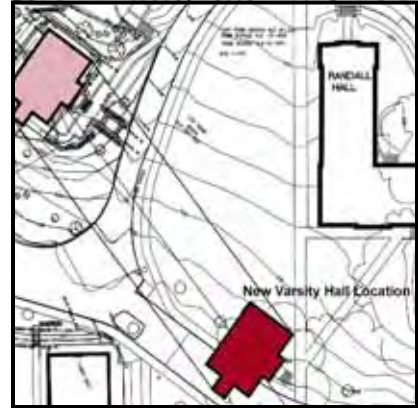


**The Retreat for the Sick Students (Varsity Hall)
The University of Virginia
Charlottesville Virginia USA**



Designed and built in 1858 by William Pratt, a British immigrant and Richmond architect, photographer, and inventor who had just been named grounds superintendent for the University of Virginia, the Retreat for the Sick Students is a picturesque Italianate (a style then associated with masculinity) pile, and an important innovation in public health: the first purpose-built student infirmary in the United States (and, perhaps, the world). It was also the first University building to violate the grid of Jefferson's Lawn, next to which it sits. By 2005 it was a drab impediment to school expansion. Rather than tear it down, the Rector and Board of Visitors hired Brian Broadus AIA, then with Train & Partners Architects of Charlottesville, to study it, document it, prepare the building to be relocated 240 feet from its initial location but retaining the cardinal orientation, and restore and rehabilitate the Retreat as administrative space.

Virginia Society American Institute of Architects Preservation Honor Award 2008

"History does not mark and measure change: it illuminates that which prevails against change."

**Brian Carter Broadus LLC Architects
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The Retreat had kept nearly intact a sophisticated central heating and ventilation system once operated by a Basement-housed cast-iron Gardner Chilson Furnace founded in Massachusetts and shipped south. The infirmary aimed to fight deadly typhoid fever epidemics by quarantining ill men in wardrooms continuously supplied with warm, fresh air. The students would exercise on broad, sunlit galleries and eat food prepared in the Retreat's kitchen, which was located in the Basement and fitted with an iron oven made in Richmond. They would use toilets flushed from lead-lined rainwater-collecting cisterns. Over each window there was a wall pocket into which four sash (two louvered, two glazed) could be raised for maximum free area. A double-door airlock guarded the main entrance against drafts and the stair accommodated a stretcher.

Major restoration design work included, with generous assistance from the University's own conservator, preservation project manager, and masons: replicating the critically-important Basement (badly damaged by rising damp and destroyed in the moving) in matching brick and with



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a restored brick floor; remaking the southwestern galleries and reinforcing them with steel beams; threading through the structure new forced-air heating and cooling equipment, plumbing piping, and power and data wiring; installing a fire protection system; selectively repointing the exterior masonry with mortar matching the 1858 formulation; leveling and shoring up the sagging Stair Hall floor; meeting handicapped-accessibility and modern building regulations (employing a modern steel-and-Brazilian hardwood bridge); and recovering the original exterior and interior finishes and colors.

The University employed Virginia Rehabilitation Tax Credits to underwrite the work and applied to the building a bronze dedicatory plaque that recognizes the Retreat's singular importance. The building is, according to a representative of the university architect, much sought after as offices. The renovation was completed in January 2008.



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