

CONSTRUCTING TRADITIONS: ARCHITECTURE, MATERIAL CULTURE, AND  
THE HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE AT SPELMAN COLLEGE, 1850 - 1925

by  
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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my children Kacy, Kingston, and Karsyn. I love you all.

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## ABSTRACT

When the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, later known as Spelman College, opened its doors on April 11, 1881, in the basement of Friendship Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, the objects that made up the materiality of the seminary consisted of two Bibles, two notebooks, and two pencils. By 1886 with the opening of the seminary's landmark Rockefeller Hall, the materiality of Spelman had grown to six times its original size, and that growth led to the donation and inclusion of objects that reflected the beliefs of Spelman's founders, Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles, and its primary benefactor John D. Rockefeller. With the passage of time, those objects continued to not only reflect the seminary's mission and goals, but they also began to reflect paternalism, the tenets of segregation, and the promises of the New South. The outlines of Spelman's institutional history are known. This study uses that scholarship as a foundation for a different query: how three characteristics of campus development (material, architectural, and educational) created and contributed to a distinct culture of refined African American womanhood on the campus of Spelman College. Emphasizing the role of architecture and objects in creating culture, this study considers how that culture manifested itself through the behavior of the college's administrators and the ultimate submission of the students.

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## INTRODUCTION

When Helen W. Ludlow edited *Tuskegee Normal and Industrial School, For Training Colored Teachers at Tuskegee, Alabama: Its Story and Its Songs* in 1884, she edited one of the earliest accounts of a historically black college and university (HBCU) in the nation. By page six of her account of Tuskegee, she included a story of Tuskegee's origins:

An old plantation was thrown upon the market at Tuskegee, on unusually low terms; a hundred acres of fairly good land at \$500, \$200 down, with a farmhouse and out buildings in tolerable repair. A bold idea took possession of the young Principal. He wrote to the Treasurer of Hampton Institute and asked if it would be practical to lend two hundred dollars to plant the Hampton seed in Tuskegee. The answer came - "To lend you Hampton school funds - no. To lend you mine at my own risk - yes, and here is my check; and God speed to you."<sup>1</sup>

Ludlow continued, noting how people from all over the country donated not only money, but objects. Those first objects donated to Tuskegee consisted of farm equipment, tools, and seeds so that students could immediately begin the task of growing crops of cotton and corn.<sup>2</sup> To Ludlow, such objects were only noted in passing, but they deserved a much larger mention considering the role they played in establishing the college.

Those first objects of farm equipment, tools, and seeds helped to create and cultivate a culture of work and industrial education at Tuskegee University. Little did those first students who planted those seeds know, but their use of those objects would

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<sup>1</sup> Helen Wilhelmina Ludlow and R. H. Hamilton, eds., *Tuskegee Normal and Industrial School, for Training Colored Teachers, at Tuskegee, Alabama ... Its Story and Its Songs* (Hampton, Virginia: Hampton Normal School Steam Press, 1884), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ludlow and Hamilton, 6.

define not only education at Tuskegee, but African American education throughout the south for the next fifty years and beyond. The story of Tuskegee University exemplifies the long-held school of thought that objects are powerful and they create culture.

When the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary opened its doors on April 11, 1881, in the basement of Friendship Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, the objects that made up the materiality of the seminary consisted of two Bibles, two notebooks, and two pencils.<sup>3</sup> Borrowed from Friendship Baptist Church were wooden pews and a wood burning stove with a smokestack. On the back wall of the basement hung five poster-sized pictures. Within the two aisles that separated the three rows of wooden pews were Doric columns supporting carved wood beams. Pipe flues from the wood burning stove zigzagged across the ceiling and between the columns. The basement itself was dark and damp with loose, decaying, or missing floorboards and on rainy days the students could hardly see.<sup>4</sup> It was here that the school that would become Spelman College first held class.

The objects in that basement met the most basic needs of the seminary, but also represent the meager beginnings of most historically black colleges and universities in this country.<sup>5</sup> Spelman Seminary like most HBCUs was not only dependent upon its governing bodies, the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS) and the

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<sup>3</sup> E. O. W., "Founders' Day," *Spelman Messenger*, May 1913, 1, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>4</sup> Beverly Guy-Sheftall and Jo Moore Stewart, *SPELMAN: A Centennial Celebration, 1881 - 1981* (New York, New York: Delmar, 1981), 21.

<sup>5</sup> "Executive Orders," *Thurgood Marshall College Fund* (blog), accessed March 7, 2019, <https://www.tnmc.org/our-policy/executive-orders>. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed into law Executive Order 12232 which legitimized the term HBCUs. In 1986, the United States Congress added the term Historically Black Colleges and Universities to the Higher Education Act of 1965. This work refers to all traditionally black colleges as HBCUs even though those colleges were not designated as such by the federal government until 1980.

Women's American Baptist Home Mission Society (WABHMS), but was also dependent upon its supporters including some of the most wealthy people and philanthropies in this country. While other HBCUs struggled to move beyond the church basements, barracks, contraband camps, and plantation big houses in which they first held class, Spelman Seminary found itself with both land and buildings by 1883, and by 1886 Rockefeller Hall, the crown jewel of the campus, opened its doors and asserted the seminary's permanence on the landscape.

By 1924, when Spelman Seminary became Spelman College, the college had grown to include hundreds of students, thousands of objects, and a physical plant consisting of eighteen buildings. Spelman had ascended to a position as the top HBCU for African American women due in part to its academic rigor but also because of what it offered materially. Spelman's growing infrastructure represented a school that was not only thriving, but financially supported by its donors and various philanthropies. The objects within the school's buildings including its Chickering Grand Piano, Singer sewing machines, marble-topped tables, mahogany wood furniture, and portraits of white men and women shaped its process of refining African American womanhood. Parents and prospective students alike marveled at the school's accommodations and understood that attendance at Spelman represented both a step up in life and social class.

The outlines of Spelman's institutional history are known.<sup>6</sup> This study uses that scholarship as a foundation for a different query: how three characteristics of campus

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<sup>6</sup> Florence Matilda Read, *The Story of Spelman College* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961); Beverly Guy-Sheftall and Jo Moore Stewart, *Spelman: A Centennial Celebration 1881 - 1981*, (Delmar: New York, New York, 1981); Yolanda L. Watson and Sheila T. Gregory, *Daring to Educate: The Legacy of the Early Spelman College Presidents*, First Edition (Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing, 2005);

development (material, architectural, and educational) created and contributed to a distinctive culture on the campus of Spelman College. Emphasizing the role of architecture and objects in creating culture, this study considers how that culture manifested itself through the behavior of the college's administrators and the ultimate submission of the students. The result is that this is not just a Spelman story, but an HBCU story. Thus, my central argument is that, by studying the objects of Spelman Seminary as seen through the lenses of materiality, architecture, and education this work will demonstrate how Spelman effectively created a culture of acceptable refinement for African American women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The story of objects is not associated with the past histories of HBCUs. While HBCU histories tell the stories of the architectural development of campuses, if, as scholars have argued, objects create culture, then the objects on HBCU campuses deserve study for what they potentially reveal about consumerism, personhood, education, and identity.<sup>7</sup> For centuries, African American women through their consumerism worked to purchase objects that defined them as women. In *Buying into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia*, Ann Smart Martin tells the story of an enslaved woman named Sukey and her purchase of a looking glass and ribbon in eighteenth-century Virginia. Martin argues that Sukey's purchase is representative of her desire to express herself in her role as an enslaved house servant and that the objects Sukey

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Harry G. Lefever, *Undaunted By The Fight: Spelman College And The Civil Rights Movement, 1957-1967* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> For more see Jules Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," in *Material Life In America, 1600-1860*, ed. Robert Blair St George (Boston, Massachusetts: Northeastern University Press, 1987), 1-2; Ann Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 9.

purchased, the mirror and ribbon, were likely imbued with meaning of which we are not privy.<sup>8</sup>

It is not surprising that written accounts of consumerism among the enslaved are often lacking, but the work of archaeologists provides insight into how that consumerism appeared materially. Archaeologist James Deetz argued that if archaeology can contribute to our understanding of common white Americans and what their life meant then it is “doubly so in the case of our understanding of the black experience in America.”<sup>9</sup> In Deetz’s retelling of the early African American freedmen community known as Parting Ways, he notes that the study of objects reveals that “while the artifacts available to members of the Parting Ways settlement were of necessity almost entirely Anglo-American, the rules by which they were put to use in functional combinations might have been more African American.”<sup>10</sup>

Deetz’s findings have reverberations into the ways that scholars approach the materiality of HBCUs. White northerners established the majority of HBCUs such as Spelman. These white northerners claimed to be guided by religion to help African Americans, but often that guise of religious calling was infused with paternalism. How white northerners shaped African American educational lives has deep implications into the materiality of HBCUs because like Deetz notes, the objects provided by white

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<sup>8</sup> Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*, 191.

<sup>9</sup> James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life*, Revised, Expanded edition (New York, New York: Anchor, 1996), 187.

<sup>10</sup> Deetz, 201.

educators meant one thing to them and possibly something else to their formerly enslaved African American students.

Archaeologist Whitney Battle Baptiste's work at the boyhood home of Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois provides perspective on African American consumerism during Reconstruction. The Du Bois family lived at the site from 1870 - 1874 providing insight into the material lives of African Americans in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, only eighty-five miles from the home of Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles, the founders of Spelman College, in New Salem, Massachusetts. The objects found at the Du Bois boyhood home included inkwells, shoes, plates, cups, saucers, furniture hardware, and utensils related to a late nineteenth and early twentieth-century occupancy of the site, but revealed that African Americans in Massachusetts during the years Packard and Giles lived there were active and selective consumers.<sup>11</sup>

Building on patterns of African American consumerism in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries is Robert E. Weems's work, *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century*. In this work, Weems discusses the emergence of the African American consumer at the beginning of the twentieth-century, but notes that often the products advertised to African Americans promoted whiteness. African American newspapers overflowed with advertisements

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<sup>11</sup> Whitney Battle-Baptiste, *Black Feminist Archaeology* (Walnut Creek, California: Routledge, 2011), 156.



seeking consumers for products that supposedly whitened skin, straightened hair, and otherwise assisted African Americans with attaining a European standard of beauty.<sup>12</sup>

While Weems highlights advertisements targeted to African Americans consumers as promoting whiteness, historian Bridget Heneghan's *Whitewashing America: Material Culture and Race in the Antebellum Imagination* explores how objects contributed to the construction of whiteness and the construction of race in America. Heneghan argues that the acquisition and use of white goods became ritual demonstrations of class status emphasizing the connections between white objects, femininity, spiritual purity, and hygiene, all themes stressed in the Spelman curriculum.<sup>13</sup>

Written by Spelman's fourth president Florence Read, *The Story of Spelman College* is a chronological overview of the college repeating the oft-told story of the college's beginnings to the 1950s.<sup>14</sup> When the book was published in 1961, Spelman was celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Because of the occasion and the fact that a former Spelman president wrote the book, the volume is celebratory and not reflective. Twenty-five years later, Beverly Guy-Sheftall and Jo Moore Stewart's *Spelman: A Centennial Celebration* extended the celebration tradition of Read's to the school's centennial.<sup>15</sup> Together these books form part of Spelman's institutional history. Additional works on the American Baptist Home Mission Society by David Charles Laubach including

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<sup>12</sup> Robert E. Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century* (New York, New York: New York University Press, 1998), 16.

<sup>13</sup> Bridget T. Heneghan, *Whitewashing America: Material Culture and Race in the Antebellum Imagination* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), xi–xxvii.

<sup>14</sup> Florence Matilda Read, *The Story of Spelman College* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961).

<sup>15</sup> Guy-Sheftall and Stewart, *SPELMAN*.

*American Baptist Home Mission Roots 1824 - 2010* and *To Think That it Happened on Mulberry Street* chronicle the history of the group that governed Spelman and worked with Spelman administrators to make the college successful.<sup>16</sup>

Recent works on Spelman include Yolanda L. Watson and Sheila T. Gregory's *Daring to Educate: The Legacy of the Early Spelman College Presidents* which provides insights into the development of the Spelman curriculum while shedding light on the motivations of Spelman's early presidents. Watson and Gregory bring attention to the fact that Spelman's earliest presidents were all educated at northern seminaries and how those personal experiences influenced who they were as educators and the educational programs they implemented during their tenures at Spelman.<sup>17</sup>

Joining the recent work on Spelman by Watson and Gregory is Harry G. Lefever's *Undaunted by the Fight: Spelman College and the Civil Rights Movement*. Lefever's work primarily focuses on the role of Spelman students in the Civil Rights Movement, but he does devote a chapter to the early history of Spelman. Of note, is Lefever's research uncovering early monetary donations to Spelman. Lefever discovers that the first donation to Spelman was from the First Baptist Church in Medford, Massachusetts.<sup>18</sup> What is most telling, however, is Lefever's research into how the actions of Spelman's students in the Civil Rights Movement challenged the rules and

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<sup>16</sup> David Charles Laubach, *American Baptist Home Mission Roots 1824 - 2010* (Vallery Forge, Pennsylvania: American Baptist Home Mission Society, 2010); David Charles Laubach, *To Think That It Happened on Mulberry Street* (Vallery Forge, Pennsylvania: National Ministries American Baptist Churches USA, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Watson and Gregory, *Daring to Educate*, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Lefever, *Undaunted By The Fight*, 2.

traditions of the college. As Lefever notes, the actions of those students certainly would not have been acceptable during the college's early years.<sup>19</sup>

The story of Spelman College fits firmly into the historiography of African American education in the South and Georgia. James D. Anderson's *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860 - 1935* details the origins of educational systems in the South for African Americans. Anderson's work was viewed as revisionist at the time of its publication, but today the work is considered seminal in the field. Anderson was among the first scholars to highlight the complications of industrial education while also highlighting the work that African Americans did to educate themselves.<sup>20</sup>

Continuing in this vein, Heather Andrea Williams's *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* adds to the historiography of African American education by reiterating African American self-reliance. Williams states, "the history of freedpeople's education is also the story of the former slaves determination to become educated and their efforts to help themselves and to reach out to others who could help them. Even when northern whites served as the teachers, freedpeople built schools, paid teachers, and made other contributions to the educational effort."<sup>21</sup> Williams emphasizes the role of African Americans in establishing, funding, and building their own educational institutions challenging arguments that white northerners were solely responsible for African American schools in the South.

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<sup>19</sup> Lefever, 15–22.

<sup>20</sup> James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

<sup>21</sup> Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 40.

Jacqueline Jones's *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865–1873* provides an early history of the actions of white northern teachers in Georgia. Jones's work covers the experiences of white northern teachers delving into sponsoring organizations such as the American Missionary Association, the Methodist Freedman's Aid Society, and the American Baptist Home Mission Society while also discussing quality of life and classroom experiences. Jones's work also discusses how African Americans opposed the efforts of northern whites in teaching African American students favoring African American teachers.<sup>22</sup>

With such self-determination, it comes as no surprise that African Americans and specifically African American women would become adept at building their own institutions. Angel David Nieves's *An Architecture of Education: African American Women Design the New South* connects themes of racial uplift to the built environment. Nieves emphasizes that African American women such as Elizabeth Evelyn Wright and Jennie Dean both founded educational institutions and used the “built environment as a primary vehicle for race-based advancement.”<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the seminal text in college campus architecture studies is Paul V. Turner's *Campus: An American Planning Tradition* which details the architectural development of college campuses in the United States. Turner connects the architectural development of United States college campuses to college campuses in Britain noting that Americans owe much of their own college campus development to British colleges.

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<sup>22</sup> Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> Angel David Nieves, *An Architecture of Education: African American Women Design the New South* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2018), 1.

Turner's work, however, fails to accurately and appropriately address the architectural development of HBCUs.<sup>24</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

While the focus of this dissertation draws on the historiography of African American material culture and consumerism, HBCUs and the development of African American education, as well as college campus architecture it also documents how class, gender, and race affected what objects were purchased, who used those purchased objects, and who cared for those purchased objects. This study emphasizes that objects tell stories weaving new interpretations and when pressed into service they become primary historical evidence.<sup>25</sup>

In 1923 when Spelman Seminary was on the cusp of becoming Spelman College, the American Appraisal Company inventoried every object and the object's location on campus. The result was a three book volume of the materiality of the campus. A. Bailey, Vice President of the American Appraisal Company, wrote: "The inventory volumes contain descriptions and itemization of the units of property included in the appraisal priced in accordance with the cost of reproduction new."<sup>26</sup> The Appraisal Certificate included with the three book volume proclaimed "This appraisal is made as of the date of

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<sup>24</sup> Paul Venable Turner, *Campus: An American Planning Tradition* (New York : Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1987).

<sup>25</sup> Laurel Thatcher Ulrich et al., *Tangible Things: Making History through Objects* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1.

<sup>26</sup> The American Appraisal Company, *Appraisal Inventory of the Spelman Seminary Atlanta, GA. Volume No. 1*, vol. 1 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The Heinn Company, 1923), 1.

June 1, 1923, is based upon a thorough personal inspection of the property, and includes buildings, and furnishings and equipment, but excludes land, supplies, and good will or other intangible assets.”<sup>27</sup>

This study centers on an 1923 Appraisal Inventory of Spelman College completed by the American Appraisal Company in 1923. This study connects the objects listed in the appraisal book to other primary and secondary sources detailing the objects on the campus of Spelman Seminary including the personal correspondence of Spelman presidents, the *Spelman Messenger* student newspaper, Spelman Seminary Bulletins and Catalogs, and photographs. The objects studied act as links between the African American students and the schools’s white and African American benefactors.

This dissertation examines the objects of Spelman Seminary. Each chapter explores the material culture of Spelman Seminary through architectural objects, educational work objects, student objects, religious objects, and administrator owned objects. Chapter One, “The Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary,” delves into the history of Spelman Seminary through the early lives of the seminary’s founders, Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles. Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles, both white women from New Salem, Massachusetts and educated in northern, white Christian seminaries met and bonded over their intense faithfulness to Christianity and education. Prior to their arrival in Atlanta, Georgia, the women worked together as educators in northern schools. This chapter contends that Packard and Giles, influenced by their upbringing and what they believed to be the debased status of African American women, worked together to found

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<sup>27</sup> The American Appraisal Company, 1:3.

Spelman Seminary enlisting the assistance of the American Baptist Home Mission, the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission, and Reverend Frank Quarles of Friendship Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Through this network, Packard and Giles soon found themselves in dialogue with John D. Rockefeller, one of the wealthiest men in America to aid in the construction of an appropriate college campus. The chance encounter with Rockefeller completely changed the trajectory of the college and put it on the fast track to achieving its mission of providing a Christian education for African American women and girls.

Chapter Two, "Collecting Objects," considers the methods used by Spelman Seminary administrators to furnish and collect objects for the school. Records reveal how Packard and Giles used print mediums as such the *Spelman Messenger* to solicit funds and objects from across the country. Relying on long-established networks from their home state of Massachusetts and New England, Packard and Giles offered benefactors the option to name buildings and rooms after themselves if they furnished them. Excited by the possibilities provided by Spelman, African American Baptist churches also donated funding and objects in support.

Chapter Three, "Student Objects," documents the objects used by Spelman Seminary students in their quest for an education. Objects such as sewing machines and a printing press initially used as educational tools quickly became work tools as the educational mission of Spelman grew increasingly closer to industrial education. With philanthropies such as The Slater Fund donating objects and funding to Spelman to advance its vocational mission, the objects found in Spelman's classrooms changed.

Paying careful attention to the objects, this chapter considers the changing attitudes and behaviors of Spelman students toward educational and work objects while also taking into account the personal objects of students within their dormitory rooms.

Chapter Four, “Religious Objects,” focuses on the materiality of Howe Memorial Chapel in Rockefeller Hall and how those secular and sacred objects found within the chapel worked to convert students to Christianity and worked to instill Christian values into African American women. Objects within Howe Memorial Chapel included portraits of Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles, the Howe family for whom the chapel takes its name, and Abraham Lincoln. These portraits worked in tandem to teach students that while they must revere God that they must also revere those who made Spelman and the chapel possible. Additional objects such as pianos, hymnals, and a pulpit contribute to the materiality of the chapel.

Chapter Five, “Administrator Objects,” explores the materiality of Reynolds Cottage and how the objects within that space reflected ideals of white supremacy and white womanhood. The personal objects of the seminary’s presidents act as evidence of their backgrounds and beliefs. Additionally, portraits and benefactor donated objects elevate the material culture of Reynolds Cottage above other campus buildings calling into the question the purpose and role of the cottage in the advancement of African American education.



## CHAPTER ONE - THE ATLANTA BAPTIST FEMALE SEMINARY AND ITS BEGINNINGS

“...I am building for 100 years hence, not only for today...”

- Sophia Packard<sup>1</sup>

In 1883 the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS) published what was then its definitive history, *Baptist Home Missions in America*. The book chronicled the group's founding in 1832 to its present time in 1882 covering fifty years of the Baptist mission's work. In the preface, Henry Morehouse, Corresponding Secretary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, noted that the volume intended to show the extent and character of the organization within a historical sketch.<sup>2</sup> In his chapter, “First Work for The Freedmen,” Morehouse described the events surrounding the signing of the Emancipation Act for the District of Columbia by President Abraham Lincoln on April 16, 1862. This act, which freed all enslaved individuals in Washington D. C., became the impetus for the American Baptist Home Mission Society in what they described as their work for the freedmen. Following the signing of this act, the author noted that the door was wide open for Christians to become involved with African Americans in the south.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Guy-Sheftall and Stewart, *SPELMAN*, 10.

<sup>2</sup> American Baptist Home Mission Society, *Baptist Home Missions in North America : Including a Full Report of the Proceedings and Addresses of the Jubilee Meeting, and a Historical Sketch of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, Historical Tables, Etc., 1832-1882* (New York: Baptist Home Mission Rooms, 1883), 3.

<sup>3</sup> American Baptist Home Mission Society, 396.

On May 29, 1862, the society recommended that its members “take immediate steps to supply with Christian instruction, by means of missionaries and teachers, the emancipated slaves - whether in the District of Columbia or other places held by our forces.” When the recommendation passed on June 25, 1862, the board voted that “Immediate measures be taken for the occupation by our missionaries of such Southern fields as in the Providence of God may be opened to our operations.”<sup>4</sup> Thus began the American Baptist Home Mission Society’s infiltration of the southern African American educational landscape.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter focuses on the establishment of Spelman Seminary and examines its beginnings through the actions of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, the Woman’s American Baptist Home Mission Society, Spelman Seminary’s founders Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles, the city of Atlanta, Georgia, and Spelman’s greatest benefactor, John D. Rockefeller. The combined efforts of the organizations, the founders, and the benefactor led to the creation of an intricately planned educational institution for African American women in Atlanta, Georgia.

### **The American Baptist Home Mission Society**

What the American Baptist Home Mission Society and its members failed to realize when concocting their 1862 plan of action was that enslaved African Americans

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<sup>4</sup> American Baptist Home Mission Society, 397.

<sup>5</sup> Ronald E. Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

had been working amongst themselves to become educated for as long as they had ever been enslaved. Historian Carter G. Woodson in his study *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861*, noted that “The ways in which slaves thereafter acquired knowledge are significant. Many picked it up here and there, some followed occupations which were in themselves enlightening, and others learned from slaves whose attainments were unknown to their masters.”<sup>6</sup> While the American Baptist Home Mission Society was still trying to figure out what to do in 1861 and early 1862, historian James D. Anderson wrote

Before northern benevolent societies entered the South in 1862, before President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, and before Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen’s Bureau) in 1865, slaves and free persons of color had already begun to make plans for the systematic instruction of their illiterates. Early black schools were established and supported largely through the Afro-Americans’ own efforts.<sup>7</sup>

The fact that African Americans were busy educating themselves and establishing their own schools was not a fact that the American Baptist Home Mission Society members took into consideration as they advanced into Georgia and the south in 1862. African Americans in Georgia were so busy working to establish their own educational institutions that by 1865 they founded the Georgia Educational Association whose purpose was to supervise African American schools throughout the state. In 1866, the organization financed entirely or in part 96 of the 123 day and evening schools and

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<sup>6</sup> Carter Godwin Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861: A History Of The Education Of The Colored People Of The United States From The Beginning Of Slavery To The Civil War* (Washington D. C: The Associated Publishers, 1919), 116; For more see Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, 7.

owned 57 of their school buildings. The Georgia Educational Association even used its newspaper *The Loyal Georgian* to refute popular misconceptions which attributed the schooling of the formerly enslaved to northern whites. In 1866, the writers of *The Loyal Georgian* wrote that they hoped that white missionary teachers were not in the south “in any vain reliance on their superior gifts, either of intelligence or benevolence; or in any foolish self-confidence that they have a special call to this office, or special endowments to meet its demands.”<sup>8</sup> Although the Georgia Educational Association and the writers of *The Loyal Georgian* hoped that white educators would set aside notions of white supremacy, most white missionary teachers felt that they were the best and only hope to educate newly freed men and women. As historian Jacqueline Jones noted, when white northern missionaries

began to work in Georgia, northern teachers and superintendents had preconceived notions about the role freed people should play in the overall education effort. They believed that black teachers lacked the formal training to be effective instructors and that enlightened white men and women must assume major responsibility for establishing - and to a great extent - teaching in black schools throughout the state.<sup>9</sup>

In Georgia, the first white northern missionary teachers from the American Baptist Home Mission society initially established schools in Augusta, a city that they came to dominate by effectively intimidating other missionary groups.<sup>10</sup> Unlike other missionary groups, the American Baptist Home Mission Society officials only employed

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<sup>8</sup> Anderson, 11–12.

