washington and Lee Univ.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup>Hugh Montgomery, "The Colonial Revival," Diss. Washington and Lee Univ. 1980, p. 3.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 4.
- <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 4.
- <sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-5.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 5.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 6.
- <sup>46</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>47</sup>Clark interview.

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Pendleton Scott Clark, Jr.

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