<sup>9</sup> Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 68–69.

<sup>10</sup> Jones, 17. Jones states that the American Baptist Home Mission Society along with the National Theological Institute, both Baptist organizations, concentrated on Augusta, Georgia making it near impossible for other missionary groups such as the America Missionary Association to start schools there.

teachers who were members of their churches ensuring that those they employed had undergone a personal religious conversion into the beliefs of the denomination.<sup>11</sup>

Apparently, this personal religious conversion gave future teachers the skills deemed necessary to convert freedmen and freedwomen to the Baptist faith while also educating them.

By 1880 the American Baptist Home Mission Society opened several HBCUs including Wayland Seminary in Washington D. C.; Richmond Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia; Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina; Benedict Institute in Columbia, South Carolina; Atlanta Baptist Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia; State University in Louisville, Kentucky; Roger Williams University in Nashville, Tennessee; Jackson College in Jackson, Mississippi; Leland University in New Orleans, Louisiana; Bishop College in Marshall, Texas; and, Selma University in Selma, Alabama. By 1889, the society boasted that they spent two million dollars on African American education since entering the south and that 13,000 African American students had enrolled at its schools.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Founders - Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles**

Sophia Betsey Packard was born January 3, 1824, in New Salem, Massachusetts.

At the time of her birth, New Salem, Massachusetts was a heavily religious town of about

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<sup>11</sup> Jones, 37.

<sup>12</sup> Henry L. Morehouse, *The American Baptist Home Mission Society :Descriptive Sketches of Schools Founded and Fostered by the Society with Illustrations of Principal Buildings ...* (New York: The American Baptist Home Mission Society, 1889), 20.

2,100 inhabitants founded by settlers of Salem, Massachusetts, site of the infamous Salem Witch Trials in the 1690s.<sup>13</sup> Sophia's parents, Winslow Packard and Rebecca Freeman Packard, were both farmers. Sophia grew up in the southern part of New Salem and lived at the foot of what became known as Mount Packard, the highest point of land in New Salem.<sup>14</sup>

Packard's devotion to the Baptist church began in childhood as her family attended the Baptist church in nearby Prescott, Massachusetts. By 1838, at the age of fourteen, Packard began teaching school. In 1845 she attended New Salem Academy, a coeducational private preparatory school founded in 1795. Among the regulations that governed the Academy was the strict attention paid to the morals of the students and the requirement of every student to attend prayer meetings and weekly public worship.<sup>15</sup>

In 1850, Sophia Packard received her diploma from the Charlestown Female Seminary in Charlestown, Massachusetts.<sup>16</sup> The Charlestown Female Seminary was the first boarding school for girls in Massachusetts and almost the first in the country. A December 7, 1848 advertisement for the school in the *Vermont Watchman and State Journal* stated that the school taught a thorough course of study including higher English,

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<sup>13</sup> Florence Cogswell Cox, *History of New Salem, Massachusetts, 1753-1953: Prepared for the Celebration of the 200th Anniversary, August 7, 8, 9, 1953* (Amherst, Massachusetts: Hamilton I. Newell Inc., 1953), 7.

<sup>14</sup> Cox, 92.

<sup>15</sup> Orcutt Leon Monroe, "The Influence of the Academy in Western Massachusetts" (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts, 1934), 71.

<sup>16</sup> Jo Anne Anne, "Packard, Sophia B. (1824-1891)," in *Women in World History: A Biographical Encyclopedia*, ed. Anne Commire (Detroit, MI: Yorkin Publications, 2002), Gale Virtual Reference Library, [http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/CX2591307274/GVRL?u=tel\\_middleten&sid=GVRL&xid=4a191c91](http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/CX2591307274/GVRL?u=tel_middleten&sid=GVRL&xid=4a191c91); Janice M. Leone, "Packard, Sophia Betsey (1824-1891), Educator and Home Missionary," in *American National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), <http://www.anb.org/view/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.001.0001/anb-9780198606697-e-0900865>.

Latin, French, Italian, German, and Hebrew Languages.<sup>17</sup> A history of the First Baptist Church in Charlestown, Massachusetts, the church which controlled the seminary, proclaimed that the seminary held the Lord's confidence because hundreds of students were converted while studying there.<sup>18</sup> Martha Whiting, a teacher at the school, acknowledged that "my principal object is, to have my school a resort for young ladies, who may not only be instructed in the sciences, but in knowledge which will, with the blessing of God, end in their conversion."<sup>19</sup> Conversion to Christianity appeared to be a theme of the school that would later reemerge in Packard's life.

In 1855 Packard accepted a job as a preceptress and teacher at New Salem Academy in New Salem, Massachusetts, where she would meet Harriet Giles, then a student at the academy. Harriet Giles was born in New Salem, Massachusetts to Samuel Giles and Hannah Foster Giles. Giles, who was four years younger than Packard, graduated from New Salem Academy in 1856. By 1859, in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, the women opened a school named the Rollstone School, which only lasted a few months.

By 1864 Packard was co-principal and Giles was a teacher of ornamentals and music at the Oread Collegiate Institute in Worcester, Massachusetts. During her tenure at Oread, Packard was alone responsible for both instruction and discipline as her co-principal Rev. John Shepardson spent very little time at Oread.<sup>20</sup> A 1905 history of the

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<sup>17</sup> "Charlestown Female Seminary," *Vermont Watchman and State Journal*, December 7, 1848, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Charlestown (Mass.). First Baptist Church, *Short History of the First Baptist Church in Charlestown* (Boston, Massachusetts: Press of J. Howe, 1852), 22.

<sup>19</sup> Martha Whiting and Catherine Badger, *The Teacher's Last Lesson: A Memoir of Martha Whiting, Late of the Charleston Female Seminary. Consisting Chiefly of Extracts from Her Journal, Interspersed with Reminiscences and Suggestive Reflections* (Boston/New York: Gould and Lincoln/Sheldon, Lamport & Blakeman, 1855), 64.

<sup>20</sup> *History and Traditions Reference Guide: Spelman College* (Atlanta, Georgia: Spelman College, 2016), 4.

school described Packard as a “woman of powerful intellect and strong will, aggressive and energetic, with almost a masculine genius for business and capacity for leadership.”

The description ended with mentioning that Packard was a devoted Christian.<sup>21</sup>

The book also commented on Packard and Giles’s relationship, describing Giles as Packard’s devoted friend adding that “It would have been impossible for a school girl of these days to speak or think of one without the other. They dressed alike and in leisure hours were nearly always together.”<sup>22</sup> The school historians, however, noted that Giles was “in character quite unlike Ms. Packard, being most gentle, mild, and self-effacing, but constantly watchful and quietly observant that everything went well.”<sup>23</sup>

Unfortunately for Packard, she was forced to resign her position at Oread Institute as the replacement for Rev. John Shepardson did not want to act as co-principal with her. After her tenure at Oread ended, Packard found work at an insurance company while Giles worked giving music lessons in private homes. In 1870, Dr. George C. Lormier hired Packard as a pastor’s assistant. In the position as Dr. Lormier’s assistant, Packard came to foster her interest in Christian reform movements, which directly influenced her approach to the founding of the Woman’s American Baptist Home Mission and to African American education.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Martha Burt Wright and Anne M. Bancroft, *History of the Oread Collegiate Institute, Worcester, Mass. (1849-1881) : With Biographical Sketches* (New Haven, Conn. : Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Co., 1905), 226.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> *History and Traditions Reference Guide: Spelman College*, 4.



## **The Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society**

While the American Baptist Home Mission Society was busy opening schools, Baptist women who had been providing aid to freedmen and women via the American Baptist Home Mission Society came together to start the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society (WABHMS). Led by Sophia Packard, Baptist women met in November 1877 in Boston, Massachusetts, and established the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society. Its goals called for "the evangelization of the women among the freed-people, the Indians, the heathen immigrants, and the new settlements of the West."<sup>25</sup> Sophia Packard became its treasurer.

From its beginnings, the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society was to be an auxiliary to the American Baptist Home Mission Society. At the end of 1877, the society boasted a membership of 200 women. The first official act of the WAMBHS was the March 1878 donation of 50 dollars to missionary Harriet Newell Hart to aid in her work on African American education in Georgia.<sup>26</sup> By May 1878, the WABHMS became legally incorporated, and its members began heavily focusing on their missionary work. By the end of 1878, Sophia Packard stopped being the society's treasurer and became its Corresponding Secretary. At this time the society employed five teachers in the south.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Annual Report of the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society* (Boston, Massachusetts: Press of S. G. Robinson, 1894), 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Annual Report of the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society*, 5; For more see Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 78–79. Harriet Atwood Newell Hart turned the parlor of her plantation mansion in McIntosh County, Georgia into a school for African Americans shortly after emancipation.

<sup>27</sup> *Annual Report of the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society*, 6.

In her role as Corresponding Secretary, Sophia Packard traveled extensively throughout Massachusetts and the northeast gathering support for the society. By November of 1879, Packard reported that she had spoken at eighty public meetings garnering support and raising funds for the society.<sup>28</sup> Packard's work in helping to found the organization, act as its first treasurer, and later as its corresponding secretary, helped to cement a level of trust and faith between Packard and the WABHMS which would aid Packard and Giles in their biggest goal yet.

### **The Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary**

Packard's life experiences as a Baptist woman, educator, and Christian reformer prepared her for what would become her life's greatest work. In February 1880, Packard traveled south on behalf of the WABHMS to assess the living conditions of African Americans. This trip took Packard into the homes, churches, and schools of African American communities in Richmond, Virginia; Nashville, Tennessee; and, New Orleans, Louisiana. Giles joined Packard on the trip in New Orleans and agreed that conditions for African Americans, especially women, throughout the south were terrible.<sup>29</sup> Sources note that Packard and Giles focused their attention on Georgia where the American Baptist Home Mission Society had established a school for African American men, but not

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<sup>28</sup> *Annual Report of the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society*, 7.

<sup>29</sup> *History and Traditions Reference Guide: Spelman College*, 4.

women. Packard and Giles also noted that every sixth person in Georgia was Baptist making the state a prime area to start a school supported by Baptists.<sup>30</sup>

In February 1881, Packard and Giles approached the WABHMS with the idea of establishing a school. Packard stated that she was “willing to spend her best efforts to make it a success and blessing to the freed people of the south.”<sup>31</sup> Despite Packard’s enthusiasm, the society was apprehensive and proclaimed that the South was too hostile, that Packard and Giles were too old, and that they had no money.<sup>32</sup> This sentiment, however, did nothing to stop the determination of Packard and Giles. Giles, a trained pianist and former music teacher, sold her prized piano to aid in their journey. Packard’s traveling and public speaking experience as Corresponding Secretary of the WABHMS aided the ladies when they returned to their Massachusetts roots with a desire to raise funds. The Baptist Church of Medford, Massachusetts was the first organization to donate to Spelman giving Packard and Giles \$100 towards their goal. The next \$15 came from the Ladies Society of Everett, Massachusetts. That first \$115 paid for Packard and Giles’s train tickets to Atlanta, their first school books, and additional materials.<sup>33</sup> In March 1881, the WABHMS reversed its original decision and allowed Packard and Giles to go to Atlanta to start their school.

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<sup>30</sup> Leone, “Packard, Sophia Betsey (1824-1891), Educator and Home Missionary.”

<sup>31</sup> *Annual Report of the Woman’s American Baptist Home Mission Society*, 9.

<sup>32</sup> *History and Traditions Reference Guide: Spelman College*, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Christine McConville, “College Owes Its Beginnings to Medford,” *The Boston Globe*, November 5, 2006, 37.

## Atlanta, Georgia in 1881

At the same time that Packard and Giles and the American Baptist Home Mission Society were beginning to establish the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, African Americans were also establishing Morris Brown College, the only African American founded institution of higher learning in Atlanta to that date. The African American Episcopal Church founded Morris Brown College on January 5, 1881 under the premise that the AME Church denomination needed its own school. In order to support the school, AME Church ministers each donated \$25.00 a year towards its operating costs. Additionally, the AME Church contracted with the Armstrong Soap Company for the school to receive a portion of all soap sold during a certain period. It soon became well known for years that the only soap African American women of the AME Church used was Armstrong Soap.<sup>34</sup>

More than anything, the AME Church wanted a college that African Americans owned and controlled. Administrators of Morris Brown College used its African American ownership and control to its advantage noting that each year larger contributions were made to the college because “African Americans were being educated in the spirit of doing for themselves.”<sup>35</sup> By 1910, Morris Brown administrators proclaimed that their college stood as the greatest monument to Negro effort for his own

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<sup>34</sup> William Newton Hartshorn and The Clifton Conference, *An Era of Progress and Promise, 1863-1910: The Religious, Moral, and Educational Development of the American Negro Since His Emancipation* (Boston, Massachusetts: The Priscilla Publishing Company, 1910), 284.

<sup>35</sup> Hartshorn and The Clifton Conference, 285.

education on the American continent.<sup>36</sup> It was this very effort that Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles failed to notice when they arrived in Atlanta during the spring of 1881.

When Packard and Giles arrived in Atlanta on April 1, 1881, they entered a city in the midst of redefining itself after its brutal fall during the Civil War. In 1880, Atlanta surpassed Savannah as the most populous city in Georgia with a population of 37,409. The March 2, 1881 edition of the *Atlanta Constitution* praised the publication of *Our Brother in Black: His Freedom and His Future* by Emory College's president Atticus G. Haygood.<sup>37</sup> In his book, Haygood opened the door to the white education of African Americans by claiming "I have reached a conclusion about this educational work among the negroes in the South: it is God's work."<sup>38</sup>

While some Atlantans may have agreed with the *Atlanta Constitution's* review of Haygood's book as one to praise, others were busy reading articles titled "After a Bad Negro," "Sent Up For Vagrancy" and "For Stealing Coal." Packard and Giles may have even come across the article "A Brutal Attempt at Rape by a Negro" which told the story of the abuse and lynching of an African American man accused of raping a white woman in nearby Sparta, Georgia.<sup>39</sup> The March 8, 1881 edition of the *Atlanta Constitution* contained the story of Emma Clark, an African American woman on trial for murder.<sup>40</sup> Clark was the exact type of woman that Packard and Giles believed they needed to save

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<sup>36</sup> Hartshorn and The Clifton Conference, 285.

<sup>37</sup> "President Atticus G. Haygood," *The Atlanta Constitution*, March 2, 1881, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Atticus Greene Haygood, *Our Brother in Black: His Freedom and His Future* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1881), 181.

<sup>39</sup> "A Brutal Attempt at Rape by a Negro," *Atlanta Constitution*, March 26, 1881, 1.

<sup>40</sup> "By Mail and Wire to the Constitution Americus - March 6," *Atlanta Constitution*, March 8, 1881, 1.

and the vehicle that they would use to save her and African American women like her would be a Christian education.

Of course, Haygood, Packard, and Giles ignored the reality that African American women in Atlanta, Georgia were outspoken advocates for their own wellbeing. In the summer of 1881, for example, African American laundresses in Atlanta organized themselves to form the trade organization known as the Washing Society. The purpose of the Washing Society was to organize African American laundresses to demand higher pay, respect and autonomy over their work, and to establish a uniform pay rate. Together, these women organized a mass meeting and called for a strike.<sup>41</sup> On August 3, 1881 the Washing Society informed Atlanta Mayor Jim English

We the members of our society, are determined to stand to our pledge and make extra charges for washing, and we have agreed, and are willing to pay \$25 or \$50 for licenses as a protection, so we can control the washing for the city. We can afford to pay these licenses, and will do it before we will be defeated, and then we will have full control of the city's washing at our own prices, as the city has control of our husbands' work at their prices. Don't forget this. We hope to hear from your council Tuesday morning. We mean business this week or no washing.<sup>42</sup>

The City of Atlanta caved to the demands of the Washing Society, and Atlanta African American laborers gained a bit of respect.

The actions of the Washing Society in the summer of 1881 apparently did nothing to shake the falsehoods and stereotypical views of African American womanhood in

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<sup>41</sup> "Atlanta's Washerwomen Strike | AFL-CIO," AFL-CIO Key Events in Labor History, n.d., <https://aflcio.org/about/history/labor-history-events/atlanta-washerwomen-strike>.

<sup>42</sup> Brandon Weber, "'We Mean Business or No Washing': The Atlanta Washerwomen Strike of 1881," *Progressive.org*, February 6, 2018, <https://progressive.org/api/content/81ae1566-0849-11e8-81a4-121bebc5777e/>.

Atlanta held by Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles. Packard and Giles were exactly what the writer of the 1866 *The Loyal Georgian* article hoped against, white missionaries who thought that they were the best equipped to educate and lead newly freed men and women.

By the fall of 1881, the city of Atlanta was preparing for the International Cotton Exposition scheduled to occur that October. The International Cotton Exposition was to be a world's fair displayed through the lens of manufacturing cotton and dedicated to the emergence of the New South. Historian Tera Hunter astutely points out that the promise of the New South as displayed at the International Cotton Exposition was simply the Old South given a new name. Hunter notes that, "African Americans in the New South would be closely defined by the Old - in cotton fields or in servile labor in private homes, rather than in factory, managerial, or professional positions. Black workers would serve a visible and integral, yet subservient, role in the modern economy."<sup>43</sup> This New South complete with its racial baggage and white supremacist views provided the prism through which Packard and Giles viewed the effort to educate African American women.

When Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles arrived in Atlanta on April 1, 1881, Dr. Shaver, a professor at the Atlanta Baptist Seminary, an institution founded by the American Baptist Home Mission Society, greeted them. Dr. Shaver led Packard and Giles's introduction to Atlanta and found housing for them first at the National Hotel. The next day, Dr. Shaver secured housing for them at a boarding house and suggested

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<sup>43</sup> Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 83–84.

that they meet with the Reverend Frank Quarles.<sup>44</sup> Frank Quarles was the reverend of Friendship Baptist Church, an African American church founded in 1862, and the first autonomous African American Baptist church in the city. Dr. Shaver and others at the Atlanta Baptist Seminary had a previously established relationship with Reverend Quarles as the Atlanta Baptist Seminary had used the basement of Friendship Baptist Church as its original classroom space. Upon meeting Packard and Giles and hearing of their work, Reverend Quarles proclaimed “While I was praying, the Lord answered. For fifteen years I have been asking the Lord to send Baptist teachers for our girls and women. They are going to our Pedobaptist schools and soon we shall lose them from our denomination.” Quarles continued by stating “I do not know where you will teach, you could have the church but for the funerals, but there is the basement; you are welcome to that.”<sup>45</sup>

Reverend Quarles and the Friendship Baptist Church had opened their doors to northern missionaries establishing schools for African Americans prior to Packard’s and Giles’s arrival. In 1865 when church members met in a boxcar, they opened the doors of the church to Atlanta University, founded by the American Missionary Association and the Freedmen’s Bureau. When the Augusta Baptist Seminary moved to Atlanta in 1879, they met in the basement of Friendship Baptist Church before later moving and changing their name to the Atlanta Baptist Seminary, known as Morehouse College today. Reverend Quarles had long been a supporter of African American education and even

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<sup>44</sup> Harriet E. Giles, “Historical Sketch of Spelman Seminary,” *The Spelman Messenger* Vol. 27 No. 7, April 1911, 1, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>45</sup> Giles, 2.



took it upon himself to raise money for the African American schools in Atlanta. When interviewed for an article on the Atlanta Baptist Seminary in 1879, Quarles recounted that he had been traveling and raising money for the Atlanta Baptist Seminary for the past six years. Additionally, Quarles mentioned that the African American Baptists of Georgia owned five acres of land worth \$2,500 that they were selling in an effort to donate that sum to the Atlanta Baptist Seminary. At the conclusion of the article, the author stated “Rev. Frank Quarles certainly deserves great credit for the good work which he has performed. As the moving spirit in this enterprise, we congratulate him, for through his untiring energy another temple has been reared in our midst, the influence of which will lift Atlanta higher in education, morals, and religion.”<sup>46</sup>

When Packard and Giles entered the basement of Friendship Baptist Church Rev. Quarles said to them “You are welcome to anything here.” By April 4, 1881, Rev. Quarles had arranged a meeting with local African American Baptist ministers and introduced them to Packard and Giles. According to Harriet Giles, at this meeting Rev. Quarles “charged them, after telling them our mission, to cooperate with us, to give us all the help possible, and urge women to attend the school.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> “A New Institution for Colored Students in This City,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 25, 1879, 4; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 22–23. Brooks Higginbotham notes how instrumental Quarles was in helping to establish Spelman College discussing how he toured the north on behalf of Spelman and how on his last trip he caught pneumonia and died “thus literally giving his life to the cause of Spelman” 23.

<sup>47</sup> Giles, “Historical Sketch of Spelman Seminary,” 2.

## John D. Rockefeller

By 1882, it became apparent to Packard and Giles that they needed to secure their own space for their growing school. Packard and Giles soon found themselves with an unexpected opportunity and proposed merger. The American Baptist Home Mission had purchased the former Union Army site known as the McPherson Barracks for use by the Atlanta Baptist Seminary. The American Baptist Home Mission then proposed a merger between the two schools. Packard and Giles vehemently opposed this merger. After much debate, the American Baptist Home Mission called the proposed merger off and gave Packard and Giles the opportunity to assume the remaining debt on the property.<sup>48</sup>

Using their established network, Packard and Giles set about fundraising to pay off the remaining \$5000 owed on the McPherson Barracks property. In June of 1882, the Reverend George O. King, one of Packard's and Giles's former students, invited them to his church, the Wilson Avenue Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio to plead the case for the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary. King arranged for John D. Rockefeller and his wife Laura Spelman Rockefeller to be in attendance. On June 18, 1882, Packard and Giles pleaded their case to the congregation of the Wilson Avenue Baptist Church, where the Rockefellers first heard the desperate plea of Packard and Giles for funding to support the

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<sup>48</sup> *History and Traditions Reference Guide: Spelman College*, 5–6. By the time of the June 1882 meeting, Rockefeller and his Standard Oil company had already monopolized the oil industry in the United States making him one of the wealthiest men in the country. His wealth allowed him to give generously to causes which he approved of, one of which was African American education. Together with his wife Laura Spelman Rockefeller, and his in-laws, Rockefeller began making charitable donations to causes related to the African American race. However, Rockefeller was very deliberate in which causes he chose to donate to, often refusing to give to causes that he thought would not last. For more see, Ron Chernow, *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr.*, 2nd edition (Vintage, 2004), 240. Harriet Giles recalled a conversation she had with Rockefeller when they first met. He asked her “Are you going to stick?” and added, “If so I’ll do more for you,” 240.

then fledgling school. At the conclusion of the meeting, Rockefeller gave all of the money on his person, pledged an additional \$250 towards the construction of buildings, and made a promise to do more.<sup>49</sup>

The events of June 1882 proved to be monumental in the history of the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary. From that time until 1884, Packard and Giles nurtured their relationship with Rockefeller as they continued to raise funds for the barracks site. On April 11, 1884, the seminary's third anniversary, Rockefeller, his wife Laura, and two of their children visited the seminary. After visiting the barracks site, Rockefeller agreed to pay off the \$5000 debt giving the seminary not only a permanent site, but relevancy and stability.<sup>50</sup>

With the assistance of Rockefeller, the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary owned the McPherson Barracks site. The McPherson Barracks opened in 1867 and was immediately occupied by regiments of the US Army. Originally, McPherson Barracks consisted of roughly fifty buildings including a hospital, bakery, officer's quarters, barracks for soldiers, and laundresses quarters.<sup>51</sup> By the time Packard and Giles secured the site, only five buildings remained. Those buildings would become the first buildings exclusively for the use of the seminary.

John D. Rockefeller's commitment led to a lifelong dedication by the Rockefeller family in supporting Spelman. In 1884, Rockefeller suggested that the school, known at

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<sup>49</sup> *History and Traditions Reference Guide: Spelman College*, 6–7.

<sup>50</sup> *History and Traditions Reference Guide: Spelman College*, 8.

<sup>51</sup> Staff History Officer, *The Fort McPherson Story, 1885 - 1963* (Fort McPherson, Georgia: Office Adjutant General Headquarters Third United States Army, 1964), 13–15.

the time as the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, change its name to Spelman Seminary after his father-in-law, Harvey Buel Spelman, who was an educator and abolitionist whose home once acted as a stop on the Underground Railroad. Not surprisingly, Harvey Buel Spelman's example greatly influenced his daughter Laura Spelman Rockefeller, his other daughter Lucy Maria Spelman, and his wife, Lucy Henry Spelman. All three women wholeheartedly placed their support behind the school and its name change. Upon hearing of Rockefeller's suggestion, Mrs. Andrea Pollard, a member of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, reminded Sophia B. Packard: "We are all glad [to] have him name it, and feel that the school has in him such a friend."<sup>52</sup>

In 1886, John D. Rockefeller pledged \$10,000 for the construction of the college's first permanent brick building, Rockefeller Hall. Rockefeller preferred the construction of buildings made of brick believing wood buildings to be only temporary and "that it would be better to build at the beginning one that would fully answer the purpose" for its use.<sup>53</sup> Rockefeller was very hands-on in the design and construction process of the building that was to bear his name. On April 2, 1885, Rockefeller told Reverend Dr. Henry L. Morehouse, the corresponding secretary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, of his specifications. Rockefeller noted that the building be "made of brick, three stories in height and to be attractive in its exterior; although no money is to be wasted in elaborate ornamentation."<sup>54</sup> Sophia Packard wrote back to H.L.

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<sup>52</sup> Andrea Pollard, "Letter to Sophia B. Packard from Andrea Pollard, 'Rockefeller Suggested Name – Spelman,'" April 12, 1884, The Sophia B. Packard Collection, Box 2, Folder 23, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>53</sup> Read, *The Story of Spelman College*, 1961, 179.

<sup>54</sup> H. L. Morehouse, "Letter to Sophia B. Packard and Harriet G. Giles from H.L. Morehouse 'JDR Gave \$10,000 Pledge/New Building,'" April 2, 1885, The Sophia B. Packard Collection, Box 2, Folder 25, Spelman College Archives.

Morehouse just six days later. Of Rockefeller's donation, she stated, "Your letter bringing the glad news of Mr. Rockefeller's generous gift does indeed fill our hearts with rejoicing."<sup>55</sup> When describing her needs for the building, she stated that she needed "a large chapel and at least twelve recitation rooms." She also requested a large library that could accommodate a study room and an office on the first floor.<sup>56</sup> John D. Rockefeller approved the building plan for Rockefeller Hall in early May of 1885.

The construction and naming of Rockefeller Hall hearkens back to the English historical tradition of naming college campus buildings after benefactors who donated funds towards the development of the college. Architect Paul V. Turner in his seminal work *Campus: An American Planning Tradition* notes that naming colleges or buildings for benefactors was a common way to solicit contributions. This tradition was early introduced into North America at schools such as Harvard University, named for John Harvard who donated his library and some funds to the school, and at Yale University named for Elihu Yale. Cotton Mather told Yale that "having a college named for him would be much better than an Egyptian pyramid."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Sophia B. Packard, "Letter to Rev. H.L. Morehouse from Packard 'Details Re: Rockefeller Hall Plans,'" April 8, 1885, The Sophia B. Packard Collection, Box 2, Folder 25, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>56</sup> Packard.

<sup>57</sup> Turner, *Campus*, 23.



Fig. 1. Rockefeller Hall while under construction in 1886. Note the barrack buildings behind Rockefeller Hall and the construction materials in the foreground. (Photograph, Rockefeller Hall Under Construction, 1885 – 1886, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

On May 18, 1886, Rockefeller Hall opened its doors as the heart of Spelman's new campus. Rockefeller Hall contains several distinct architectural features (Fig. 1). Among these are its signature Syrian arch on its front façade, arched windows, cupola, decorative brick belt courses, and projecting arched windows in the gables at either end. A review of its earliest floorplan reveals that Sophia Packard received what she wished for as the first floor contained administrative offices (Fig. 2.), the second floor contained a chapel and student rooms (Fig.3.), and the third floor contained student rooms (Fig.4.).

Architectural floor plan of the second floor of Rockefeller Hall. The plan shows a central corridor (CORRIDOR) running horizontally, with a staircase (STAIRS) on the left and a 'BALCONY ABOVE' indicated below the corridor. On the left side, there are four 'STUDENT ROOM' units, each measuring 12'-0" by 12'-0", and a 'SUPPLY ROOM' measuring 12'-0" by 12'-0". On the right side, there are four 'STUDENT ROOM' units, each measuring 12'-0" by 12'-0", and a 'LOBBY' area. The plan also shows a 'STAGE' area at the top, a 'REST ROOM' at the bottom right, and a 'REST ROOM' at the bottom left. The overall dimensions are 48'-0" by 48'-0". The plan is labeled 'ROCKEFELLER HALL' and 'SECOND FLOOR PLAN' with a scale of 1/8" = 1'-0".

Fig. 3. Floorplan of the second floor of Rockefeller Hall. Note the chapel in the center of the building. (Rockefeller Hall Second Floor Plan, Clement and Wynn Program Managers, *Spelman College Campus Heritage Plan* (Atlanta, Georgia, 2005), 9.)

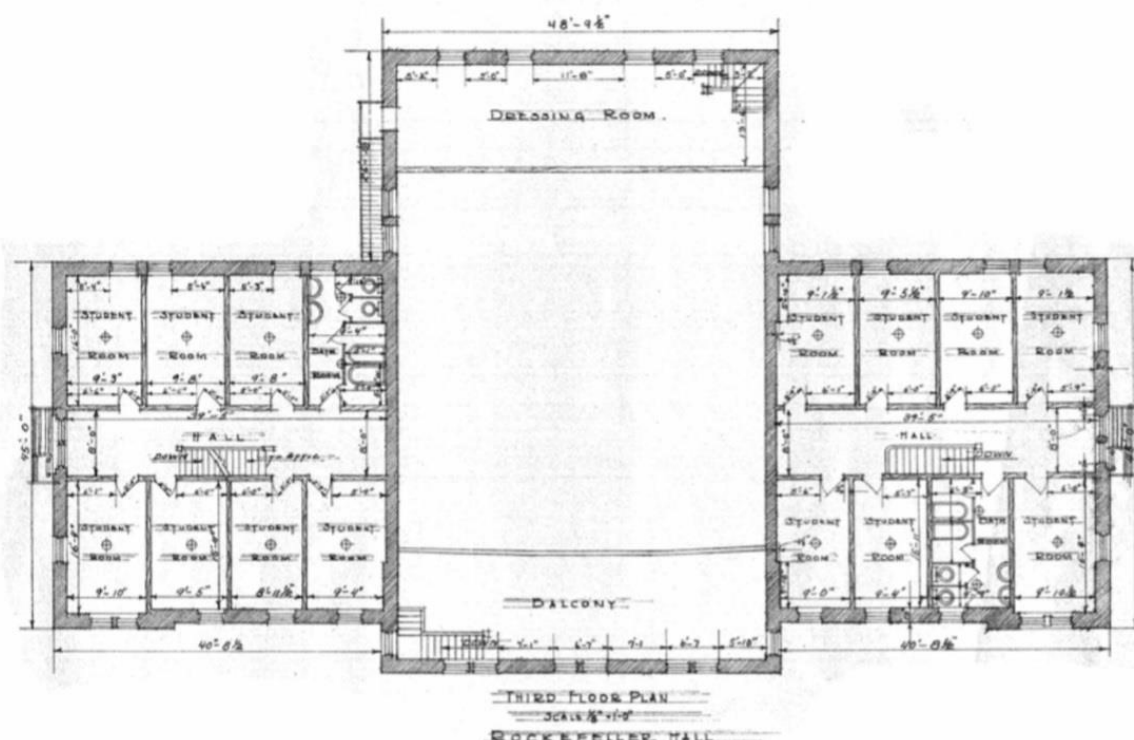


Fig. 4. Floor plan of Rockefeller Hall's third floor. Note the chapel again is the center of the building and dominates this floor. (Rockefeller Hall Third Floor Plan, Clement and Wynn Program Managers, *Spelman College Campus Heritage Plan* (Atlanta, Georgia, 2005), 10.)

The May 1886 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* detailed the interior floorplan and finishes of Rockefeller Hall.

The first floor contains a hall 12x42 with office and library, each 16x22 one on either side; also two recitation rooms 22x38. The chapel occupies the second and third stories and is 45x40 and 24 ft. high with large cove in angle of ceiling, and plaster cornices. The galleries on each end are 16x45. The room is finished in Georgia pine, and the windows bordered with stained glass. On each side of the building are wings 44x42, three stories high, each having on first floor a hall, connecting with front hall, 8x42. In one wing there are on each side the hall two recitation rooms 16x19; the other contains the Principal's apartments and two recitation rooms, making a total of thirteen rooms on first floor. The second and third floors are divided into dormitories, with the exception of four rooms which will be used for recitations, eight rooms to the floor, 10x16, thirty-two in all. The entire building is finished in Georgia pine with oak stairways, and will be lighted



by gas and heated by steam. The roof over the chapel, constructed on trusses, carries a cupola 18x22 with bell tower, on which is a vane, a gilt pane.<sup>58</sup>

Rockefeller's overall architectural influence on the Spelman College campus would not stop with the construction of Rockefeller Hall. Correspondence to and from Sophia Packard reveals the extent of his involvement in the college's building program. Packard's letters detail donations from Rockefeller for building components such as iron piers and heating systems, gifts of various amounts from Rockefeller for the building program, and even a donation from Rockefeller for the construction of a campus laundry. However, further investigation of these gifts reveals the true nature of Rockefeller's philanthropy; he pledged to make up whatever Packard proved incapable of fundraising. Rev. Dr. Henry L. Morehouse hinted at the process when he told Sophia Packard "I hope you will be successful in getting sufficient subscriptions so that Mr. Rockefeller will not be called upon for even his whole \$2,000."<sup>59</sup> Historian Ron Chernow found Rockefeller's attitude and actions towards giving was always a delicate balancing act: "Rockefeller gave enough to get projects underway, yet not so much to obviate future fundraising."<sup>60</sup> In a letter from Sophia B. Packard to Rev. Dr. Henry L. Morehouse, Packard notes that Rockefeller pledged to donate funds, but only if she could find matching funds. She states, "We wrote to Mr. Rockefeller that we needed from \$2500 to \$3000 for the heating and completion of the building. In a reply, he promised \$1500 on condition that the

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<sup>58</sup> "Rockefeller Hall," *The Spelman Messenger* Vol. 2. No. 7., May 1886, 4, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>59</sup> H. L. Morehouse, "Letter to Sophia B. Packard from Rev. H.L. Morehouse, 'Encourage Subscriptions so JDR Not Asked for More \$,'" June 5, 1888, The Sophia B. Packard Collection, Box 2, Folder 32, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>60</sup> Chernow, *Titan*, 241.

remainder could be raised.”<sup>61</sup> Just two years after the writing of this letter Rockefeller donated \$600,000, or roughly \$16 million in today’s money, towards the creation of the University of Chicago.<sup>62</sup>

No other benefactor of Spelman Seminary ever matched the contributions of John D. Rockefeller. His wealth translated to immediate support and guidance of the seminary’s building programs. In fact, today five buildings on the campus bear the Rockefeller name, Rockefeller Hall (1886), Bessie (Rockefeller) Strong Hall (1917), Laura Spelman Rockefeller Hall (1918), Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Hall (1953), and the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Fine Arts Building (1961) while another building Sisters Chapel (1929) serves as a memorial to Laura Spelman Rockefeller and her sister Lucy Maria Spelman. Rockefeller’s wealth also contributed to the construction of other buildings on the seminary’s campus including Packard Hall, Giles Hall, Reynolds Cottage, Morehouse-James Hall, and MacVicar Hospital.<sup>63</sup> The Rockefeller family was not only involved in constructing campus buildings, but John D. Rockefeller also sent his own craftsmen to lay out drives and walks and utilized the expertise of his own landscape architects to purposely select plants and trees for the campus.<sup>64</sup> What becomes clear

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<sup>61</sup> Sophia B. Packard, “Letter to H.L. Morehouse from Sophia B. Packard, ‘Explanation of Rockefeller Pledge,’” October 13, 1888, The Sophia B. Packard Collection, Box 2, Folder 33, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>62</sup> The University of Chicago, “History,” *The University of Chicago*, accessed May 30, 2017, <http://www.uchicago.edu/about/history/>.

<sup>63</sup> *History and Traditions Reference Guide: Spelman College*, 13. In 1901 Rockefeller donated \$200,000 to Spelman Seminary for the construction of Reynolds Cottage, Morehouse-James Hall, MacVicar Hospital, and a power plant building.

<sup>64</sup> *History and Traditions Reference Guide: Spelman College*, 13.

through Rockefeller's philanthropy is that without it Spelman Seminary would have fared differently, even down to its very name.

## **Conclusion**

Together, the combined influences of the American Baptist Home Mission, the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission, Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles, and John D. Rockefeller worked to found, establish, and strengthen Spelman Seminary. What often is missing from the story is that African Americans in Atlanta, Georgia were actively working to uplift themselves. Without the aid of the African American community in Atlanta and African American churches such as Friendship Baptist Church, Packard and Giles may not have received the support that assisted them in the seminary's early days.

Sophia Packard's background also shaped the creation of Spelman Seminary. Her Baptist upbringing in the small town of New Salem, Massachusetts, combined with her Christian education at various seminaries and institutes throughout New England, directly influenced her approach to education and her understandings of what a proper education should be. Packard's ingenuity and ambition not only helped to found Spelman, but also helped to found the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission, a group strictly for Baptist women to use their influence to support causes that interested them. Packard clearly believed in the power of women.

Packard also did not shy away from the dilemmas presented by starting Spelman. Together with Harriet Giles, they worked to rely upon their network to fund them and

support the seminary. Additionally, they established their own relationship with the Rockefeller family for the greater benefit of Spelman. Packard's and Giles's relationship with the Rockefellers allowed for perhaps one of the greatest examples of philanthropy to a historically black college and university. Through his relationship with Packard and Giles, John D. Rockefeller became an agent of control building an African American woman's seminary essentially from the ground up. His hands-on approach cemented his place in the development of the seminary, but also demonstrated the lengths he went through to control what was happening at Spelman. Additionally, he served as a trustee of the seminary until 1907 giving him the unique opportunity to watch the growth of the seminary and endear himself in the hearts of the students and administrators. In many ways through the careful selection of building names, Spelman's physical campus developed as a shrine to the Rockefeller family.

While Rockefeller's support enabled the seminary to grow and flourish physically, the seminary's ultimate success relied upon the African American community. Reverend Quarles and Friendship Baptist Church provided a space for the seminary when they had none. Additionally, Quarles championed the seminary among the African American community and Atlanta area African American churches. African American congregations such as those worshipping at the Wheat Street Baptist Church in Atlanta, were among the first supporters of the seminary sending gifts of goods. Word of mouth among African American communities in Atlanta helped students discover the seminary and ultimately aided in the seminary's growth. As the seminary grew, its needs also grew and to meet these needs Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles began an active campaign of soliciting money and objects to support the school.

## CHAPTER TWO - COLLECTING OBJECTS

“I am enclosing a list of things that are needed annually for each room, or the approximate need. I am also enclosing some sheets that give lists of things that are always welcome and always needed... Please do not feel frightened by the lists, they are simply suggestions from which to choose.”

- Lucy Hale Tapley, February 16, 1923<sup>1</sup>

Spelman President Lucy Hale Tapley’s letter to Mrs. E. T. Wilson of Denver, Colorado was one of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of letters sent by Spelman administrators requesting the public to send objects to the seminary. With the construction of each building on campus, letters requesting both monetary help for purchases and gifts of objects became the norm as Spelman administrators sought to outfit the buildings with objects to advance their mission. With the passage of time and the needs of the seminary, Spelman administrators not only accepted gifts from individuals and churches, but they also began to accept gifts from philanthropies such as the Slater Fund in exchange for advancing their African American education mission. As the seminary collected more objects, the mission of Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles became apparent as the objects accepted began to reflect the founder’s goals for African American women. These very different objects significantly contributed to the culture of African American female refinement at Spelman Seminary.

In 1923, Spelman administrators had every object on campus appraised and assigned a value based on the cost to replace it with a comparable new item. The

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<sup>1</sup> Lucy Tapley, “Letter from President Lucy Tapley to Mrs. E. T. Wilson,” February 16, 1923, Lucy Hale Tapley Presidential Collection, Box 2, Folder 44, Spelman College Archives.

American Appraisal Company published its findings in a three-volume set of appraisal books given to Spelman Seminary treasurer A. E. Kendall. Listed within these appraisal books were every object on campus, the building that the object was in, and the room in the building that was home to that object. According to historical archaeologist James Deetz, inventories combined with artifacts create a more detailed picture than either could alone.<sup>2</sup> In the case of Spelman, the combination of the appraisal book, historic photographs, and primary source documents opens a world of objects representing the material culture of the school. This chapter examines how those objects came to be on the campus of Spelman Seminary investigating how the material world of Spelman developed by exploring the methods used by Spelman administrators to acquire the objects that defined the college and its mission.

### **Material Beginnings**

From the beginning in the basement of Friendship Baptist Church the seminary needed more space and more things were needed to run effectively. The basement was dark, dank, and unappealing. Towards their goal of making the basement more like a school, they divided the basement into two classroom spaces. Packard secured a desk and used it along with some of the basement pews to create an area for her students while Giles created a space for her students near the basement's window by arranging the pews in a square. Sarah Champney, the seminary's first teacher besides Packard and Giles,

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<sup>2</sup> Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten*, 15.

used the basement's coal room as her classroom.<sup>3</sup> The first objects of two bibles, two notebooks, and two pencils allowed two students to start, but much more was necessary to sustain the seminary.<sup>4</sup> Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles, however, did the best they could in the first months making the basement as much of a classroom as they possibly could, but to keep the tools of education - pencils, notebooks, bibles - they quickly began a program of writing to those sympathetic to their cause and asking for help. Of the learning experience in the basement, student A. DeLamotta recalled that "Miss Giles would break up a lot of little sticks and lay them across the seams of the planks, where there were planks, and make us count them, and take up one, and so we learned to add and subtract."<sup>5</sup> Later records reveal that from October 1881 to June 1, 1882, that the seminary enrolled 173 students, far more than the number of books and reading materials found in records.<sup>6</sup>

Among the first objects given to Spelman was a Webster's Unabridged Dictionary from the G. & C. Merriam Company in June 1881. Along with the dictionary, the company showed interest in the educational program at Spelman and asked if there was a catalog.<sup>7</sup> Spelman leaders sent the company their very first catalog for the years 1881 - 1882. The catalog was the first significant object that Spelman administrators used to

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<sup>3</sup> C. M. Grover, "Spelman December 1882," *The Spelman Messenger*, April 1891, 1, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>4</sup> W., "Founders' Day," 1.

<sup>5</sup> A DeLamotta, "At School," *The Spelman Messenger*, April 1891, 2, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>6</sup> The Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, *Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary*, 1881st-1882nd ed. (Atlanta, Georgia: Jas. P. Harrison and Company Printers, 1881), 9, <http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=sccatalogs>.

<sup>7</sup> G. & C. Merriam, "Letter from G. & C. Merriam to Sophia B. Packard," June 11, 1881, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Box 1, Folder 3, Spelman College Archives.

define the school and its audience. The catalog began with the biographies of Packard and Giles, noting

These ladies bring to this important but difficult work an experience of more than a quarter of a century, an enviable reputation for competency, faithfulness and success, and a Christian principle as marked as their culture is unquestionable...Those who educate the women of a race will have the race; and if Baptists are true to their responsibility in this regard, will they not speak "a word in season," to help forward an enterprise which looks only to the promotion of intelligence, pure morals, and sound Christian faith?<sup>8</sup>

Although George and Charles Merriam were Congregationalists, they were ardent supporters of missionaries, missionary activities, and aid societies. They gave profusely to those causes perhaps explaining their interest in Spelman and their request for the catalog.<sup>9</sup> The brief biographies of Packard and Giles helped convince the Merriams and many other donors in the future of the seminary's value. Its founders were Christian women sacrificing to provide a better future for those more unfortunate. Why not join the crusade? In the coming years, G. & C. Merriam Company would pay Spelman to advertise their dictionaries in the *Spelman Messenger*.<sup>10</sup>

In June 1881, the American Baptist Home Mission Society Board gave Spelman \$38.10 for the purchase of bibles from the American and Foreign Bible Society. Since its founding in 1816, the American and Foreign Bible Society was committed to providing

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<sup>8</sup> The Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, *Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary*, 1.

<sup>9</sup> "Charles Merriam's Will," *The Boston Globe*, August 18, 1887, 1. Charles Merriam's will includes donations to several aid societies including the American Missionary Association which also founded HBCUs. Additionally, the Merriams were from Springfield, Massachusetts just a short distance from New Salem, Massachusetts home of Packard and Giles and may have heard of their work by word of mouth.

<sup>10</sup> "A New Book From Cover to Cover," *Spelman Messenger*, December 1890, 7. Two advertisements for G. & C. Merriam Company's Webster Dictionaries are found in this issue of the *Spelman Messenger*.



Bibles to as many people as possible. They operated an office out of Atlanta known as the Coloured People of the South Agency, which made it easy for Spelman administrators to receive the bibles they purchased. These bibles then became the second objects received by the new school.

By the fall of 1881, Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles had weathered the storm of opening the seminary and surviving through the summer break. The start of the fall semester found the seminary with the donated gifts of American Tract Society Christian literature along with thirty copies of Bailey's *Scholar Companions*.<sup>11</sup> Rufus Bailey's *Scholar's Companion* books included lessons that helped students understand the orthography, derivation, and classification of words.

What the comparison between the number of students and available books and learning materials reveals is that the learning conditions at Spelman in its earliest days were comparable to learning conditions at other HBCUs and schools that taught African American students.<sup>12</sup> What sets Spelman apart from some of those schools is its concentrated and well-executed fundraising plan designed and implemented by Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles. In a letter dated July 25, 1881, Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles wrote to Rebecca M. Hesseltine, Corresponding Secretary of the WABHMS, describing the seminary's fundraising plan. Of the plan, Packard and Giles wrote that they came up with a plan to print circulars about the seminary and hand them out at the

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<sup>11</sup> G. L. Shearer, "Letter from Rev. G. L. Shearer to Sophia B. Packard," August 5, 1881, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives; John W. Paulett, "Letter from John W. Paulett to Sophia B. Packard," October 13, 1881, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>12</sup> Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1963), 43-44. Washington recalled starting Tuskegee teaching in a stable and a hen house while African American schools around him had only a blackboard and one book.

upcoming separate conventions of white Baptist ministers and African American Baptist ministers. Those circulars would also request aid to the school. Additionally, Packard and Giles, along with Reverend William White, started a fundraising society to acquire funds to move the school out of Friendship Baptist Church's basement. Each member of the society was to give five cents a month, and seminary students were to find members to join the society. Furthermore, Packard and Giles indicated that they were actively visiting nearby Baptist churches and women's groups each Sunday to raise funds.<sup>13</sup>

Packard and Giles had a plan to move beyond their meager beginnings. As they had established a growing Atlanta area network to raise funds, it became apparent that they would also need to rely on the network that gave them their first donation, the New England Baptists.

### **The New England Baptists Network**

Along with the early gifts of books and papers came gifts of dollars. The very first donation towards the establishment of Spelman came from the First Baptist Church in Medford, Massachusetts. This single donation set the pace for other donations as Spelman administrators realized the strength and support they received from New England area Baptist churches. In a letter dated May 26, 1881, Mrs. L. M. Googins of Cambridge, Massachusetts wrote to Sophia Packard and included a donation of \$12.25

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<sup>13</sup> Harriet E. Giles and Sophia B. Packard, "Letter From Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles to Mrs. F. L. Hesselstine," July 25, 1881, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

from the Ladies Missionary Society of the Broadway Baptist Church.<sup>14</sup> Packard wrote Googins back two days later thanking her for the donation.<sup>15</sup> The donation from the Ladies Missionary Society of the Broadway Baptist Church was just the first of many donations that poured into Spelman during its first months.

Having spent the greater part of their lives in New England, Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles were well known among New England Baptists. They had dedicated their lives as adults to education and Christianity so it came as no surprise to them that they would be able to depend upon the friendships they had made and the network they had cultivated to aid Spelman. New England Baptists soon came to hear the news of Spelman and began to write Sophia Packard asking what they could do to help. Baptist Reverend A. P. Mason of Chelsea, Massachusetts wrote to Sophia Packard on September 12, 1881, asking her to send him information on African Americans so that he could spread the word and help the cause.<sup>16</sup> The H. A. Kimball family of Massachusetts wrote soon thereafter and donated \$11.87 for the work being done.<sup>17</sup>

A review of the records of donations quickly reveals that New England Baptists largely kept the seminary open. On February 17, 1882, Andrea Pollard, Corresponding Secretary of the WABHMS wrote Sophia Packard a list of donors, including some from

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<sup>14</sup> L. M. Googins, "Letter L. M. Googins to Sophia Packard," May 26, 1881, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Box 1, Folder 3, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>15</sup> Sophia B. Packard, "Letter from Sophia Packard to L. M. Googins," May 28, 1881, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Box 1, Folder 3, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>16</sup> A. P. Mason, "Letter from A. P. Mason to Sophia Packard," September 12, 1881, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>17</sup> H. A. Kimball, "Letter from H. A. Kimball to Sophia Packard," October 22, 1881, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

New England and also sent her \$166.66 in donations received by the WABHMS.<sup>18</sup>

Individuals also chipped in. On March 23, 1882, Sophia Packard wrote to Isabel Comins a member of the Baptist church in Barre, Massachusetts thanking her for her \$5.00 donation. Packard used this opportunity to write Comins a five-page letter updating her on the state of Spelman. Packard no doubt saw the original donation as a potential commitment from Comins to speak to others on behalf of Spelman and ask for donations.<sup>19</sup>

The passage of information by word of mouth greatly aided Packard and Giles as they sought funds for the school. Records reveal that many people wrote to Sophia Packard asking what the school needed. On March 29, 1882, Reverend A. P. Mason followed up his letter from the past September again asking for more information. This time he also asked that Sophia Packard send a letter to his wife, Mrs. Phoebe Mason with the Women's Foreign Mission, because she had funding available that might help Spelman.<sup>20</sup> Letters like Mason's were common and sometimes came from chapters of the WABHMS. On October 9, 1882, Sara E. Hatheway wrote to Sophia Packard asking if she needed items for the recitation room. Before she ended her letter, Hatheway asked Packard to send her a letter of needs so that the Baptist women of Suffield, Connecticut could help her mission.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Andrea Pollard, "Letter from Andrea Pollard to Sophia Packard," February 17, 1882, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>19</sup> Sophia B. Packard, "Letter from Sophia Packard to Isabel Comins of Barre, Massachusetts," March 23, 1882, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>20</sup> A. P. Mason, "Letter from A. P. Mason to Sophia Packard," March 29, 1882, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>21</sup> Sara E. Hatheway, "Letter from Sara E. Hatheway to Sophia Packard," October 9, 1882, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

Just one day after Packard received a letter from Sara E. Hatheway of Suffield, she received a letter from M. J. Rice of Suffield asking her of Spelman's needs. Rice also reminded Packard of the time Packard taught school in Suffield.<sup>22</sup> If the actions of women's groups in sending letters only a day apart indicates anything, it reflects the significant support Spelman received from those affiliated with the WABHMS. Women's groups such as those from Suffield, Connecticut, often worked together to raise funds and gather objects to send to Spelman.

Often, New England women's groups and churches would send Spelman barrels of items. According to correspondence to and from Sophia Packard, from October 1882 through the end of 1882, Spelman received fourteen barrels containing objects such as clothing and quilt patches with two of those barrels from Sara Hatheway and the Second Baptist Church of Suffield who inquired about Spelman's needs months earlier.<sup>23</sup> In later years, Spelman would receive so many barrels that they set aside a room to be called the Barrel Room.<sup>24</sup>

Spelman administrators were well aware that the lifeline of the school was New England Baptists. In a 1923 letter to Mrs. A. E. Reynolds, President Lucy Tapley indicated that she would check the barrel room to see how many new packages Spelman had recently received from New England and report back. Tapley stated, "When I go to

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<sup>22</sup> M. J. Rice, "Letter from M. J. Rice to Sophia Packard," October 10, 1882, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>23</sup> William Reid, "Letter from William Reid to Sophia Packard," November 6, 1882, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives; Sara E. Hatheway, "Letter from Sara Hatheway to Sophia Packard," November 10, 1882, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>24</sup> Lucy Tapley, "Letter from Lucy Tapley to Mrs. A. E. Reynolds," January 17, 1923, Lucy Hale Tapley Presidential Collection, Spelman College Archives. In a letter to Mrs. A. E. Reynolds, Tapley indicated that Spelman had a room called the Barrel Room where they sorted newly received objects.

the office I will check up and report what boxes etc. have come in from New England. We are receiving a good many packages these days and I should have to consult the record to say just how many are from that section of the country.”<sup>25</sup> The sheer volume of objects and funding received from New England begs the question of what New Englanders thought of southern African American women?

Due to the New England Baptist network and the pipeline that Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles established, Spelman had a never-ending source of objects and funding to support its mission. New Englanders depended and relied on Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles to tell them the state of the school and its students as well as what they needed. What becomes apparent, is that Packard’s and Giles’s New England reputation for being excellent educators aided them in their southern venture as those who remembered their past work were eager to support their present work.

### **African American Donations**

White New Englanders were not the only people seeking ways to support Spelman, African Americans showed interest in supporting the school as well. The construction of Rockefeller Hall in 1885 caused many African Americans to reach out to Sophia Packard inquiring about volunteering to construct the building. In her letter to Henry Morehouse, Packard wrote “Some colored people who are interested in it, but have no money to give, have offered to give their work. I mention this to show their interest.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Sophia B. Packard, “Letter from Sophia Packard to Rev. H. L. Morehouse,” April 16, 1885, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

Packard was correct in her assertion that local African Americans had an interest in what was happening at Spelman and they gave whatever they could for the betterment of the school.

The March 1886 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* includes a list of donations from African Americans across the south towards the construction of Rockefeller Hall. In 1886, Zillah Frazier was a twenty-one-year-old African American woman living in Vacluse, South Carolina. The 1880 United States Census indicates that Zilla could neither read nor write, yet in 1886 she freely gave \$1.00 earned through her work as a farm laborer to Spelman.<sup>27</sup> Some of those joining Zillah Frazier in her donation to Spelman were Early Ragland, a formerly enslaved African American farmer from Barnesville, Georgia who donated 50 cents, Reverend C. H. Lyon, an African American minister from Athens, Georgia who donated \$5.00, Reverend A. N. McEwen of Montgomery, Alabama who donated \$1.50, and the Cumming Grove Baptist Church an African American congregation from Augusta, Georgia who donated \$1.25.<sup>28</sup>

After Spelman's Union Hall burned in June 1887, Spelman student Ella Bailey took it upon herself to raise funds for the construction of a new building. Bailey wrote an appeal and Spelman published it in the February 1888 edition of the *Spelman Messenger*. Bailey's appeal stated, "To the charitable public. Whereas on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of June, Union

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<sup>27</sup> "1880 U. S. Census, Edgefield County, South Carolina, population schedule, Wise, p 47, dwelling 453, family 461, Zillah Frazier; digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed February 20, 2019; "We Gratefully Acknowledge the Following Gifts," *Spelman Messenger*, March 1886, 5, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>28</sup> 1880 U. S. Census, Camden County, Georgia, population schedule, Bailey's Mill, p 58, dwelling 508, family 510, Early Ragland; digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed February 20, 2019; "We Gratefully Acknowledge the Following Gifts," 5.

Hall, of Spelman Seminary was destroyed by fire, the undersigned respectfully ask you to contribute as much as you can towards erecting another building for the Seminary. Ella Bailey, receiver for the seminary.”<sup>29</sup>

Bailey, a student in the normal and preparatory department from Bailey’s Mill, Georgia, raised \$6.63 from her African American neighbors in Bailey’s Mill, with her highest donation being \$1.70 from Reverend Q. Hardy of the Enterprise Baptist Church and the lowest being a one cent donation from Katie Green. Ella herself gave ten cents and the majority of benefactors, who were housekeepers and farm laborers, gave amounts of around five to ten cents each to help Spelman rebuild.<sup>30</sup> Of Bailey’s work in fundraising on behalf of Spelman, the author of the article in the *Spelman Messenger* described Bailey as enterprising, business-like, and commendable.<sup>31</sup>

Not only did rural African American communities such as the benefactors from Bailey’s Mill, Georgia band together to donate to Spelman, but local African American churches did as well. One of the earliest Atlanta congregations other than Friendship Baptist Church to show support to Spelman was the Wheat Street Baptist Church. The Wheat Street Baptist Church first opened its doors in 1869. The congregation consisted of former members of Friendship Baptist Church who sought to create a congregation closer

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<sup>29</sup> Ella Bailey, “To The Charitable Public,” *Spelman Messenger*, February 1888, 2, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>30</sup> 1880 U. S. Census, Camden County, Georgia, population schedule, Bailey’s Mill, p 5, dwelling 64, family 64, Charity White; digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed February 20, 2019. Using Charity White who donated ten cents as a starting point, I analyzed the census line by line and found other benefactors listed in the Spelman article. White’s occupation was “keeping house” while other donators such as Washington Houston who donated five cents was a farmer.

<sup>31</sup> Bailey, “To The Charitable Public,” 2.



to their homes. From its beginning, the congregation did not shy away from social issues which may inform why they decided to give objects to Spelman.<sup>32</sup>

The June 1886 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* spoke of the donation from the Wheat Street Baptist Church.

On May the 9, we were favored by a visit from the Deborah Society of the Wheat Street Baptist Church. The afternoon was very sultry and the distance great, notwithstanding, a large number of the Society were present. The pastor, Rev. Tilman, addressed the Society and the School, stating that they had come for the purpose of doing something for Rockefeller Hall. They left behind them a donation of thirty-six dollars. We are very grateful to our friends for their kindness and hope that God's blessing, which always comes to those who give to His work, may follow them.<sup>33</sup>

A second article in the *Spelman Messenger* immediately followed this article and stated "We take pleasure in stating, that the members of the Wheat Street Baptist Church have increased their thirty-six dollars recently given by the Deborah Society to one hundred dollars, for the finishing and furnishing of a room in Rockefeller Hall."<sup>34</sup> Through furnishing a room in Rockefeller Hall and having that room named for them as was customary, the Wheat Street Baptist Church congregation claimed a space on the campus of Spelman.

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<sup>32</sup> Kayla Scott Bresler, "Wheat Street Baptist Church [Atlanta] (1869- ) • BlackPast," March 14, 2014, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/wheat-street-baptist-church-atlanta-georgia-1869/>; "Wheat Street Baptist Church," *Spelman Messenger*, December 1912, 8, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library. The December 1912 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* describes Wheat Street Baptist Church as the largest African American Baptist church in the south adding that the church operates a day and night school, an old woman's home, and a South African mission.

<sup>33</sup> "Deborah Society of the Wheat Street Baptist Church," *Spelman Messenger*, June 1886, 4, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>34</sup> "Deborah Society of the Wheat Street Baptist Church," 4.

By 1913, African Americans were regularly contributing funding and objects to Spelman. The November 1913 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* indicates that during 1913 African Americans donated \$700.00 towards the support of the school.<sup>35</sup> Through their donations to Spelman, African Americans not only displayed their interest in the school, but they also displayed the value of the African American dollar. Their willingness to give, when some had so little, shows that they were actively supporting causes beneficial to them as people. Sophia Packard's and Harriet Giles's appeals to African American Baptist ministers shows their understanding that they would not succeed without the support of the African American church and African American people.

### **Appeals**

The fundraising message was central to the creation of the *Spelman Messenger* in March 1885. Not only would the printing of the *Spelman Messenger* train students in the college's Printing Office, but it would also work to spread the Spelman story and to encourage donations. For the price of 25 cents, anyone could subscribe to and receive the *Spelman Messenger* for one year. Single copies cost 5 cents each. Additionally, Spelman offered the newspaper to anyone for free on a trial basis of two months. Current subscribers could also send one paper to their friends for free.<sup>36</sup> By providing flexible subscription options, Spelman administrators ensured that the paper would reach a large

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<sup>35</sup> "A Message to the Friends and Donors of The Spelman Seminary," *Spelman Messenger*, November 1913, 5, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>36</sup> "Spelman Seminary," *Spelman Messenger Vol. 16 No. 3*, January 1900, 4, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

number of supporters. School administrators filled its pages with requests for monetary donations and objects as small as needles and thread.<sup>37</sup>

The seminary's "ask" followed a similar pattern. First, they used language that appealed to Spelman's largest group of donors, New England Baptists. Next, they often appealed to the pride of the donor by offering them personal recognition in return for their donation. Third, they relied upon the curriculum and student successes as evidence of the results of donations.

Because the majority of early Spelman benefactors were Baptists, Spelman administrators knew that by appealing to their shared Christianity that they would be able to encourage donations. One of the many ways they did this was to rely upon biblical teachings. For example, an article titled "To The Benefactors" in the March 1885 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* described the work being done at Spelman to educate African American women and also stated "The ladies of this Society took the school upon their hands when it was in its infancy, - now it has five hundred and seventy-five students enrolled, and new ones are coming daily - a wonderful growth. Truly "This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes." The article also included the statements, "Still the prayer is that God would open the hearts of His children to whom He has entrusted his

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<sup>37</sup> "Our Sewing School," *Spelman Messenger*, March 1885, 2, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library. The article closes with the request "Our means to carry on this important work are quite limited. Any help in this direction will be thankfully received and appreciated."

riches, so that the work may be greatly increased” and “Oh! That God’s people would test and prove the truth, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”<sup>38</sup>

Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles were keenly aware that by offering donors the ability to have their gifts made public, that donors would be more inclined to donate due to the recognition of their committed Christian gesture. Articles titled “Gifts Received” featured in the *Spelman Messenger* listed benefactors, their locations, and the gifts they donated. Not only could one have their name and donation listed in the *Spelman Messenger*, but their donation would also be listed in the *Baptist Home Mission Monthly* magazine printed by the American Baptist Home Mission Society. By printing donations to Spelman in the *Baptist Home Mission Monthly*, members of the ABHMS across the country would be able to see the donation and would be able to regard the benefactor as both pious and giving.

By tying requests for objects and funding directly to the curriculum, potential benefactors could rest assured knowing that their donations were going towards the appropriate training of African American women. The March 1885 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* included an article titled “Our Needs” which stated “The kitchen lacks many conveniences and the library is but poorly furnished. We mention these two departments together as they are typical of the way in which this work is blended, because the students are taught to feel equally at home in each.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> “To The Benefactors,” *Spelman Messenger*, March 1885, 2, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>39</sup> Spelman Seminary, “Our Needs,” *Spelman Messenger*, March 1885, 2, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

Through this lens, the *Spelman Messenger* emerges as a tool used to not only inform the public about the school, but also to encourage donations. By including articles on graduates of Spelman and their work in the field, benefactors were able to see how their donations bettered African American society, which might have spoken to their paternalistic sensibilities. Not only was the *Spelman Messenger* an appropriate tool to use to gather donations, but it also brought news of hardships faced by Spelman. By including articles on not only the triumphs of Spelman but also the trials, administrators were able to build relationships with readers and benefactors. When unforeseen trials affected the school, Spelman administrators knew to document those events in the *Spelman Messenger* while subtly asking for support. This practice became even more beneficial in Spelman's coming years with the burning of Union Hall and the construction of Packard Hall.

### **Packard Hall and the Gifts of Furnishings**

As early as 1882 before the school had a permanent home, Spelman administrators fielded requests from individuals wishing to furnish the school's rooms. With the purchase of the former McPherson Barracks site, Spelman administrators now had five buildings to prepare for use. Paying for the site itself had nearly emptied the school's accounts, but Spelman administrators knew that they had to continue to seek funding for the objects necessary to fill the buildings. Spelman administrators soon determined that they would appeal to the vanity of their donors by suggesting that if they furnished rooms across the campus that Spelman would name those rooms after them.

The plan of naming rooms after donors proved to be successful as donors jumped at the opportunity to have rooms named for themselves, their churches, or their hometowns on Spelman's campus.

For example, on January 30, 1883, Mrs. N. S. Burton, President of the Woman's Baptist Missionary Society of Cleveland, wrote to Sophia Packard and sent \$40 towards the furnishing of a room to be named the Akron Room for Akron, Ohio. On February 7, 1883, Sophia Packard received funds from the Second Baptist Church of Suffield who first began inquiring about furnishing a room in 1882. Reverend Hothanay of the Second Baptist Church indicated that the funds were for the furnishing of a room named the Suffield Room.<sup>40</sup> On March 3, 1883, Mrs. L. M. Kenyan wrote to Sophia Packard indicating that the Buffalo Home Missionary Society voted to donate \$30 towards the furnishing of a room.<sup>41</sup> On March 26, 1883, Jane F. Davis wrote to Sophia Packard and enclosed \$30 for the furnishing of the Woburn Room named for Woburn, Massachusetts. Davis also wrote that they had formed a Woman's Missionary Society strictly to raise funds for Spelman teacher's salaries.<sup>42</sup> On September 21, 1883, J. S. Milner wrote to Sophia Packard and sent \$30 towards the furnishing of the Milner Room.<sup>43</sup> These examples are but a few exemplifying how rooms across the Spelman campus acquired both their furnishings and their names.

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<sup>40</sup> Andrea Pollard, "Letter from Andrea Pollard to Sophia B. Packard," February 7, 1883, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>41</sup> Mrs. L. M. Kenyan, "Letter from Mrs. L. M. Kenyan to Sophia B. Packard," March 3, 1883, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>42</sup> Jane F. Davis, "Letter from Jane F. Davis to Sophia B. Packard," March 26, 1883, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>43</sup> Jane F. Davis, "Letter from J. S. Milner to Sophia B. Packard," September 21, 1883, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

With the burning of Union Hall on June 4, 1887, Spelman administrators immediately asked for help. An article in the November 1887 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* titled “Fire! Fire! Fire! - Help!!” opened with the statement, “Never has Spelman’s need for money seemed more urgent than just now,” while also encouraging readers to donate towards the rebuilding efforts.<sup>44</sup> Union Hall was the largest barracks building, and during the Union Army occupation of the campus site, it was an army hospital. Because it was the largest building, it had the most functions as it housed classrooms, the chapel, the model school, and dormitory rooms. Its absence on the landscape was largely felt as the burning of the building displaced students and put substantial pressure on the school’s remaining buildings.

As a result of the fire, Sidney Root, a Spelman Seminary trustee, suggested that Spelman begin a campaign to construct a new building. The new building was to be north of Rockefeller Hall, and it would form a boundary helping to create a quadrangle on the landscape. Insurance money totaling \$6000 matched by a \$6000 donation from Mrs. E. A. Slack of Merrimac, New Hampshire would fund the new building. Mrs. Slack’s \$6000 pledge came with two stipulations. First, she wanted the new building to be named Howard Hall after her mother and second, she wanted the school to always be under the control of the WABHMS. Meeting the first stipulation was easy. By naming the new building Howard Hall, after Mrs. Slack’s mother, Spelman administrators were furthering

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<sup>44</sup> “Fire! Fire! Fire! - Help!!,” *Spelman Messenger*, November 1887, 1, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library. The article also included statements about Spelman’s mission in bringing souls to Christianity, educating African American students so that they could care for their families, and asking those with Christian hearts to donate exemplifying the patterns Spelman’s donation requests often followed.

the tradition started first with Rockefeller Hall by naming the building after the benefactor or a name of the benefactor's choosing.<sup>45</sup> Mrs. Slack's second stipulation proved to be difficult to follow because at the time of her pledge, Spelman administrators were actively working to incorporate the school which would remove it from the control of the WABHMS. Spelman administrators asked her to reconsider the second stipulation and suggested that they would return the \$6000 if they decided to move forward with incorporating the school.<sup>46</sup>

On November 15, 1887, Spelman laid the cornerstone for Howard Hall. The cornerstone was granite gifted to Spelman by S. S. Blanchard of Massachusetts. The granite cornerstone held a lead box and several objects including copies of the *Atlanta Constitution*, copies of the *Spelman Messenger*, coins dated to 1881 the year the school opened, and several paper documents including a history of the building, statistics of Atlanta in 1887, reports from the WABHMS and the ABHMS, a picture of the main building from the Piedmont Exposition, a prohibition badge, and the first Spelman circular published in 1881.<sup>47</sup>

While Mrs. Slack wanted the building named for her mother, she did not agree to the suggestion that Spelman administrators would repay the \$6000 if they incorporated

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<sup>45</sup> Sophia B. Packard, "Letter from Sophia Packard to Abner Coburn," 1881, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives. Packard first began this practice by sending a letter to Abner Coburn, former Governor of Maine, in 1881 soliciting funds for a new building and ensuring him that the new building would be named Coburn Hall. Packard wrote, "Do wish your donation may be so liberal as to give name to the building, Coburn Hall." Coburn was a big benefactor to HBCUs. Coburn Hall on the campus of Virginia Union University, a HBCU in Richmond, Virginia, is named in his honor.

<sup>46</sup> Clement and Wynn Program Managers, *Spelman College Campus Heritage Plan* (Atlanta, Georgia, 2005), 59.

<sup>47</sup> "Howard Hall," *Spelman Messenger*, December 1887, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.



the school. Mrs. Slack withdrew the funding in March 1888, but Spelman administrators moved forward with the building's construction. In July 1888 the building was officially named Packard Hall for Sophia Packard (Figure 5).<sup>48</sup>



Fig. 5. Engraving of Packard Hall. (Engraving, *Spelman Messenger* May 1889, Spelman College *Messenger* Collection, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta, Georgia)

Packard Hall is a two-story with basement eleven-bay Victorian style building. The east façade of the building features such Italianate influences as a projecting bay with a projecting center tower. The tower features a terra cotta sign bearing the name Packard Hall. At the time of the building's completion, the west elevation or rear of the building contained a walkway to a separate two-story building known as the Packard Hall Annex.

<sup>48</sup> Clement and Wynn Program Managers, *Spelman College Campus Heritage Plan*, 60.

Packard Hall contained classroom and dormitory space, along with Quarles Library, named for Reverend Frank Quarles, and a dining room in the basement.

Due to the withdrawal of Mrs. Slack's \$6000, Spelman administrators diverted all funds for the furnishing of the building to its completion. Spelman administrators turned to their network to furnish the rooms, once again soliciting funds for furnishings in exchange for the naming of rooms after the benefactor.

One of the more documented examples of a named room and furnishings donation is the Wollaston Room of Packard Hall. The December 1889 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* included an article that stated, "We have just received from Wollaston, Mass., a fine sewing-machine, the gift of Mr. W. G. Corthell. Other friends provided case and expressage, so we have it free of cost. We tender our sincerest thanks for this timely present."<sup>49</sup> Wendell G. Corthell was a Wollaston, Massachusetts businessman, photographer, and former treasurer of the First Baptist Church of Boston, the Boston area YMCA, and the Massachusetts Baptist Charitable Society.<sup>50</sup> Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles often spent summers in Wollaston, Massachusetts and Giles owned a home there. It is through this connection or the connection to the First Baptist Church of Boston that W. G. Corthell first heard of Spelman.

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<sup>49</sup> "We Have Just Received," *Spelman Messenger* Vol. 6 No. 2, December 1889, 5, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>50</sup> "W. G. Corthell Dead at Wollaston," *The Boston Globe*, October 9, 1915.

Table 1. Wollaston Room (Packard Hall) Objects <sup>51</sup>	
Object	Value
1 iron bed with mattress, pillows, and cases, sheets, blanket, comfort, and spread	35.00
1 metal cot, with mattress, pillows, and cases, sheets, blanket, comfort, and spread	31.00
1 dresser	17.50
1 commode	9.50
2 stand tables	9.00
1 writing desk	28.00
1 New Home domestic sewing machine, old style	35.00 “not much value”
1 30” - 3- shelf book rack	4.00
4 common chairs	9.00
1 plain rocking chair	5.50
1 pine wardrobe	25.00
Miscellaneous	3.25
1 Rayo lamp	3.00
	214. 75 Total Value

The Wollaston Room was located on the second floor of Packard Hall (Figure 3), and the 1923 appraisal inventory listed its contents including the sewing machine that Corthell donated in 1889 (Table 1). Of the sewing machine someone, perhaps the appraiser, wrote in pencil on the margin of the appraisal book “not much value” and described it as “old style” indicating that this was more than likely Corthell’s 1889 donation.

On the second floor with the Wollaston Room was a room called the Dickenson Room (Figure 6). The Spring Hill Baptist Church in Somerville, Massachusetts paid to

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<sup>51</sup> The American Appraisal Company, *Appraisal Inventory of the Spelman Seminary Atlanta, GA. Volume No. 3*, vol. 3 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The Heinn Company, 1923), 144.

furnish both the Dickenson Room and the Chapin Room in Packard Hall. The Dickenson Room took its name from the former minister of the Spring Hill Baptist Church while no explanation was given for the naming of the Chapin Room.<sup>52</sup>

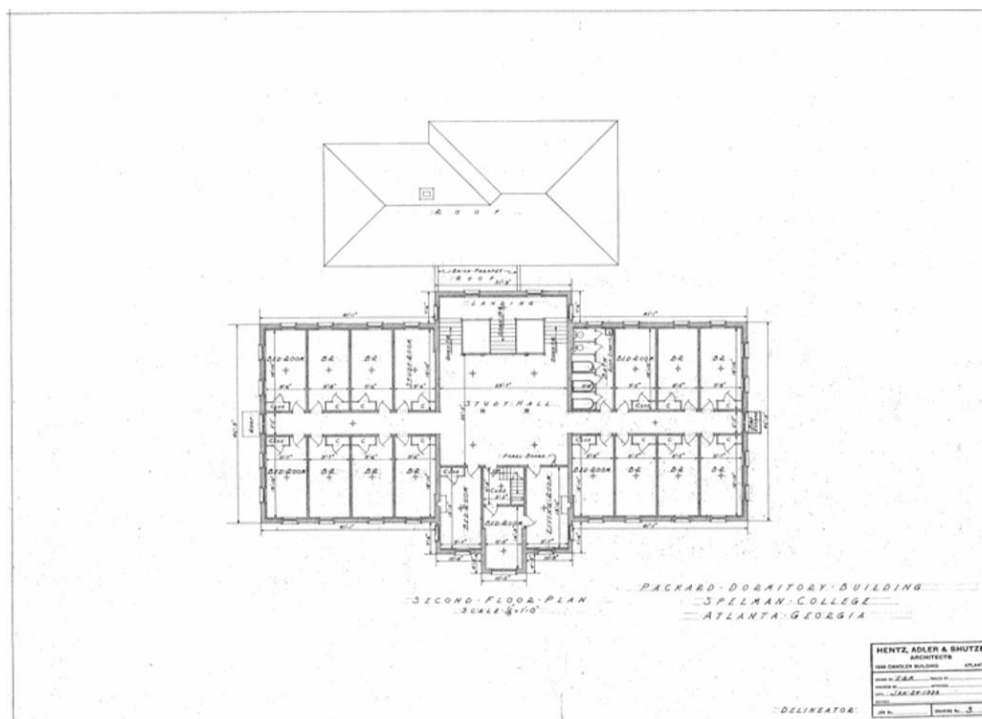


Figure. 6. Second-floor floorplan of Packard Hall. The second floor was home to the Wollaston Room and the Dickenson Room. (Floorplan, *Spelman College Campus Heritage Plan* 2005, Clement and Wynn Program Managers, Atlanta, Georgia) 67.

In terms of objects, the Dickenson Room and the Wollaston room were almost identical (Table 2.)

<sup>52</sup> Spelman College, "Spring Hill Baptist Church," *Spelman Messenger*, May 1888, 4, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

Table 2. Dickenson Room (Packard Hall) Objects <sup>53</sup>	
Object	Value
1 metal cot, with mattress, pillows, and slip, sheets, blankets, comfort, and spread	31.00
1 dresser	17.50
1 commode	9.50
2 common chairs	4.50
1 plain rocking chair	5.50
1 stand table	6.00
1 30" 3 shelf book rack	4.00
1 wardrobe	15.00
Miscellaneous	3.25
1 Rayo Lamp	3.00
	99.25 Total Value

A comparison of the objects in both rooms reveals that two people slept in the Wollaston Room, while only one person slept in the Dickenson Room. The Dickenson Room also lacks the writing desk and sewing machine of the Wollaston Room. In the inventory lists for Packard Hall, the Wollaston Room and the Dickenson Room share material similarities with Room U and Room 6, both on the first floor of Packard Hall. The objects in these four rooms reveal that teachers, hall matrons or administrators probably used these rooms. The other bedrooms in Packard Hall each contained three metal cots indicating that these were more than likely student dormitory rooms. It is unclear if W. G. Corthell or the Spring Hill Baptist Church specified that their furnished

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<sup>53</sup> The American Appraisal Company, *Appraisal Inventory of the Spelman Seminary Atlanta, GA. Volume No. 3*, 3:144.

rooms, the Wollaston Room and the Dickenson Room, were specifically for use by teachers and administrators.

The locations of the Wollaston Room and the Dickenson Room on the second floor of Packard Hall, provides the opportunity to examine the objects within these rooms as contemporaneous groups. What comparing their location and use reveals is that the objects, like an archaeological assemblage, reflect community and societal behavior patterns. In many ways, the objects in the Wollaston Room, the Dickenson Room, Room U, and Room 6 are a subassemblage, or artifacts used by subgroups in the community and in the case of Spelman, the subgroup consists of teachers and administrators.<sup>54</sup>

The use of named rooms by teachers and administrators adds to the level of significance of those spaces. Articles in the *Spelman Messenger* often discussed the importance of named rooms and the activities that took place in those rooms. In the case of Packard Hall, two of its named rooms, the Wollaston Room and the Dickenson Room, not only are named for benefactors, but share a similar materiality with the lesser named Room U and Room 6.

By comparing their location and use, it becomes apparent that object collection practices at Spelman often varied depending on who the objects were for. Often, Spelman administrators purchased objects for students in bulk.<sup>55</sup> Records reveal that donors were

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<sup>54</sup> Charles E. Orser, *Historical Archaeology* (New York, New York: Routledge, 2016), 347.

<sup>55</sup> John M. Gregory, "Letter from John M. Gregory to Sophia Packard," January 18, 1883, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives; John M. Gregory, "Letter from John M. Gregory to Sophia Packard," February 7, 1883, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives. On January 18, 1883 John M. Gregory wrote to Sophia Packard noting that he had negotiated the price on 100 desks for the school. Gregory wrote again on February 7, 1883 that he had ordered in bulk iron bedsteads for the school.

often given conflicting costs for furnishing rooms. For example, on several occasions, Sophia Packard received letters asking about the specifics and costs of furnishing rooms from both the WABHMS society and the public. Andrea Pollard of the WABHMS wrote to Packard on February 13, 1883, asking for specifics on furnishing rooms.<sup>56</sup> On March 5, 1883, Mrs. G. O. King wrote to Packard asking her to clarify if the cost to furnish a room was \$30.00 or \$50.00.<sup>57</sup> These discrepancies may have been due to Spelman administrators assigning different types of rooms different furnishing costs based on their usage.

Later records reveal that Spelman President Lucy Tapley often requested special objects for teacher's private bedrooms which may explain the material differences between rooms such as the Wollaston Room and the Dickenson Room when compared to student dormitory rooms. In a letter to Mrs. A. E. Reynolds, Corresponding Secretary of the WABHMS, Tapley wrote "We do need rugs for teachers rooms. I hesitate about putting the necessary money into rugs, but I do feel that each teachers room should have them."<sup>58</sup> Through her request for rugs, Tapley sought to upgrade the objects of teacher's rooms causing those rooms to present themselves different materially than the dormitory rooms for the African American students.

This difference in collection practices and the difference in objects in rooms for white women and African American students helped to keep a separation between the

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<sup>56</sup> Andrea Pollard, "Letter from Andrea Pollard to Sophia Packard," February 13, 1883, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>57</sup> Mrs. G. O. King, "Letter from Mrs. G. O. King to Sophia Packard," March 5, 1883, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>58</sup> Tapley, "Letter from Lucy Tapley to Mrs. A. E. Reynolds."

two groups, while also creating separate identities for both groups. The social distinctions between those two groups - those in power (teachers) and those without power (students) were overtly expressed through their bedrooms.<sup>59</sup>

## Conclusion

The foundation first set by Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles in soliciting funds and objects to support Spelman carried over well into the twentieth-century. By the time of Lucy Tapley's presidency in 1910, Spelman still relied upon the plans that aided them thirty years earlier. What the overall collection of objects by Spelman administrators reveals is that they were very calculated in their approach. Packard and Giles were savvy enough to recognize from the beginning that they needed the assistance of both African American Baptists and white Baptists in order for their educational venture to be successful. By catering to both groups, albeit separately due to racism, Packard and Giles were able to get their message across.

Like most HBCUs, Spelman's early materiality was meager as the objects they had did not fully meet their needs. Recognizing this, Packard and Giles knew that their most fervent supporters were those in New England who knew them as people and knew of their past work. The New England Baptist network proved to be the backbone of Spelman in its earliest days as they came together through the work of women's groups

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<sup>59</sup> Orser, *Historical Archaeology*, 248. In Orser's examination of housing on Kingsmill Plantation, he noted the ways in which the social distinctions between owners and the enslaved were expressed through their housing.



and churches to assist a school for African American women more than 1,000 miles away.

While many have written about the help African American Baptist congregations such as Friendship Baptist Church and Wheat Street Baptist Church provided to Atlanta area HBCUs over the years, few have written of the separate donations made by African Americans to support Spelman. Through examining patterns of African American donations to Spelman, what emerged were the stories of communities such as Bailey's Mill, Georgia in which African Americans rallied around Spelman donating what they could.

That an African American student led the charge to solicit funds from Bailey's Mill, Georgia, represents the commitment many Spelman students felt towards their institution. Through this lens, the collection of funding and objects for Spelman became a venture that all, even students, were involved in. As students began their own funding ventures, it is important to remember that they were the customers of Spelman. Students were essentially raising funds to keep their educational institution open. In many ways, those funds that students raised to keep Spelman open contributed to a regime that exerted tremendous control over their lives from working with educational philanthropies that sought to limit them to even dictating what types of clothing and adornments they could wear. Despite this, Spelman students persevered and used objects to create an educational world that was acceptable to them and propelled them forward.

### CHAPTER THREE - STUDENT OBJECTS

“That industrial training is being introduced into the colored schools gradually, year by year, is cause for rejoicing. Every girl thoroughly trained in this department will be a missionary of wise management and practical knowledge in the domestic arts, a leavening power, not only in towns and villages, but in the country where they have no knowledge of even the most common utensils in the household.”

- Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles, 1886<sup>1</sup>

“The race question cannot be solved by industrial education, but industrial education will make the problem an easier one to deal with, and, if solely for the sake of the white people of the South, this work should be allowed to live and encouraged to grow.”

- Elizabeth C. Hobson, The John F. Slater Fund<sup>2</sup>

On February 22, 1925, former Spelman student Henrietta O. Jones wrote to Spelman Dean Lamson and requested a 1923 high school class pin. Jones had lost her pin and was eager to have another one made as the pin meant a great deal to her.<sup>3</sup> Dean Lamson wrote Jones back assuring her that she would order another class pin for her.<sup>4</sup> During Jones’s enrollment as a Spelman student, she took classes in the high school department with a focus in Latin. Like all students, Jones was required daily to assist in the cleanliness of not only her dormitory room, but the college campus as well. For Jones, the material world of Spelman consisted of her personal objects such as her 1923 class

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<sup>1</sup> Sophia B. Packard and Harriet E. Giles, “Annual Report,” in *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly*, vol. VII (Temple Court, New York: The American Baptist Home Mission Society, 1886), 129.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth C. Hobson, “Report,” in *Report of the Society of the Southern Industrial Classes, Norfolk, Virginia, to the Trustees of the John F. Slater Fund and the General Education Board, October, 1907*, The Trustees of the John F. Slater Fund Occasional Papers 12 (Hampton, Virginia: Hampton Institute Press, 1907), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Henrietta Jones, “Letter from Henrietta O. Jones to Dean E. E. Lamson,” February 22, 1955, Deceased Alumnae Files, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>4</sup> Edna Lamson, “Letter from Dean E. E. Lamson to Henrietta O. Jones,” March 1, 1955, Deceased Alumnae Files, Spelman College Archives.

pin, those objects that surrounded her in her Rockefeller Hall dormitory room, educational objects, as well as the work objects such as the mops and brooms that she used daily cleaning the campus. For other Spelman students, the objects they encountered on campus such as laundry machines, sewing machines, and the printing press were more industrial in focus and may not have been as special to the students as Henrietta's class pin. However, people imbue objects with meaning and for some students, those more industrial objects on campus may have represented a way to excel, while for others those more industrial objects may have represented the limitations of their career aspirations due to their race.

While students viewed the college's objects in their own way, so did the college's administrators. Spelman Presidents Sophia Packard, Harriet Giles, and Lucy Tapley all viewed the college's industrial objects as important components of the curriculum. From the college's very beginnings, Spelman administrators worked with educational philanthropies to spread an educational ideology of learning through labor amongst the students. As objects on campus increasingly reflected that ideology, students began to attempt to assert their individuality as much as they could within the confines of Spelman. This chapter takes as its focus the student objects of Spelman arguing that the influence of educational philanthropies changed the materiality of Spelman and created a culture of labor in which students sought opportunities to assert their independence.

## Educational Curriculum at Spelman

When Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles founded Spelman Seminary, they both were experienced educators having taught throughout New England. A review of the curriculum at Oread Collegiate Institute in Worcester, Massachusetts, where Sophia Packard served as co-principal from 1864 - 1867, reveals a marked difference between the curriculum taught at Spelman under her guidance first as principal and later president. During Packard's three year tenure at Oread, students took courses such as elocution, natural sciences, mathematics, foreign languages such as German, French, and Italian, literature, and music.<sup>5</sup> Students at Spelman initially took courses such as reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, geography, Latin, Bible, and history, but by the 1883 - 1884 school year, Spelman began requiring its students to take courses in its Industrial Department. The 1883 catalog described the industrial department:

This is made *a prominent feature in this Institution*. The time of three teachers is devoted to this department. Every woman should be a good housekeeper for her own honor and the progress of the civilization. Hence, all boarders are required to learn the art of housekeeping in its various branches. Mending, cutting, making garments, millinery, and the different kinds of needlework are taught, also designing for fabrics. Printing and fine laundry work will be introduced at once, and telegraphing and other occupations as soon as practicable. The results accomplished this past year, through the aid of the "Slater Fund," prove beyond a doubt the desirableness and practicability of industrial training, to coincide with other courses of study. For all, especially for those who are to be teachers and mothers, we believe industrial training is essential in making them *self-reliant* and *self-supporting*; yea, necessary for the best intellectual and moral discipline of the colored people. Our great *aim is to make education practical*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Wright and Bancroft, *History of the Oread Collegiate Institute, Worcester, Mass. (1849-1881)*, 228.

<sup>6</sup> *Third Annual Catalog of the Spelman Baptist Seminary, For Women and Girls in Atlanta, Georgia 1883-1884*. (Atlanta, Georgia: Jas. P. Harrison and Company Printers, 1884), 23.

As stated, the goals of the industrial courses were to make Spelman students self-reliant and self-supporting through the teaching of a practical education. But what quickly becomes evident is that this course of practical education was only suitable for African American students, not those white students at schools such as Oread Institute. Consider the 1883 - 1884 catalog at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary (known today as Mount Holyoke College), a white women's college also founded by women like Spelman, in South Hadley, Massachusetts. Its catalog reveals no courses related to industrial training and noted only the requirement that students spend one hour a day performing domestic duties and household affairs in their living spaces. The Mount Holyoke catalog makes no mention of sewing, needlework, laundering, or printing and additionally no mentions of making students self-reliant and self-supporting.<sup>7</sup> Packard's and Giles's sentiments on what type of education middle-class African American women needed were condescending and paternalistic compared to the educational needs of middle-class white women.

Stereotypical, racist, and paternalistic beliefs about African American women guided Packard and Giles in the formation of the curriculum at Spelman.<sup>8</sup> Their acceptance of these beliefs is evident through their descriptions of African American

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<sup>7</sup> *Forty-Seventh Annual Catalogue of the Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary in South Hadley, Mass, 1883-4*. (Northampton, Massachusetts: S. E. Bridgman & Co. Publishers, 1884), 27.

<sup>8</sup> For more see Stephanie J. Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers during the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). Shaw argues that "As much as the missionaries, most of whom were white, insisted that African Americans were equal to whites, and as concerned as they were with leadership development among black southerners, they were often paternalistic and even racist in their pronouncements," 72. Shaw also states that African Americans accepted this behavior from the leaders of their educational institutions because "education was vital to their practical efforts to vote, to work, to acquire and protect property, and to develop their community. And for that reason, however paternalistic (and even racist) some of the missionaries' ideas were, the ends at first seemed to more than justify the means," 73.

women as ignorant, untidy, idle, and sick.<sup>9</sup> Packard and Giles described African American teachers in 1881 as the blind leading the blind.<sup>10</sup> Although Packard and Giles evidently could see no wrong in their descriptions, those descriptions were derisive and hurtful and revealed Packard's and Giles's ignorance of the challenges African Americans faced after the Civil War.

Not surprisingly, Packard's and Giles's assumptions about the needs of African American women reflected the goals of the Slater Fund and its desire to promote industrial education. In 1882 John F. Slater of Norwich, Connecticut founded the Slater Fund for the sole purpose of funding African American education. Slater had three specific goals: a Christian education; to teach and train African American teachers; and to advance industrial education as a curriculum and ideology.<sup>11</sup> The advancement of industrial education is how Slater Fund representatives first reached out to Sophia Packard.

Packard and Giles quickly embraced the Slater Fund, and in fact, the 1883 - 1884 Spelman Catalog when discussing Spelman's industrial department borrowed the phrases "self-reliant" and "self-supporting" used by the Slater Fund. In the Slater Fund's 1883 *Proceedings*, they stated "Industrial training is not only desirable as affording the means

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<sup>9</sup> "What God Hath Wrought," *The Spelman Messenger*, April 1891, 3, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library. The Decennial Jubilee edition of the *Spelman Messenger* contained an article titled "What God Hath Wrought" comparing Spelman in 1881 to Spelman in 1891. Included in the article were comparisons - "1881 - Ignorance and Superstition. 1891 - 700 conversions," "1881 - Untidy Hands. 1891 - 74 trained housekeepers sent out," and "1881 - Ignorant teachers in country places. Blind leading the Blind. 1891 - 50 graduates from the Higher Normal and Scientific Course."

<sup>10</sup> "What God Hath Wrought," 3.

<sup>11</sup> William H. Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865-1954* (New York, New York: Teachers College Press, 2001), 177.

of making a more self-reliant and self-supporting population, but necessary as furnishing some of the conditions of the best intellectual and moral discipline of the colored people - especially of those who are to be the teachers and guides of their people.”<sup>12</sup> For administrators and advocates, the terms “self-reliant” and “self-supporting” went hand-in-hand, placing limits on what African American education should be.

The Slater Fund lent legitimacy to the educational curriculum that Packard and Giles wanted for Spelman. Two of the seminary’s early uses of the Slater Fund was the printing press program and paying the salaries of Spelman’s three industrial department teachers.

### **Student Work Objects**

In 1885, the Slater Fund gifted a printing press to Spelman Seminary. The inaugural issue of the *Spelman Messenger*, printed on that very printing press, proclaimed “A printing office has recently been added, - a gift from the Slater Fund, - in the use of which the girls can be taught to set type thus opening another avenue for earning an honest livelihood.”<sup>13</sup> Augustus Haygood noted in the 1887 Annual Report of the General Agent of the John F. Slater Fund that Spelman Seminary began receiving appropriations in 1885. Among those appropriations in 1885 were \$1,635 toward teacher salaries, \$140.00 on the printing office, and \$25.00 on the sewing department. In 1886 Spelman

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<sup>12</sup> *Proceedings of the Trustees of the John F. Slater Fund for the Education of Freedmen 1883* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Murphy and Co., 1883), 14, <http://archive.org/details/39094767.4763.emory.edu>.

<sup>13</sup> Spelman Seminary, “Our Needs,” 1.

received a \$2,000 appropriation with \$150.00 of that given to the printing office.<sup>14</sup> Later issues of the *Spelman Messenger* indicate that the college's original printing press was second-hand when purchased.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, Spelman administrators encouraged readers to subscribe to the *Spelman Messenger* which would provide training for the students because every graduate they produced could not be a teacher, some needed to be printers.<sup>16</sup>

With the completion of Packard Hall in 1888, school officials relocated the printing office from its original location behind the barracks buildings to the second floor of the annex of Packard Hall (Figure 7). Of the printing office's new location, Sophia Packard wrote: "Our bright, spacious printing office is now a delight to the eyes, and we fancy that our *Spelman Messenger*, the paper printed there, reflects the fresh surroundings, and is better and better every month."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> A. G. Haygood, *Annual Report of the General Agent of the John F. Slater Fund, 1887* (Macon, Georgia: J.W. Burke & Co. Printers, Stereotypers, and Binders, 1887), 23, <http://archive.org/details/annualreportofge00john>.

<sup>15</sup> Spelman Seminary, "Annual Report of the Principals of Spelman Seminary," *Spelman Messenger Vol. 12 No. 7*, May 1896, 3, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library, <http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1088&context=scmessenger>.

<sup>16</sup> Spelman Seminary, "Dear Readers," *Spelman Messenger Vol. 4 No. 2*, December 1887, 4, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library, <http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=scmessenger>.

<sup>17</sup> *Proceedings of the Trustees of the John F. Slater Fund for the Education of Freedmen 1889* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Murphy and Co., 1889), 40.





Fig.7. Packard Hall Annex. The Print Shop was on the Second Floor. Note the hyphen connecting the annex to Packard Hall on the right.

The 1923 appraisal inventory contains four pages of objects found in the printing office. The table below lists some of the printing office objects (Table 3).

Table 3. Various Printing Office Objects <sup>18</sup>	
Object	Value
1 8' x 26" x 42" pine frame single side type cabinet, with 15 type trays	49.00
2 5' x 26" x 42" pine frame single side type cabinets, slant top, 10 type trays	70.00
2 Hamilton Mfg. Co. 36" x 20" Oak galley rack with compartments	52.00
1 48" x 36" marble imposing stone, 2 ½ top, 4" x 4" pine frame	64.00
1 26" x 20" x 2" marble inking stone	10.00
Printing Press	157.30
Cutter	74.00
1 4' x 4' x 6' high 1" D&M beaded pine dark room, 1 door, 1 ruby window	16.80
1 24" x 30" oak frame blackboard	2.50
1 24" x 20" mirror 2" birch frame	6.50
1 pine frame galley rack	4.50
4 8" x 12" cast iron chases	11.04
16 6" composing sticks	24.00
2 ink stone rollers	3.00
850 Assorted type assorted sizes and styles	850.00
Lot of approx. 250 electro cuts, mounted on wood block, size 3" x 5"	375.00
*Not all objects listed	

What the appraisal inventory listing of the Printing Office reveals is that printing was a trade that required a lot of objects to meet Spelman's printing needs. Not only were Spelman students in charge of printing the *Spelman Messenger*, but they also printed the annual catalog, programs, hymns, Christmas cards, visiting cards, labels, badges, and

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<sup>18</sup> The American Appraisal Company, *Appraisal Inventory of the Spelman Seminary Atlanta, GA. Volume No. 3*, 3:157.

school blanks (Figure 8).<sup>19</sup> Working in the printing office required a high level of skill and changes to the curriculum began to reflect the skills that student Print Office workers needed as well as the qualities that they needed to possess.

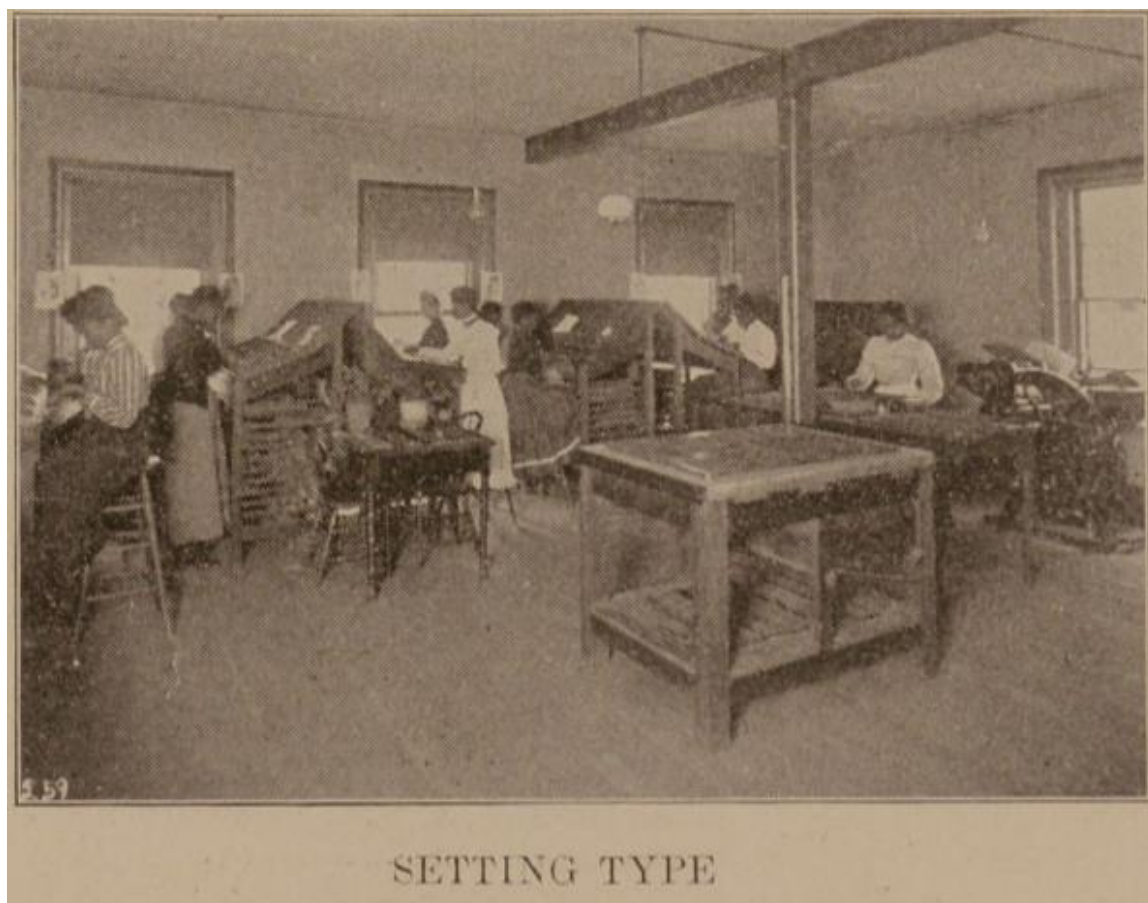


Fig. 8. Spelman students at work in the Printing Office from the January 1908 edition of the *Spelman Messenger*. Note the printing press to the right and slanted print trays.

In 1888 Evelina O. Werden was the teacher in charge of the Printing Office, and that year eighteen students enrolled in printing classes. Successful completion of the

<sup>19</sup> *Proceedings of the Trustees of the John F. Slater Fund for the Education of Freedmen 1889*, 40. The June 1891 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* indicates that recent graduates wore blue class badges with their class motto of “Be True” in gold gilt printed on them which were more than likely made by the Spelman Print Office.

industrial department's printing program combined with the completion of work in other industrial department programs such as sewing required students to take two years of classes before they could receive a certificate of completion.<sup>20</sup>

Students of the industrial department's printing program no doubt heard the stories of the program's best graduates. For example, the May 1888 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* included articles from the *Georgia Baptist*, the *Baptist Leader*, and the *Athens Clipper*. Each of the articles detailed the hiring of Mary A. Fontaine, an 1888 graduate of Spelman, as a member of the typographical staff of the *Columbus Messenger* newspaper. The *Georgia Baptist* stated, "Miss Mary Fontaine, one of Spelman's daughters, is compositor for the *Messenger* and with her nimble fingers sets up most of the matter for that paper. We felt proud of Spelman and Spelman girls as we observed this young lady leading the van in the *Messenger* office."<sup>21</sup> Mary Fontaine worked in her role at the *Columbus Messenger* until her death in 1891.

During Mary Fontaine's time in the printing office, she used the printing press provided by the Slater Fund to print Spelman publications while learning the skills needed to work as a compositor in the printing industry. Spelman administrators regularly notified supporters as well as Slater Fund administrators of the successes of their industrial department students. Schools participating in the Slater Fund sent yearly

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<sup>20</sup> Spelman Seminary, *Eighth Annual Catalogue and Circular of Spelman Seminary for Women and Girls in Atlanta, Georgia 1888 – 1889* (Atlanta, Georgia: Spelman Messenger Office, 1889), 36.

<sup>21</sup> Spelman Seminary, "From the Georgia Baptist," *Spelman Messenger Vol. 5 No. 1*, November 1888, 3, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library, <http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1026&context=scmessenger>. The *Columbus Messenger* was an African American newspaper started by Tuskegee Institute graduate B. T. Harvey in 1887 making Mary Fontaine one of its first employees. The Tuskegee Institute Print Office was supported with funding from the Slater Fund.

updates for inclusion in the fund's annual reports. In the vast majority of African American seminaries and colleges teaching printing, the trade was reserved for male students.

The large number of HBCUs with printing programs sponsored in part by the Slater Fund suggests that administrators of the Slater Fund found printing to be an acceptable career for African Americans which begs the question of why? For years before the Slater Fund encouraged printing as a career for African Americans, African Americans had been using the press to defend themselves and attack racism.<sup>22</sup> According to sociologists such as Gunnar Myrdal, the African American press was "the greatest single power in the Negro race," which taught American ideals to African Americans while also highlighting the fact that white Americans rarely lived up to those ideals.<sup>23</sup> The training that Spelman students received as part of their work in the Printing Office, from their learning of typesetting to their writing of articles, equipped them with the skills needed to empower their race which seems contradictory to the fact that Slater Fund administrators were only seeking to keep southern whites happy by limiting the power of African Americans, not empowering them.

Rounding out the list of objects in the Printing Office is a list of cleaning supplies such as mops, brooms, dustpans, and cleaning brushes. A review of the 1923 appraisal inventory suggests that these objects were fairly common around campus. Rockefeller

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<sup>22</sup> For more see William G. Jordan, *Black Newspapers and America's War for Democracy, 1914-1920* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Gunnar Myrdal, *American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1944), 924.

Hall had \$20.00 (\$293.00 in today's money) worth of cleaning objects and supplies.<sup>24</sup> A review of the *Spelman Messenger*, Spelman catalogs, and other records reveals that large amounts of cleaning objects were necessary, not only to keep the college's buildings clean, but also to support the mission of having students learn the value of cleanliness.

White educators such as Packard and Giles also assumed that whites needed to teach the proper methods of cleaning their homes. In the 1885-1886 catalog, Spelman administrators wrote "Every woman should be a good housekeeper, for her own honor and the progress of the civilization. Hence all the boarders are required to learn the art of house-keeping in its various branches."<sup>25</sup> In supporting this mission, the *Spelman Messenger* regularly included articles on cleanliness. The January 1888 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* included an article titled "Hints For The Home." Included with those hints were tips on boiling water and cleaning a carpet with a broom.<sup>26</sup> Not only were Spelman students going to know how to properly clean, but readers of the *Spelman Messenger* were as well.

The idea of having student boarders clean at HBCUs and white colleges was not out of the ordinary.<sup>27</sup> For many, it was a cost savings measure. For women's colleges, the thought was that women needed to know how to clean because they needed to know how

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<sup>24</sup> The American Appraisal Company, *Appraisal Inventory of the Spelman Seminary Atlanta, GA. Volume No. 3*, 3:106.

<sup>25</sup> *Fifth Annual Catalog of the Spelman Seminary and Normal School for Women and Girls in Atlanta, Georgia 1885 - 6* (Atlanta, Georgia: Constitution Publishing Company, 1886), 31.

<sup>26</sup> "Hints For The Home," *Spelman Messenger*, January 1888, 5, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>27</sup> Willard Range, *The Rise and Progress of Negro Colleges in Georgia, 1865-1949* (University of Georgia Press, 2009), 125. Range stated "Everywhere students were their own janitors, sweeping, and cleaning buildings and their own rooms... Saturday was general cleaning day: stoves were blacked, floors and windows washed, furniture polished, and all things arranged in order according to New England concepts of cleanliness and Godliness."

to care for a home properly. To accomplish this, Spelman administrators divided students into groups who reported to a hall matron. Under a heading titled Family Life, the 1900 catalog stated: “Our boarders are divided into several groups, each under a hall-teacher, who has full personal care of each member of her family, watching over her work, her habits, her study-hours, her recreation, her exercise, and her health.”<sup>28</sup> That hall matron was in charge of ensuring that students under her watchful eye completed the daily required hour of housework which was “a part of our plan to educate girls for homelife” and for which no student received pay.<sup>29</sup>

Under Spelman’s curriculum, the hall-matron became someone who practiced in loco parentis (in the place of a parent). When Caroline Grover, Spelman’s fourth teacher and hall-matron of many years, died students and alumnae wrote to the *Spelman Messenger* with fond memories of her. Former Student Victoria Maddox Simmons wrote that Spelman alumnae requested that she care for their children as hall-matron while former student Selena Sloan Butler wrote that Grover mothered hundreds of girls.<sup>30</sup> In her role as mother, Miss Grover and other Spelman hall-matrons like her, imparted their white New England influenced knowledge of cleanliness.<sup>31</sup> However, this passage of

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<sup>28</sup> *Twentieth Annual Circular and Catalog of Spelman Seminary for Women and Girls in Atlanta, GA. For the Academic Year 1900 - 1901.* (Atlanta, Georgia: Spelman Messenger Office, 1901), 42.

<sup>29</sup> *Twentieth Annual Circular and Catalog of Spelman Seminary for Women and Girls in Atlanta, GA. For the Academic Year 1900 - 1901.*, 43.

<sup>30</sup> Victoria Maddox Simmons, “Miss Grover - The Teacher,” *Spelman Messenger*, February 1920, 7, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library; Selena Sloan Butler, “Miss Grover - An Appreciation,” *Spelman Messenger*, February 1920, 8, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>31</sup> Range, *The Rise and Progress of Negro Colleges in Georgia, 1865-1949*, 125.

knowledge had roots in anti-blackness and the belief that African American women were not feminine and consequently not clean and needed to be shown how to be.<sup>32</sup>

Racism explains the middle-class white assumption that African Americans knew nothing about how “to keep house.” It was a rather ridiculous assumption, considering how generations of enslaved women had done all of the housekeeping for middle and upper class families in the South until emancipation. Yet the assumption that white educators needed to teach African American women how to keep house persisted well into the twentieth century. Historian Thavolia Glymph notes that after emancipation that white people widely reported what they believed to be the misbehavior of African American women. Glymph stated, “white people saw the alleged misconduct almost everywhere they looked, from the determination of black women to “set up for themselves” in their own homes, to how they chose to dress themselves and assert their rights of citizenship.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, no matter how clean an African American woman made her home, white people would find fault with it.

Additionally, as Glymph noted in her analysis the house that whites would chastise African American women for not cleaning might be a former chicken shack.<sup>34</sup> The homes of African American women and their families after emancipation were the direct results of the failures of Reconstruction and the severity of white supremacy. What

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<sup>32</sup> Margaret Lowe, “‘My Ambition Is to Weigh 150 Pounds’: College Women’s Attitudes Toward Their Bodies, 1875-1930,” *Bridgewater Review* 19, no. 2 (December 2000): 7. Lowe argues that African American women at Spelman constantly had to prove that they were feminine and that one way they did this was through health and cleanliness. For more see Margaret Lowe, *Looking Good: College Women and Body Image, 1875 - 1930*, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

<sup>33</sup> Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 213.

<sup>34</sup> Glymph, 209.



Spelman administrators failed to understand was that African Americans in 1881 when Spelman opened were only sixteen years beyond enslavement which had lasted for 246 years. That some African Americans at the time lived in what Spelman administrators viewed as less than stellar and untidy housing had less to do with their cleanliness as people and more to do with the crushing white supremacy that dictated where they could live and the standards of their living.

No matter how much white women demanded that African American women did not clean well and needed to be taught how to clean, it never stopped them from hiring African American women as domestics. In fact, many sought out African American domestics because they believed that they were best suited for that type of work. White women's acceptance of domestic work as strictly a job for African American women allowed them to illogically separate themselves from African American women. That separation gave white women the ammunition to dictate what true womanhood was and to declare that African American women would never attain true womanhood because they did not clean well enough, were not feminine enough, and did not possess the other qualities that made them respectful women.

Therefore through the lens of Spelman's curriculum, it is easy to see how badly Spelman students wanted to please their teachers and show them that they could be respectful women and possess womanly traits such as cleanliness and Godliness. If Spelman students were working hard to prove their femininity as historian Margaret Lowe asserts, then this ambition undoubtedly created a culture where students used cleanliness and objects such as mops and brooms to prove that they were indeed feminine

by appropriately mastering so-called feminine traits and skills. This pressure to prove themselves as rule-abiding students, feminine women, and master domestics, however, led students to find ways to punish other students who did not follow the rules and meet Spelman's standards of cleanliness. In 1883 with the opening of the Boarding Department in the new barracks buildings, there were not enough teachers to oversee the students. Spelman administrators thus declared four students as assistant pupils. The role of the assistant pupils was to be an appointed leader of a group of girls, much like a hall-matron, and to be responsible for their girls' work, home life, and study habits. Clara Howard, a member of Spelman's first graduating class, was an assistant pupil and she claimed that one of the students she was in charge of was less than tidy. According to the *Spelman Messenger*,

The new girl was untidy and in spite of preaching and example, two different mornings the room was on the black list and its residents were sent from Chapel to put it in order. Miss Howard and her other roommates escorted their delinquent protégé to the creek which ran through campus and which was sheltered from view by high banks. What lectures and pleadings had not done for the young housekeeper, a forced dip in the creek accomplished. Miss Packard had called for results and wisely asked no questions about the method.<sup>35</sup>

With students coming together to ensure that all students met the cleanliness mandate through any means necessary, what emerges is a picture that displays how important those mops, brooms, buckets, and brushes listed in the 1923 inventory really were. Those objects allowed Spelman students to please their hall-matrons and prove to them that they were indeed respectful feminine women.

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<sup>35</sup> "Miss Clara A. Howard," *Spelman Messenger*, October 1928, 1.

As Spelman students graduated and became teachers, their lessons on cleanliness followed them to rural African American communities through organizations like the Jeanes Fund. Created in 1907 and administered by the General Education Board, the Anna T. Jeanes Foundation sought to support the work of industrial education teachers in rural schools. In the beginning, Jeanes teachers taught students skills such as basketry, but soon their primary pedagogical focus became industrial education which also included teaching students how to clean and care for their homes.<sup>36</sup> The strategy of the Jeanes Foundation quickly became that they would use the rural classroom to connect to the rural home and then use that connection to reach rural women and Spelman graduates found themselves appropriately trained for that type of work.<sup>37</sup>

The May 1910 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* described the Jeanes Foundation work of Spelman alumnae. The article stated,

Three graduates of our Teachers Professional Department have been working during the past year under the Anna T. Jeanes Fund, organizing industrial work in rural schools...The successful superintendent of that work is our Miss Barbara E. Battle T. P. C' 07. Only the trained teacher is eligible for such a position, and the working of this Fund calls for many such teachers. Would be applicants would do well to enter our teachers professional class at once.<sup>38</sup>

Additional records reveal that Spelman alumnae were very successful in their endeavors as Jeanes Foundation teachers. A November 1913 edition of the *Spelman*

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<sup>36</sup> Mary S. Hoffschwelle, *Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community: Reformers, Schools, and Homes in Tennessee, 1900-1930* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 27–28. For more see Mary Hoffschwelle, “A Black Woman ‘in Othority’: Claiming Professional Status in Jim Crow Alabama,” *Journal of Southern History* 81 (November 2015): 843-86.

<sup>37</sup> Hoffschwelle, 28.

<sup>38</sup> “Jeanes Fund,” *Spelman Messenger*, May 1910, 6, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

*Messenger* contained an article that stated, “Three are supervisors in the rural schools under the Jeanes Fund...Each in her place is busy scattering the seeds of Christianity, thus helping to produce better homes and improve social conditions for the entire race.”<sup>39</sup> Spelman administrators were very proud of their students who went to work for the Jeanes Foundation often carrying stories of their work in the *Spelman Messenger*. Spelman’s involvement with the Jeanes Foundation lasted for decades and at one point the local Jeanes Foundation’s office was located on the campus of Spelman.<sup>40</sup>

Although these objects functioned as tools of administrators and their curriculum goals for black women, Spelman women in many cases used these objects to uplift themselves and their people. The use of mops, dustpans, brooms and even printing presses did not define Spelman students nor were these objects at the center of their world. Beyond the objects provided by administrators, Spelman students used what little autonomy they had to bring in their own objects and to surround themselves with objects that were significant to them as women.

## **Portraits and Adornment**

Lucy Houghton Upton’s 1914 article in the *Spelman Messenger* titled “Our Portraits” describes the portraits located on the campus of Spelman College while providing background information on the sitters of the portraits. Upton’s article notes that

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<sup>39</sup> “A Message to the Friends and Donors of The Spelman Seminary,” 5.

<sup>40</sup> “Graduates Corner,” *Spelman Messenger*, November 1923, 4, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library. The article included an update from former Spelman student Mrs. Mary Ellen Walker who was the State Industrial Supervisor of the Jeanes Fund. The article also stated that Walker’s headquarters were at Spelman Seminary.

the portraits of Harvey Buell Spelman and Lucy Henry Spelman hung near the entrance of Rockefeller Hall. Upton concludes her description of the portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Spelman with the statement, “She (Mrs. Spelman) exhorted the girls never to do anything unworthy of the name of Spelman. When we look upon her sweet face by the door of Number Eleven, as we do every time we come to chapel, let us remember that her honored name is in the keeping of every student of Spelman.”<sup>41</sup> Lucy Houghton Upton was the Dean and Acting President of Spelman Seminary from 1891 to 1910, so when she spoke of the positive characteristics of those in portraits across the campus the students more than likely listened.

The majority of portraits that Spelman received were gifts from those featured in the portraits. The May 1889 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* stated, “We are indebted to Maj. Sidney Root for a very finely engraved portrait of himself which will be highly prized.”<sup>42</sup> Major Sidney Root served as President of the Spelman Board of Trustees and was an instrumental figure in Spelman’s early days who led the charge to build Packard Hall. Root, a Confederate veteran, also demanded that Spelman always be a segregated African American only institution. The gift of his portrait to Spelman students may have conveyed the message that students should be thankful to him for his service and a reminder of who was in charge. What each student saw when she looked at each portrait differed, but collectively the students gazed upon the portraits and saw qualities and

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<sup>41</sup> Lucy Houghton Upton, “Our Portraits,” *Spelman Messenger*, May 1914, 2–3, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>42</sup> “We Are Indebted,” *Spelman Messenger*, May 1889, 2, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library. For more on Sidney Root, see *The Georgia Encyclopedia* <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/business-economy/sidney-root-1824-1897>. Root agreed to serve as a trustee of Spelman only on the condition of social, gender, and racial segregation.

characteristics displayed that they needed to master. Each of the portraits communicated a message to the viewer of identity, taste, social acceptance, and the significance of race. But most importantly, these portraits emphasized the importance of proper appearance.



Fig.9. Unveiling the portraits of Laura Spelman Rockefeller and John D. Rockefeller, April 1919 (Spelman College, "Spelman Messenger May 1919 Vol. 35 No. 8," *Spelman Messenger*, May 1919, Vol. 35 No. 8 edition.)

The unveiling of portraits around the Spelman College campus drew large crowds as evidenced by this photograph featured in the May 1919 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* (Figure 9). Among those in the crowd at the unveiling of the portraits of Laura Spelman Rockefeller and John D. Rockefeller are Lucy Hale Tapley (far left) Spelman College President, seven students standing against the far wall, and a multiracial audience made up of both blacks and whites. The hats worn by the women in the audience indicate that the portrait unveiling was more than a casual event. However, the students appear dressed in plain white button-down shirts and long black skirts. A comparison of the

student's clothing to those required by Spelman administrators reveals that the students featured in the photograph are adhering to the college's strict dress code.

To say that the culture of Spelman College was obsessed with appearance would be an understatement. In the 1922-1923 Spelman Seminary Catalog, two full pages discuss student clothing requirements. The first page lists five statements regarding appearance.

1. It is an indisputable fact that the well-dressed woman is one whose clothing is selected with care and thought as to its becomingness and propriety. It will always be quiet in color, style, and material. It will always be chosen with a view to the purpose which it is to serve. Loud, inharmonious colors, extreme styles, and inappropriate materials are always in poor taste.
2. While girls are of school age many things which may be entirely suitable in later years are wholly out of place and, therefore, in poor taste. The dress of a school girl should be characterized by neatness and simplicity.
3. While girls are young they should learn that much jewelry, cheap jewelry, clothing that is injurious to health, and showy and immodest styles and materials will be carefully avoided by the cultured and virtuous.
4. We are also striving to cultivate in students a sympathetic consideration for the parents and friends who often at great cost to themselves and other members of the family strive to meet the absolutely necessary expenses of the girl away at school. These friends are too often asked for not only unnecessary but often undesirable articles of clothing. Co-operation on the part of all patrons of the school will help and avoid unpleasant complications in the carrying out of the rules.
5. We are bending all our energies toward developing the characters of our girls and we expect the result to reveal itself in the way a girl dresses and conducts herself. A truly cultured girl does not consider outward adorning of first importance.<sup>43</sup>

Following those statements are the official dress code requirements. Among those requirements listed are "dark wash dresses, two dark petticoats, dark aprons, a dark dress skirt, plain white cotton waists of material not too thin, two suits of long underclothing

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<sup>43</sup> *Spelman Seminary Catalog 1922 - 1923* (Atlanta, Georgia: Spelman Seminary, 1923), 31.

for winter wear, an umbrella, and a pair of rubber overshoes.”<sup>44</sup> Students were also required to bring substantial black shoes of the Oxford type with lacing of four or five eyelets, and strong black cotton stockings. Among the dress items students could not bring with them to campus were fancy shoes of any variety, thin crepe or silk, net, lace, all-over embroidered or transparent waists, skirts that were too short or too narrow, low cut shirts, no dresses made of silk, or of material resembling silk, or of velvet, lace, net or all-over embroidery, or transparent material. The list of clothing regulations ends with the statement “These rules will be carried out.”<sup>45</sup> Six of the students in the dedication photograph are wearing dark dress skirts and plain white cotton waists. The seventh student appears to wear a black dress jacket over her white shirt.

While we do not know who those students are or what they were thinking of at the portrait unveiling, what is obvious is that they are presenting themselves in a social setting in a way that is pleasing to college administrators. These students lack the power to protest their dress, and in many ways, their interactions with the public at this event are merely a performance with their appearance playing a key role and their school uniform as a costume.

Archaeologists Brian and Larissa Thomas argue that an individual’s appearance communicates to others before, or in the absence of, verbal interaction and that clothing provides visual clues about a person allowing the public to respond accordingly.<sup>46</sup> The

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<sup>44</sup> *Spelman Seminary Catalog 1922 - 1923*, 31–32.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Brian W. Thomas and Larissa Thomas, “Gender and the Presentation of Self: An Example from the Hermitage,” in *Engendering African American Archaeology: A Southern Perspective*, ed. Jillian E. Galle and Amy L. Young (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 104–5.



students' dress and appearance communicated order while also relaying the message that these specific women were worthy to be students at Spelman College. The students' racial appearance also communicated with the public, but the messages communicated are possibly different based on the race of the receiver. For example, the black women in the audience most likely viewed the students as the best and the brightest young women of the black race while the white women in the audience may have viewed the students paternalistically as objects in need of help and benevolence.

If we apply sociologist Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theory to the dedication photograph then the students' behavior in the photograph reflected the front region, or behavior present in front of an audience and what is missing is the backstage, or behavior hidden from those who did not share critical aspects of identity, in this case, both the race and the status of student.<sup>47</sup>

Lucy Houghton Upton's article "Our Portraits" also noted that several portraits on campus featured the images of Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles, the founders of Spelman College. Upton identified the locations of a few of these portraits while emphasizing that portraits of each woman along with bronze tablets about each woman hung in the college's chapel (Figure 10).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Thomas and Thomas, 105.

<sup>48</sup> Upton, "Our Portraits," 2–3.



Fig.10. Portraits of Harriet Giles (left), Angelina Howe (center), and Sophia Packard (right) above the stage in Howe Memorial Chapel. (Photograph, Howe Memorial Chapel, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

Portraits of Packard and Giles also hung near the entrance of Packard Hall, Giles's portrait hung in Giles Hall, photographs of Packard and Giles hung in the library of Reynolds Cottage, a portrait of Packard hung in the President's Office and the west parlor of Reynolds Cottage, portraits of both women hung in the study of Morehouse Hall, in the nurses' home, in the hospital lecture room, and in the study of Rockefeller Hall.<sup>49</sup> The numerous portraits of Packard and Giles ensured that they were present throughout the campus and that students felt that presence. If Packard and Giles were models of appearance and behavior to emulate, students received a constant dose of that message as they moved throughout the campus.

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<sup>49</sup> Upton, 2–3.

While students had numerous examples of appearance and dress to duplicate and strict rules about what to wear, some individuality presented itself materially through the objects that students used to adorn themselves.



Fig.11. Group portrait of Spelman Teachers Professional Class commencement in 1919. (Photograph, Spelman Teachers Professional Class Commencement 1919, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

While each of the students in Figure 11 wore the Spelman College uniform of white button-down shirt and long dark skirt, there were some material differences between the women present. For example, some of the students are wearing necklaces, watches, and different types of stud earrings. These adornments allowed the students to express themselves subtly while staying within the Spelman guidelines. These adornments may have also communicated messages between the students or symbolized

relationships between the students and someone they were dating unbeknownst to Spelman administrators.

African American women had a tradition of adornment that not even the rules of Spelman could quell. While many African Americans faced the hardships of Jim Crow and limited wages, many still found the funds to purchase objects to adorn and decorate themselves.<sup>50</sup> If Spelman students read their local *Atlanta Constitution* newspaper, they would have been bombarded with advertisements from local stores advertising hair adornments for prices as low as 50 cents.<sup>51</sup> A popular hairstyle for African American women at this time was the chignon, which called for hair to be pulled to the back and fastened with a hairpin, barrette, or comb items which Spelman administrators found unnecessary, but students thought otherwise.

The March 1912 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* included an article titled “Our Dress” written by sewing and methods teacher Katherine M. Burgner. Burgner emphasized that God did not favor overdressing; women should not dress to create “a stir.” Burgner added:

One of the most common errors is the attempt to dress up a plain garment with knickknacks and bits of finery. The result is always a failure. This mistake is seen plainly in the ornaments of the hair, as well as of the garment. A variety of glittering combs, pins, barrettes, and bright ribbons, surmounting indescribable rolls and puffs, makes a woman’s hair unduly conspicuous and detracts much

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<sup>50</sup> For more see Ayana Flewellen, “The Clothes on Her Back: Interpreting Sartorial Practices of Self-Making at the Levi Jordan Plantation” Ph.D. Dissertation (The University of Texas at Austin, 2018), 39. Flewellen notes that while material conditions of African Americans were challenging archaeology has revealed that African Americans found ways to purchase goods including clothing and adornments beyond just the basics and that their consumerism does not negate the fact that many struggled.

<sup>51</sup> “Jacobs’ Pharmacy The Birthplace of Cut Prices,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 24, 1912, 2.

from the attractiveness of her face. When worn with plain garments, they are nothing short of ridiculous.<sup>52</sup>

At the time that Katherine Burgner wrote her article, the African American women's haircare industry was flourishing. Newspapers were full of advertisements for hairdressing schools including those founded by Madam C. J. Walker. Advertisements for hairpins, barrettes, and other adornments also were common. One important haircare firm was that of Ezella Mathis Carter, a 1907 Spelman graduate, who named her business the Madame Carter's School of Hair Culture. Carter's work in the African American hair industry was so successful that she started her own benevolent society named the National Carter Industrial and Benevolent Association. Additionally, she established the Giles Charity Club, an organization named for Harriet Giles, whose purpose was to "perpetuate the sainted memory of Miss Harriet E. Giles."<sup>53</sup> Carter credited her success to the hair care and beauty industry.<sup>54</sup> Although Spelman Administrators clearly thought that African American women should forgo hair adornments and what they viewed as extravagant hairstyles, this policy did not stop them from accepting Carter's monetary donations to the school.<sup>55</sup>

Despite the articles found in the *Spelman Messenger* encouraging students not to adorn themselves, Spelman students did it anyway, testing the boundaries placed upon

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<sup>52</sup> Katherine M. Burgner, "Our Dress," *Spelman Messenger* Vol. 28 No. 6, March 1912, 3, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>53</sup> "Giles Charity Club," 1922, Deceased Alumnae Files 4) Campbell - Crawl, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>54</sup> Ezella Mathis Carter, "Who's Who in Colored America Questionnaire," n.d., Deceased Alumnae Files 4) Campbell - Crawl, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>55</sup> Ezella Mathis Carter, "Letter from Ezella Mathis Carter to Lucy Tapley," March 18, 1922, Deceased Alumnae Files 4) Campbell - Crawl, Spelman College Archives. Carter notes in this letter that she's enclosed a donation. Additional letters reveal that Carter donated funds every year for Founder's Day.

them by Spelman administrators. Figure 12 is a photograph of the 1912 graduating class of Spelman Seminary. While some students may have chosen to listen to Katherine Burgner's warnings against rolls and puffs of hair and ribbons and other hair adornments, several students wore their hair in a style that suited them, including students with headbands or ribbons in their hair. Historian Tanisha Ford asserts that African American women have often incorporated beauty and fashion into their activism.<sup>56</sup>



Fig.12. Photograph of the 1912 graduating class of Spelman Seminary. Note the uniform dress, and chignon hairstyles. Also of note is the student on the second row from top to the far right who is wearing a headband in her hair.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Tanisha C. Ford, *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 3. While Ford's work is primarily on the Black Power era, many of her findings are applicable to the Spelman students in this study.

<sup>57</sup> *Spelman College Commencement 1912*, 1912, 1912, Spelman College Photographs Collection, Commencement, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library, <http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/scimgcomm/20>.

## Mirrors and Images

A comparison between Upton's "Our Portraits" article and the 1923 appraisal inventory reveals that joining the portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Spelman in the entry corridor of Rockefeller Hall were various objects including recitation benches, armchairs, two 72" x 36" plate glass mirrors with oak frames, one umbrella rack, and six other framed pictures.<sup>58</sup> Of the objects in the entry corridor, the two 72" x 36" mirrors have the most value at \$90. These mirrors more than likely hung vertically giving students and visitors the opportunity to check their appearance from head to toe before exiting the building. The location of these mirrors in the first-floor corridor of Rockefeller Hall indicates that administrators found it important to have students check their appearance before they exited the building for the day.

The 1923 appraisal inventory also detailed objects found within the bedrooms of students living in Rockefeller Hall. An examination of bedrooms on the second and third floor of Rockefeller Hall revealed that each room contained at least one dresser. For example, Room #21 on the second floor contained three metal cots, one oak dresser valued at \$25 and one pine wardrobe valued at \$15.<sup>59</sup> Room #22 on the second floor contained one iron bed, but also one dresser and one wardrobe as well.<sup>60</sup> The list of items for the bedrooms on the second and third floors did not individually list mirrors. One

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<sup>58</sup> The American Appraisal Company, *Appraisal Inventory of the Spelman Seminary Atlanta, GA. Volume No. 3*, 3:106–7.

<sup>59</sup> The American Appraisal Company, 3:118.

<sup>60</sup> The American Appraisal Company, 3:118.

mirror was in the first-floor bathroom, and possibly in Room #37 and Room #48, which both contain miscellaneous bathroom fixtures, according to the inventory.

A photograph of two Spelman students from the turn of the century provides clues as to how dressers within student bedrooms may have appeared (Figure 13).

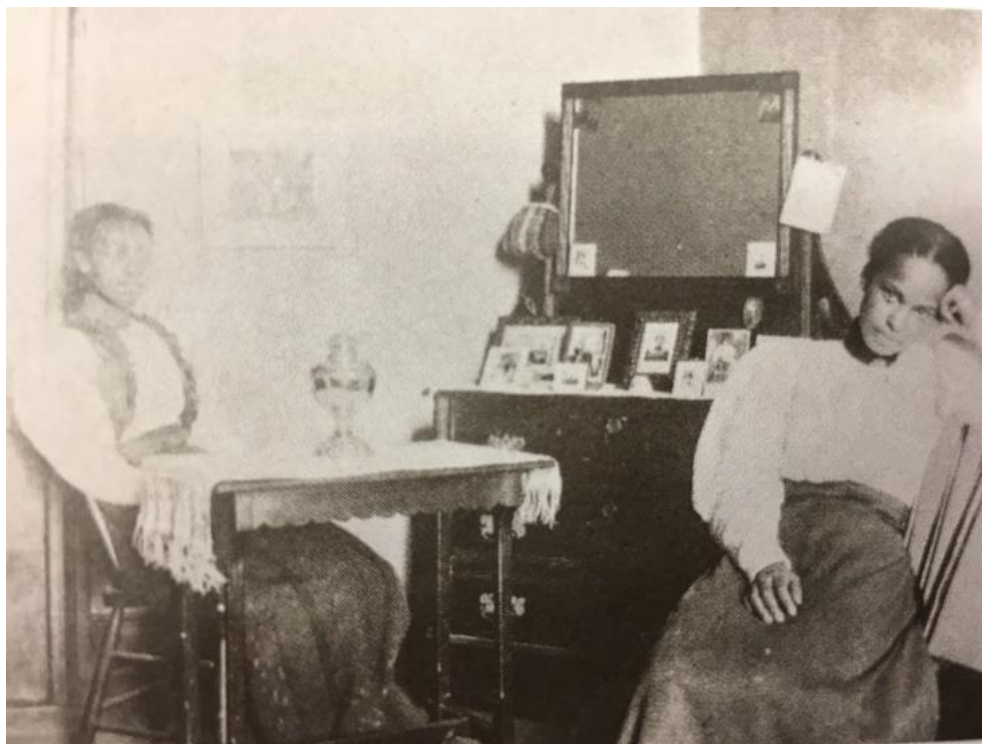


Fig. 13. Two unidentified Spelman students in dormitory room near the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Photograph, Students, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

This photograph reveals that although the 1923 appraisal inventory does not list the student rooms in Rockefeller Hall as having mirrors affixed to the dressers, it is possible that they did. An undated photograph from Packard Hall, constructed in 1888, revealed that the building's dressers had mirrors (Figure 14).





Fig. 14. Undated Packard Hall Student Room Photograph (Photograph, Student Room in Packard Hall, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

Both of the previous dormitory room photographs reveal personal objects on each student's dresser. Figure 13 reveals that those students chose to cover their dresser with framed photographs of various sizes. Additionally, they have affixed photographs to the corners of the dresser mirror.



Fig. 15. Detail image of the dresser (Photograph, Student Room in Packard Hall, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

The dresser featured in Figure 14 and Figure 15 reveals a great deal about student choice as well as permissible items in dormitory rooms. For example, within the curvy white frame on the dresser is an image displaying religious iconography. The image appears to be that of the Madonna di San Sisto by the Italian artist Raphael. Additional

images on the dresser to the left and right of the mirror also appear to be religious iconography as apparent by the clothing worn by the people in the images. What is also interesting about the material culture on this student's dresser is that she appears to have either jewelry or trinket boxes on her dresser where she may have kept her adornments. She also has what appears to be a smaller round mirror. What is most fascinating about this dresser is that it features keyholes on the drawers indicating that the drawers lock.

Locking the drawers of the dresser would give the student a degree of privacy and control over her space. Spelman rules required that anything brought into the room had to be cleared by the hall matron. In fact, upon moving in each student had to provide the matron with a list of the items that she brought with her and all of her items had to be labeled with her name. Spelman administrators took unapproved items.

If the student in this room had a key to lock her dresser, that act in itself was a form of resistance. Locking the dresser allowed the student some degree of privacy as her things would be unable to be accessed without a key. Hiding objects in a locked dresser drawer would allow the student to keep objects secret or in the backstage, as described by Goffman. Additionally, James Scott's theory of hidden transcripts directly applies to the act of hiding objects in a locked drawer as the hiding of objects is a covert action meant to undermine the dominance of authority figures.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1992), 4.

## Student Letters as Objects of Resistance

The Deceased Alumnae Files in Spelman College's archives contain hundreds of letters which reveal the motivations of both students and their parents. While these letters have a wealth of information on student behavior and parental relationships the letters themselves are a form of material culture. Through the writing, mailing, or passing of letters students were creating images of themselves and their lives and sharing that behind vestiges of their lives and personal relationships.

In October of 1920, eighteen-year-old Spelman student Bertha Johnson received a letter from a male suitor. Enclosed with the letter were three dollars. In an attempt to conceal his identity, the male suitor sent his letter under a false name. The *Fortieth Annual Circular of Spelman Seminary for Women and Girls in Atlanta, Georgia for the Academic Year 1920 - 1921* listed several guidelines for Spelmanites to follow. Among those listed in the "Requirements" section of the catalog are "Letter writing is subject to regulation. The mail and express packages of students are inspected."<sup>62</sup> Clearly, Bertha and her male friend assumed that if he used a false name, perhaps a woman's name, that Spelman administrators would not further inspect the letter. Using James Scott's theory, Bertha and her male suitor's attempt to outsmart Spelman administrators were evidence of Bertha's hidden transcript. In front of administrators, Bertha appeared to follow the rules but outside of their watch Bertha conspired with her male suitor to break the rules to fit her needs.

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<sup>62</sup> Spelman Seminary, *Fortieth Annual Circular of Spelman Seminary for Women and Girls in Atlanta, Georgia for the Academic Year 1920 - 1921* (Atlanta, Georgia: Spelman Messenger Office, 1921), 14.

Bertha and her male suitor's secret letter attempt came to light, and Bertha ultimately confessed to Spelman administrators. A letter from Spelman Seminary Dean Edith V. Brill to Bertha's parents outlined the whole incident.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Jones,

I am sending you a letter in which this explains itself. I have talked with Bertha about it and she says the man's name is Oscar Clayton. I am sending back to him the three dollars which she received in this letter, and I am telling him that he is not to write to Bertha or send her anything more. I am also telling him that anything further will be sent to you. Bertha seems to be really sorry and her hall teacher says that she has been an entirely different girl in the hall since my talk with her. I know that you have written Bertha a fine letter, and I believe that it has had a great deal to do with helping her to see the importance of being a different girl. If I thought that she had been a bad girl this summer I should have to send her home at once. I am thinking that if we give her a chance now that she may be a better girl than she has ever been. I shall try to help her to be, and her hall teacher is deeply interested in Bertha. Please continue to write the same strong, good letter to her. Please tell me if she has been writing to any others. She ought not to, and this name was a false one, you see.

Sincerely yours, Dean.<sup>63</sup>

Dean Brill's letter to Oscar Clayton, Bertha's suitor, emphasized the same message as the letter to Bertha's parents.

Sir: -

Enclosed you will find the money which you have sent to Bertha Johnson. I wish to say that our students are not to receive letters from men, even under assumed names. I also wish to say that we do not approve of girls receiving money and gifts of such sorts from men who are not their kindred. Please do not send any serge or any other things. If any more come I shall send all to Bertha's mother.

Very truly, Dean<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Edith Brill, "Letter from Dean Edith Brill to Mr. and Mrs. Jones," October 28, 1920, Deceased Alumnae Files 4) Campbell - Crawl, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>64</sup> Edith Brill, "Letter from Dean Edith Brill to Oscar Clayton," October 28, 1920, Deceased Alumnae Files 4) Campbell - Crawl, Spelman College Archives.

Bertha graduated from Spelman Seminary in May of 1921. She married Oscar Clayton August 7, 1933.

In February of 1919, Dora Cason wrote to her daughter Cassie Clark warning her of writing to a soldier. Spelman administrators through their inspection of student's mail discovered the letter from Dora Cason to her daughter Cassie and immediately set out investigating the letter that Cassie had written to the soldier. In order to gather information, Spelman administrators responded to the letter from Dora.

Dear Mrs. Cason -

Your letter to Cassie came to her this week and I see that you are troubled a little about the letter which she wrote to that soldier. I do not wonder that you are, for I know that there is so very much danger from such things. I know of one girl who has ruined her life through carelessness and wrong through a soldier. I thought that if I could be of any help in showing Cassie how unsafe it is for her to have anything to do with him except as you approve, I should like to be of as much help as I can. Girls are not always intending to do wrong, and they do not always see the harm in such things until it is too late. Perhaps we who are older and know more about advising may be able to direct her.

Will you please tell me when Cassie wrote that letter? I mean what is the date of when it was written? I shall feel it a favor if you will tell me that. I think it may help some. She had a valentine from him last week. Do you know where he is in camp now? Now that the war is over I shall be glad when the men are out of the service and back at their work, out of uniform. It is the uniform which leads so many of the girls astray. I do not know what there is about it, but there is something.

If you think of anything I can say or anyway in which I can help besides talking to Cassie I hope that you will feel free to tell me about it. We are so anxious to save the girls from mistakes and harm, and it can only be by telling them the truth and helping them to be wise enough to be careful. Very yours truly,<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> "Letter from Spelman Administrators to Mrs. Dora Cason," February 18, 1919, Deceased Alumnae Files 4) Campbell - Crawl, Spelman College Archives.

It is unclear which Spelman administrator wrote the letter to Cassie's mother, but what is apparent is that Spelman administrators found no wrong in opening letters from parents to students, reading them in full, and questioning parents and students about the contents of the letter. In this instance, Spelman administrators clearly felt as if they had not only the power, but the right to question African American parents about conversations with their children. The level of observation undertaken by Spelman administrators certainly had the ability to make students cognizant of their lack of privacy and force them to act in ways that challenged the rules. Historian Stephanie Evans furthers this train of thought by noting that the actions of HBCU administrators often "translated into intimidation, attempts to instill guilt or shame, and constant invasion of personal privacy."<sup>66</sup> By questioning parents about the aspects of private conversations, Spelman administrators shamed parents for having the gall to have private conversations with their children while also submitting parents to their rules and forcing parents to submit to their dominance and paternalism.

What if students such as Bertha and Cassie realized that their letters were being intercepted and read? They might have found a way to distribute letters amongst themselves privately. In fact, in 1927 Spelman administrators discovered that students had secretly been passing letters to other students covertly so that the letters would not be seen by Spelman administrators.

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<sup>66</sup> Stephanie Y. Evans, *Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850 - 1954: An Intellectual History* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2007), 111.

## Conclusion

Examining objects given to students by administrators versus the objects students owned themselves helps to uncover the world the students built for themselves within the world that administrators defined for the students. The administrator defined world consisted of objects such as those found in the Printing Office that while meant to create a career path for students, often were associated with racist and paternalistic undertones by philanthropies such as the Slater Fund. Despite the beliefs of the Slater Fund, students such as Mary A. Fontaine found liberation from their beliefs in the form of typesetting for an African American newspaper.

Spelman administrators subjected their African American students to the dictates of white feminism and the cult of true womanhood. Linda M. Perkins in her article “The Impact of the “Cult of True Womanhood” on the Education of Black Women” argued that the cult of true womanhood was designed for upper and middle class white women and that black women were not perceived as women in the same sense as white women.<sup>67</sup> Building on Perkins’s argument, it becomes even more apparent that no matter what Spelman students did to meet the white definition of cleanliness and godliness it was never enough. White privilege ruled. White women would find something wrong because under no circumstances could African American women be considered their equal.

The rules and regulations placed upon Spelman students and their choice of dress and adornments was nothing more than the tried and true control of behavior that white

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<sup>67</sup> Linda M. Perkins, “The Impact of the Cult of True Womanhood on the Education of Black Women,” *Journal of Social Issues* 39, no. 3 (1983): 18.



woman had sought to institute since emancipation. As historian Thavolia Glymph noted “Many northern missionaries, however, derided the trend, seeing it as proof for former slaves’ inferiority and inability to understand the meaning of freedom. These missionaries described black women’s appreciation for nice clothing in the same language they used to denigrate black people’s religious fervor.”<sup>68</sup> What becomes apparent is that when possible, students such as the young lady with the ribbon headband in the 1912 graduating class photograph, resisted and chose to ignore the culture of white feminism in favor of her own.

Spelman administrators clearly chose to promote white femininity while chastising African American femininity without considering the fact that the lives of African American women differed significantly than those of white women. Those ideals of white femininity not only created what Spelman administrators viewed as the ideal African American woman, but also created a class of some African American women who viewed themselves as the elite upper echelon of their race and gender. The ultimate control of their behavior and their acceptance of Spelman behavior guidelines essentially separated them from other African American women who were not as privileged.

The repression of African American female identity through power and access to preferred objects including adornments limited the autonomy and decision-making ability of African American women and essentially caused them to defer to the white-dominated world. Educator Lucy Diggs Slowe in her research on African American women at colleges and universities noted that “It is quite apparent that students in too many schools

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<sup>68</sup> Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 208.

are governed by administrators and faculties rather than encouraged to govern themselves - the only kind of government worthwhile in an intelligent community.”<sup>69</sup> This sentiment is true of Spelman in that there was a rule regulating every aspect of students’ lives. Additionally, Slowe argues against the culture of rules noting that the extreme nature of some rules invaded the most intimate phases of students’ lives while documenting how white college administrators did not view African American women as responsible individuals.<sup>70</sup>

If the goal of Spelman’s administrators was to create the ideal African American woman, then objects such as the printing press and mops and buckets combined with the absence of certain types of objects such as jewelry and adornments helped to make that goal a reality. While these objects all spoke to the labor and appearance of African American women they did not outright speak to the Christian salvation of African American women. However, this gap was acceptable as Spelman administrators would use Howe Memorial Chapel and the objects within it to lay a claim to the souls of African American women.

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<sup>69</sup> Lucy Diggs Slowe, “Higher Education of Negro Women,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 2, no. 3 (July 1933): 355.

<sup>70</sup> Diggs Slowe, 357.

## CHAPTER FOUR - RELIGIOUS OBJECTS

“Just as I was about leaving school one day, Miss Packard came and said, “Have you decided for Christ yet?” I said, “No.” She looked at me and said, “You can be such a power for good, if you only yield yourself to Christ. He has a work for you to do: mark it; then said, “Goodbye.” I walked home thinking, “God has work for me to do, and me not a Christian!”

- Clara Howard<sup>1</sup>

When Clara Howard first arrived at the seminary’s basement classroom at Friendship Baptist Church in 1881, she came to find out what the school would be like. She found out immediately. Howard received an enthusiastic welcome from Sophia Packard, but one of Packard’s first questions was whether Howard was a Christian. Howard’s answer was no. Packard immediately invited her to a prayer meeting. From the moment Packard met future students she set the expectation that if they were not a Christian, then they needed to become one quickly.<sup>2</sup>

The Christian mission of Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles was at the forefront of their efforts at Spelman. Their obsession with their students’ Christianity came from their deeply religious backgrounds. While an administrator at Oread Institute in Worcester, Massachusetts, Packard was described as being “deeply interested in the moral and spiritual welfare of the girls, so that the whole school during this administration was permeated with religious interest and enthusiasm.”<sup>3</sup> Packard doubled efforts at Spelman

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<sup>1</sup> Clara Howard, “Untitled Manuscript by Clara Howard” (n.d.), Deceased Alumnae Files, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Howard, 1–2.

<sup>3</sup> Wright and Bancroft, *History of the Oread Collegiate Institute, Worcester, Mass. (1849-1881)*, 227.

assuming that African American Christianity lagged behind the spiritual beliefs of white reformers.

Christianity was a guiding force within the culture created by Packard and Giles, and it manifested itself throughout the principles of the college, including the school's motto: "Our Whole School for Christ." Christianity's influence throughout the campus is documented via objects found on campus including paintings and religious paraphernalia, concentrated most notably in the Howe Memorial Chapel of Rockefeller Hall. This chapter focuses on the materiality of Howe Memorial Chapel and how those religious objects found within the chapel reinforced and extended the school's religious mission as they also instilled white approved Christian values into African American women.

### **Religious Beliefs**

The approach of Spelman administrators towards the religious backgrounds of their students is significant and telling because it reveals how little they understood about African Americans and African American Baptist traditions.<sup>4</sup> The white administrators insisted that the way they practiced religion was the correct way, as they worked to indoctrinate students towards a more white protestant way of worship. Packard and Giles relied on stereotypical views of the time to inform what they believed about African Americans and religion. They immediately assumed that African American women either had no religion or had the wrong religion. Additionally, they believed that African

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<sup>4</sup> William E. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree : The African-American Church in the South, 1865-1900* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 36.

American religious beliefs were full of superstitions, possible idol worship, and that they needed to be corrected.<sup>5</sup>

In his study of the black church, historian William Montgomery found that the religion that enslaved Africans brought with them to America was flexible. Amongst themselves, the enslaved formulated their own religious practices which were a combination of African and European beliefs. This combination led to the creation of a unique African American religious system.<sup>6</sup> During the Second Great Awakening, many enslaved individuals found themselves attracted to Christianity and this attraction influenced their religious beliefs. Montgomery further argues that what attracted the enslaved to Christianity was the fact that evangelical doctrines advocated that even the worthless could be redeemed and made acceptable to God.<sup>7</sup> Most significantly as historian Donald G. Matthews has concluded the enslaved believed that to “be important to God, one did not have to possess wit, learning, wealth, family connections, or even white skin.”<sup>8</sup>

African American Christian worship soon became known for its dancing, singing, and handclapping, all of which Montgomery argues, were conspicuous elements of West African religion and easily fit into patterns of Protestant evangelical worship which itself was noisy and exuberant.<sup>9</sup> At Spelman Packard and Giles opposed such exuberance as

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<sup>5</sup> Sophia B. Packard, “Letter from Sophia Packard,” July 1881, Sophia B. Packard Papers 1850 - 1891, Box 1, Folder 4, Spelman College Archives. In the letter written to an unknown recipient, Packard discusses the degradation and superstition among students.

<sup>6</sup> Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree*, 18; For more see Mechal Sobel, *Trabelin’ On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1988), 99–135.

<sup>7</sup> Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree*, 19.

<sup>8</sup> Donald G. Matthews, *Religion in the Old South*, ed. Martin E. Marty (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 35.

<sup>9</sup> Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree*, 22.

primitive and base. Many whites disliked the behaviors of the enslaved regarding religion and believed that it had no place in Christian worship. Many regarded these behaviors as primitive and related them to the supposed superstition of African American people.<sup>10</sup> However, what Packard and Giles and others who believed those stereotypes failed to understand was that these behaviors were representative of a larger African American culture and not a failure among African Americans in their understanding of Christianity.

Packard's and Giles's failure to accept African American culture along with their assumption that the only acceptable religious culture was theirs, drove their approach to religious education at Spelman. The 1882 - 1883 Spelman Seminary catalog proclaimed "Physical, social, moral and religious culture will occupy an important place in the general system pursued. Religious and moral instruction is the foundation of all our teaching. We believe that if this is neglected all else *is in vain*."<sup>11</sup> The catalog called for respectful and obedient students, chapel services every Friday night, Bible reading every Sunday afternoon, and religious services every Sunday night.<sup>12</sup>

Beginning in 1882, Spelman Seminary required applicants to submit satisfactory testimonials of their good behavior. These testimonials needed to be from people who could attest to the applicant's behavior such as a student's church pastor and a former teacher. Solomon W. Lee completed his step-daughter Willa Golson's application for admission in 1907. Solomon described Willa as "very fine and perfect in this respect" in regards to her character traits. He further described her as having a very sweet

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<sup>10</sup> Montgomery, 24.

<sup>11</sup> *Catalogue of Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, Atlanta, Georgia, 1882 and 1883* (Atlanta, Georgia: Jas. P. Harrison and Company Printers, 1882), 14–15.

<sup>12</sup> *Catalogue of Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, Atlanta, Georgia, 1882 and 1883*, 16.

temperament and a good Christian tendency when asked if she was easy or hard to control and if she was a Christian. Solomon Lee concluded the application with a spontaneous personal statement about Willa. He stated,

Miss. Giles, I am quite sure you would be well satisfied with our girl, she is very quiret and love music too. We hope that the few months liking to make her 15 will not cause her objections with the schol. We certainly want her in this kind of school and mostly on account of such enfluence exzerted. Let us hear from you as early as possible. Very respectfully, S. W. Lee.<sup>13</sup>

Willa's references also spoke highly of her. Rev. A. J. Hunter pastor of Brown Chapel AME Church in Selma was another reference. Harriet Giles mailed Rev. Hunter Spelman's standard reference request form. The form stated,

Willa Gordon, daughter of Mrs. S. W. Lee, is a candidate for admission to the school, and we are writing to you for information in regard to her. Does she sustain a good moral character? What is her disposition? Has she good health? Can we, in your opinion, depend upon her or her family to pay what is promised? Please write us frankly and confidentially concerning her, and oblige. Yours truly, Harriet E. Giles, President.<sup>14</sup>

Rev. Hunter replied: "Dear Miss Giles I answer yes to your first, third, and fourth questions. To the second question I answer good. Miss Golson is quite a promising youth and I hope she will matriculate in your school. Very truly yours A. J. Hunter."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Spelman Seminary and Solomon W. Lee, "Application for Admission to Spelman Seminary Atlanta, Ga. - Willa Golson" (Spelman Messenger Office, August 10, 1907), 1, 2, 3, Deceased Alumnae Files 4) Campbell - Crawl, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>14</sup> Spelman Seminary, Harriet E. Giles, and Rev. A. J. Hunter, "Spelman Seminary Atlanta, GA. Candidate for Admission - Willa Golson," August 15, 1907, 1, Deceased Alumnae Files 4) Campbell - Crawl, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>15</sup> Spelman Seminary, Giles, and Hunter, 2.

The testament to her religious beliefs by both her step-father and her minister no doubt helped her chances of enrollment. Spelman admitted Golson on August 24, 1907. She became an active member of the seminary writing for the *Spelman Messenger* and graduated from Spelman in 1916. While things worked out for Willia Golson, the questions asked on the admission applications for Spelman students were clearly written to identify those students who needed Christianity. Questions asked on the admission applications included, “Is she a member of any church? If so, what denomination? If not, is she a Christian?” The application also requested that applicants send the name and address of their pastor.<sup>16</sup> If Spelman students were not Christians, then Spelman administrators were willing to work to make them Christians and they would go on to use Howe Memorial Chapel and the objects within it to meet their goal.

### **Howe Memorial Chapel**

Located in the center of Rockefeller Hall is Howe Memorial Chapel. Named for Mrs. Angelina Ammidon Howe, Howe Memorial Chapel was one of the original spaces requested for inclusion in Rockefeller Hall by Sophia Packard. The Reverend William Howe chose to donate funds to furnish Howe Memorial Chapel in honor of his late wife who was a supporter of the African-American race.<sup>17</sup> William Howe was a Baptist minister from Cambridge, Massachusetts. He, along with his wife Angelina, were

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<sup>16</sup> Spelman Seminary and Lee, “Application for Admission to Spelman Seminary Atlanta, Ga. - Willa Golson.”

<sup>17</sup> Clement and Wynn Program Managers, *Spelman College Campus Heritage Plan*, Rockefeller Hall-2.



abolitionists and active members of the Massachusetts Abolition Society.<sup>18</sup> Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society (WABHMS) member Andrea Pollard wrote Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles that "Rev. Wm. Howe...paid \$2000 for the chapel... He said he never gave money more happily for any object than this."<sup>19</sup> The west wall of the chapel featured three portraits, one of each of Spelman's founders, Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles, and one of Mrs. Angelina A. Howe. Mrs. Howe's portrait hung above and in the center of the three portraits. Additionally, "In Memoriam. Mrs. Angelina A. Howe." was painted on the wall in a semi-circle above her portrait (Figure 16).

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<sup>18</sup> Angelina Ammidon, "Letter from Angelina Ammidon, Boston, [Mass.], to Anne Warren Weston, Nov. 21st, 1838," Digital Commonwealth Massachusetts Collections Online, accessed May 1, 2018, <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:7s75fq587>. In this letter, Angelina notes upcoming abolition meetings with Amos Augustus Phelps. Angelina also refers to herself as an "abolition sister."

<sup>19</sup> Andrea Pollard, "Letter to Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles from Andrea Pollard, 'Have Just Come Back from Board Meeting,'" February 4, 1886, The Sophia B. Packard Collection, Box 2, Folder 28, Spelman College Archives. William Howe would go on to become a fervent supporter of Spelman for many years often returning to campus to speak with students and administrators. He was also a lifelong donor to the school. For more on Rev. William Howe's visits, see the *Spelman Messenger*. The April 1897 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* notes that Howe visited the campus and treated the students and teachers to a catered lunch. The June 1889 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* notes that Howe donated money for scholarships. The June 1890 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* noted that Howe chose to celebrate his 84th birthday at Spelman.



Fig. 16. Undated photograph of the west wall of Howe Memorial Chapel. Note the portraits on the wall. Angelina A. Howe's portrait is in the middle. (Photograph, Howe Memorial Chapel Booklet, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

Sophia Packard's correspondence includes descriptions of the design of Howe Chapel. On July 31, 1885, Henry L. Morehouse informed Packard of changes to the floorplan of Rockefeller Hall that impacted the design of the chapel. He stated,

The chapel extension will be 10 feet longer than the one in the modified plans, giving a beautiful room 45x75 – the same length of your present chapel and about 20 feet wider. This will be quite as large as the chapel at Atlanta Univ and much larger than that at Clark Univ, both of which I have visited. It will be much pleasanter and finer than either. It will seat 500 or 600 and with gallery at one end (if you so prefer) will accommodate about 750 or 800 persons. Of course more can be crowded in.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> H. L. Morehouse, "Letter to Sophia Packard from Henry L. Morehouse, 'Concluded the Contract with Mr. Broomhead,'" July 31, 1885, The Sophia B. Packard Collection, Box 2, Folder 26, Spelman College Archives.

Here, Henry Morehouse displayed his intentions to have Howe Chapel be the most impressive chapel among the African American colleges in the Atlanta area. Historic photographs reveal that it was more elaborate than the chapels at Atlanta University and Clark University. Additionally, its great size allowed for it to become host to community events and to host a variety of speakers.<sup>21</sup>



Fig. 17. Undated photograph of Howe Memorial Chapel Interior (Photograph, Howe Memorial Chapel, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

<sup>21</sup> "Prayer Meeting," *Spelman Messenger*, January 1888, 3, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library. The chapel often hosted prayer meetings and visits from local clergy.

Oriented to face west, the main focus of Howe Memorial Chapel was its stage (Fig. 17.) Photographic evidence shows that the pulpit, a few chairs, a table, and a piano consistently stood on the stage. Facing the stage were rows and rows of recitation benches with folding seats. The north and south walls featured balcony seating with some recitation benches and some wooden pews (Figure 18.)



Fig. 18. Photograph of Howe Chapel. Note the wooden pews visible in the top right of the photograph. (Photograph, Howe Memorial Chapel, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

An article titled “Our Portraits” published in the *Spelman Messenger* in 1914 described the portraits that hung in Howe Memorial Chapel. According to the article,

portraits of Angelina A. Howe, Sophia Packard, Harriet Giles, and Reverend William Howe hung in the room with bronze plaques of Packard and Giles.<sup>22</sup> Additional photographic evidence reveals that at times banners hung from the north balcony and a portrait of Abraham Lincoln hung from the south balcony (Figure 17 And Figure 18.) Figure 17 and Figure 18 also display that at various times the portraits of all three women are decorated with flowers symbolizing their importance to not only the chapel but to those who use the chapel.

Howe Memorial Chapel would become the gathering spot for college assemblies, graduations, and other programs, but most importantly it was the main worship space for Spelman College. Photographs of Howe Memorial Chapel reveal that its materiality changed little from 1886 until its renovation in 1929, forty-three years after it first opened. This renovation changed the chapel by changing its orientation from east to west to north to south and by altering the balconies. Despite the extensive renovation, the large open space of the chapel changed little.

### **Chickering Grand Piano**

The listing for Howe Memorial Chapel in the 1923 inventory reveals that Spelman was in possession of a Chickering Grand Piano in a mahogany case valued at \$950.00, a princely sum since in 1923 the average net income in Georgia was just a little

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<sup>22</sup> Upton, "Our Portraits," 2; The American Appraisal Company, *Appraisal Inventory of the Spelman Seminary Atlanta, GA. Volume No. 3*, 3:123. The Appraisal Book describes the bronze tables as "2 bronze memorial tables" and assigns them a value of \$400.00 or a value \$5800.00 today. This is the same value given to all of the hymn books in the chapel.



over \$3100. The Chickering Grand Piano is the first item listed in the inventory indicating that the appraisers began with items on the stage, and photographic evidence reveals its location on the chapel stage. The Chickering and Stewart Piano Company, founded in 1823 and reorganized as Chickering and Sons in 1853, produced a wide variety of musical instruments including upright pianos, baby grand pianos, grand pianos, harpsichords, square pianos, virginals, and clavichords. In 1908 Chickering and Sons merged with the American Piano Company (AMPICO), but the new company continued to produce pianos under the Chickering name.

A photograph of Howe Chapel taken after 1906 displays the Chickering Grand Piano mentioned in the appraisal book (Figure 19).

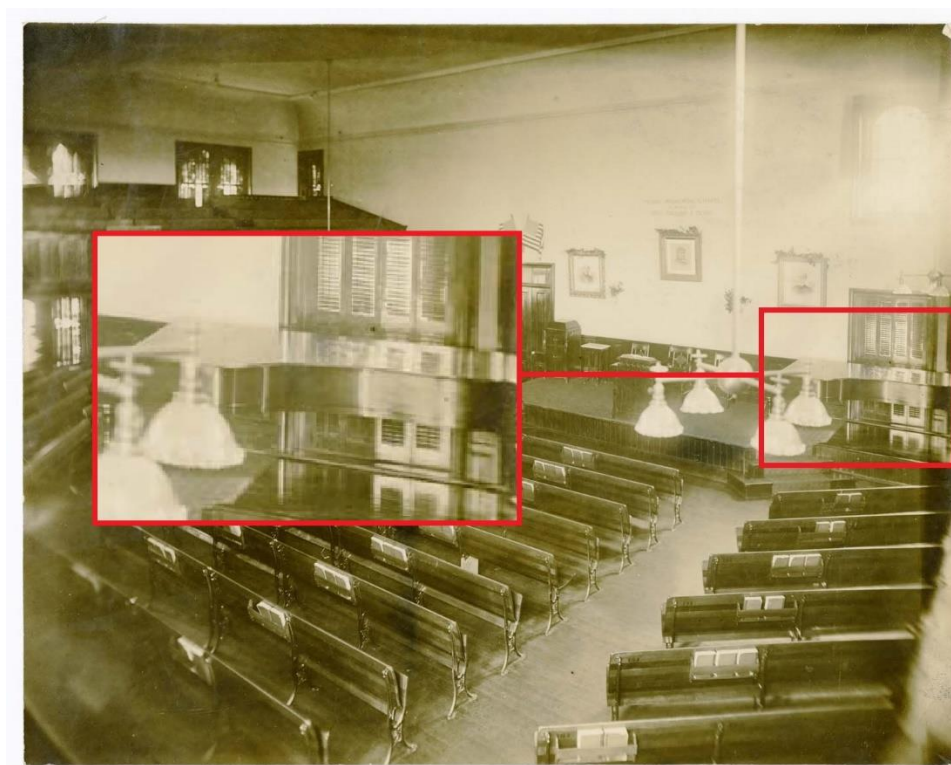


Fig. 19. Howe Memorial Chapel with Chickering Grand Piano highlighted. (Photograph, Howe Memorial Chapel, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

Earlier photographs reveal that the location on the stage to the audience's right where the Chickering Grand Piano rests was once home to an upright piano indicating that over time administrators of Spelman felt the need to upgrade their musical instruments and found the funds to do so. Records taken from the Chickering Piano Company and AMPICO reveal that often the company sold its products directly to colleges including some of the "Seven Sister" colleges for white women. Among the entries in Chickering's ledgers are a 1908 purchase by Smith College of a clavichord, a 1908 purchase of a clavichord by Wellesley College, a 1909 purchase of a clavichord by Vassar College, and a 1909 purchase of a clavichord on behalf of Mount Holyoke College.<sup>23</sup>

A review of college catalogs dating back to the 1919 – 1920 school year reveals a distinct change in the piano offerings at Spelman. Each catalog before the 1923 – 1924 school year contains the phrase "Haines Bros.' pianos are used exclusively."<sup>24</sup> The Haines Brothers Piano Company opened for business in 1851 in New York City. By the 1920s, the company became a part of the Sherlock-Manning Piano Company of Canada, perhaps explaining why Spelman purchased a Chickering grand piano.<sup>25</sup>

While it is possible that Spelman administrators may have ordered their grand piano directly from Chickering and AMPICO, Atlanta was also home to the Ludden and Bates Southern Music House, which advertised their sale of Chickering pianos in the

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<sup>23</sup> "Non-Piano Instruments Made by Chickering Register," National Museum of American History, accessed April 15, 2018, [http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/siris\\_arc\\_363065](http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/siris_arc_363065).

<sup>24</sup> Spelman Seminary, *Thirty-Ninth Annual Circular of Spelman Seminary for Women And Girls in Atlanta, Georgia: For the Academic Year 1919-1920* (Atlanta, Georgia: Spelman Messenger Office, 1920), 28.

<sup>25</sup> "Haines Brothers," Antique Piano Shop, accessed April 23, 2018, <http://antiquepianoshop.com/online-museum/haines-brothers/>.

*Atlanta Constitution* newspaper. An advertisement from the December 21, 1919 edition of the *Atlanta Constitution* boasted, “Just received a large shipment of Chickering Grand Pianos in time for Christmas delivery. The one supreme gift.” The advertisement also included two telling sentences: “Chickering Pianos may be bought on terms convenient to you. A liberal allowance will be made for your present piano.”<sup>26</sup> If Spelman administrators did not have the funds to purchase the grand piano outright, they may have traded in their old upright piano, bought the grand piano on time and made installment payments towards their purchase.

Why Spelman administrators purchased such an expensive piano is possibly tied to the college’s curriculum. The 1923 – 1924 *Spelman Seminary Catalog* notes that the college employed two piano teachers, Julia Gilman and Ruth Yale, that academic year.<sup>27</sup> The *Spelman College Bulletin for 1924 - 1925* reveals that the college now offered piano lessons at the cost of 75 cents per week.<sup>28</sup> The bulletin reported that the piano classes intended “to give each student systematic, logical training in modern piano technic, by the use of scales, arpeggios, and selected studies and to apply this technical training to the study of standard piano compositions.” Among those composers Spelman students played in piano class are Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, and Tchaikovsky.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ludden & Bates, “Just Received a Large Shipment of Chickering Grand Pianos,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 21, 1919.

<sup>27</sup> Spelman Seminary, *Spelman Seminary Catalog 1923 - 1924* (Atlanta, Georgia: Spelman Seminary, 1923), 5.

<sup>28</sup> Spelman College, *Spelman College Bulletin for 1924 - 1925* (Atlanta, Georgia: Spelman College, 1924), 43.

<sup>29</sup> Spelman College, 51.



Like music educators across the nation, by teaching the students classical music, Spelman's piano teachers taught African American women the classics. Before her time at Spelman, Harriet Giles was a music teacher and accomplished pianist. It is very likely that her taste in music influenced Spelman's piano curriculum. The Chickering Grand Piano may have served to show students that if they wanted to learn or teach respectful music that they needed a grand piano. As one of the most expensive objects on the campus, the Chickering Grand Piano certainly sent a message of middle-class taste. Upright pianos were common in African American churches, but Spelman educators aimed higher. Accomplished piano students received the opportunity twice per year to use the piano for their piano recitals. Outside of students, the Chickering Grand Piano also sent a message to the college's visitors that Spelman was serious about music education. The piano then worked to legitimize the music played during service while also sending a message against the so-called primitive gospel music of African American churches.

## The Victrola

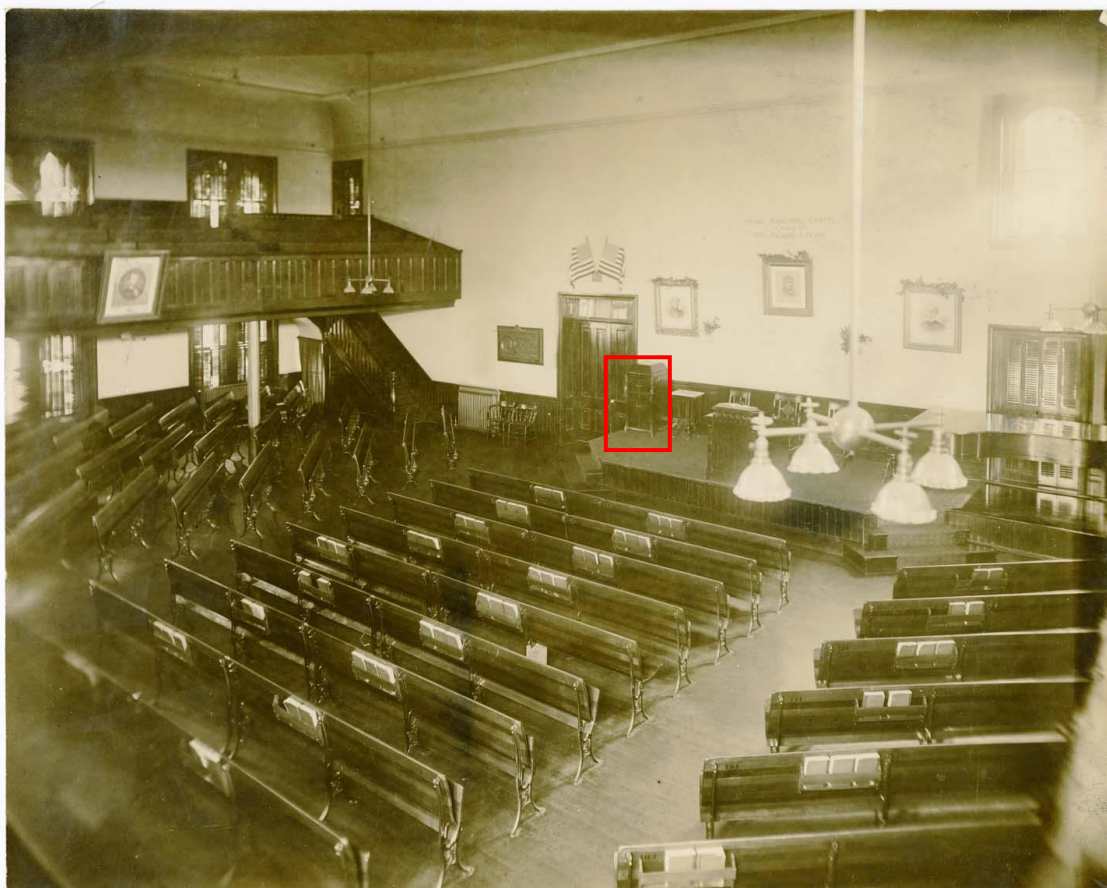


Fig. 20. Howe Memorial Chapel with Victrola highlighted. (Photograph, Howe Memorial Chapel, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

Joining the Chickering Grand Piano on Howe Chapel's stage was an XVI Victrola in a mahogany case valued at \$275.00 (Figure 20). Officially introduced in 1906, the XVI Victrola was the original internal-horn Victrola, the company's flagship model, and the first commercial product to enclose the horn inside of a cabinet. Furthermore, 1907 was the first year that Victrola produced the XVI Victrola with a domed head matching the

model in the post-1906 photograph of Howe Chapel.<sup>30</sup> The XVI Victrola was a type of phonograph designed to look more like a piece of furniture rather than a music device making it an attractive addition to the stage in Howe Memorial Chapel (Figure 21). Its presence on the stage indicates that during some services Spelman students and administrators consumed music versus performing it.



Fig. 21. Spelman's XVI Victrola and 1909 Victrola with a domed head. Note the curved legs and bottom edge and flared upper sides of both Victrolas. (Photograph, Howe Memorial Chapel, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA; "VTLA / VV-XVI / VE-XVI / VV-XX," The Victor-Victrola Page, accessed April 15, 2018, <http://www.victor-victrola.com/XVI.htm>.)

Several newspaper advertisements indicate that Spelman's administrators had a variety of Atlanta stores to choose from when they purchased the Victrola, among them

<sup>30</sup> "VTLA / VV-XVI / VE-XVI / VV-XX," The Victor-Victrola Page, accessed April 15, 2018, <http://www.victor-victrola.com/XVI.htm>.

Cable Piano Company. A 1921 advertisement of the Cable Piano Company stated, “The Superb Victrola. XVI or 120. In Mahogany, Oak, or American Walnut. Spring drive or electric drive. Complete with 24 selections (12 double face records).”<sup>31</sup> Another Victrola advertisement from the Goodhart- Tompkins Company advertised the XVI Victrola with a mahogany finish for \$275.00 with \$50.00 cash as a downpayment and \$25.00 due each month.<sup>32</sup>

Spelman’s Victrola quickly became a hit among students and administrators who used it to entertain during special events. The May 1913 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* noted that during the Founders Day Program on April 11, 1913, the Victrola played appropriate songs.<sup>33</sup> In later years, the *Spelman Messenger* covered the events surrounding National Better Homes Week in April of 1926. During these events, Spelman students fitted the Practice Apartment of the Home Economics Building with objects, and they took turns living in the Practice Apartment like a family would taking care to cook meals and dress dining tables, while demonstrating that they had learned the necessary skills to care for a home. During National Better Homes Week in April of 1926, Spelman students noted that a Victrola needed to be added to their home. Mildred C. Pratt, author of the article in the *Spelman Messenger*, noted that the students had not forgotten the value of music in the home writing that, “Each afternoon and evening

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<sup>31</sup> Cable Piano Company, “Tomorrow! Is the Opening Day of Our Great Victrola Christmas Club,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 30, 1921.

<sup>32</sup> Goodhart - Tompkins, “Victrolas in Every Style and Finish,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 16, 1920.

<sup>33</sup> “Founders’ Day,” *Spelman Messenger*, May 1913, 1, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

suitable selections including Negro melodies were played on the Victrola.”<sup>34</sup> According to Pratt and the Spelman students, the appropriate location of a Victrola in the home was the living room so that families could enjoy music together. Spelman’s Victrola was on the stage of Howe Memorial Chapel and perhaps signaled to students in the audience that they would all partake in music together as a family.

### **The Pulpit**

Joining the XVI Victrola and Chickering Grand Piano on the stage is the pulpit (Figure 22). Occupying the center of the stage the pulpit is perhaps one of the most important objects in any chapel because it is where the minister stands to deliver messages of salvation. Not only is the pulpit located on the center of the stage in Howe Chapel, but it is also directly below the photograph of Angelina Howe, the chapel’s namesake and benefactor whose donation purchased not only the pulpit but the furnishings in the room making it possible for Spelman students to worship.

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<sup>34</sup> Mildred C. Pratt, “Better Homes in America Spelman College Demonstration,” *Spelman Messenger*, December 1926, 10–11, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

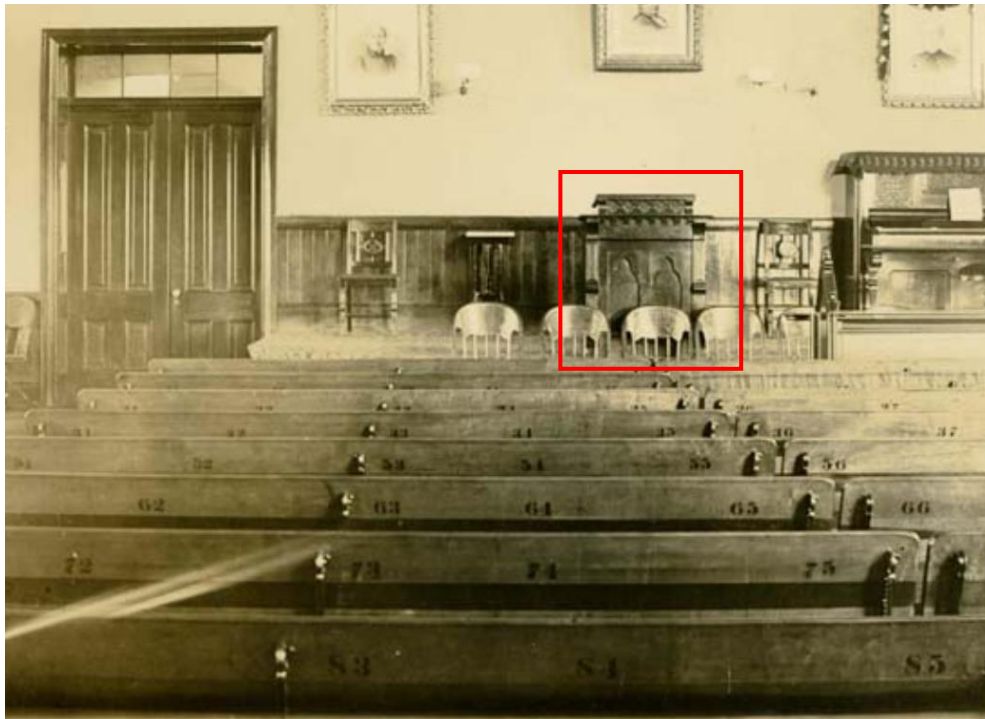


Fig. 22. Howe Memorial Chapel with pulpit highlighted. (Photograph, Howe Memorial Chapel, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

The appraisal book identified a walnut pulpit stand and assigned a value of \$20.00. The pulpit was Gothic Revival in style, a popular architectural style for churches of the period, featuring carved arches and elevated top with a row of quatrefoil carvings. A review of late nineteenth-century furniture catalogs revealed that often pulpits were sold in suits including chairs, and Eastlake style tables often referred to as Bible stands.<sup>35</sup>

Pulpits by their design were used to not only draw attention to the speaker, but also specifically to aid in controlling the behavior of the audience. Those behind the pulpit through their mere presence in that space silently communicated to the audience

<sup>35</sup> Applin & Company Shaw, *Parlor, Church and Lodge Furniture* (The Firm, Boston, 1881), 61, <http://archive.org/details/parlorchurchlodg00shaw>. Photographic evidence reveals that there is an Eastlake table on the stage with the pulpit in several photographs of Howe Memorial Chapel throughout the years.

how to appropriately act while audibly moving the service forward through song or sermon. Furthermore, standing behind the pulpit on the elevated stage gave the speaker an uninterrupted view of the audience and the opportunity to surveil the behavior of the students.

The pulpit with its elevated top placed the Bible in a commanding position that displayed its power and importance (Figure 23.). In this position, the Bible acted as an agent communicating its authority over the lives of the students as well as acting as a gatekeeper to the lives that Spelman administrators demanded students aspire. The pulpit with the bible on top became a gateway to the conversion of Christianity and a gateway into the good graces of Spelman administrators. This object commanded the attention of the students as they watched from the audience listening for words that would guide their lives.

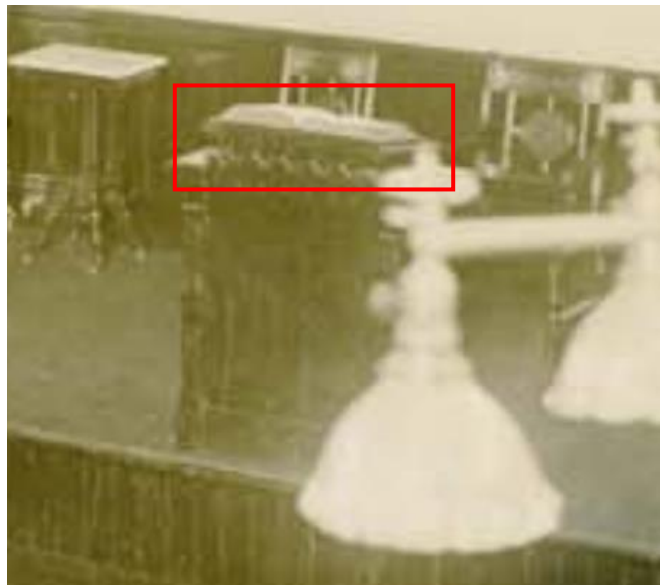


Fig. 23. Pulpit in Howe Memorial Chapel with opened Bible on elevated top highlighted. (Photograph, Howe Memorial Chapel, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

## Recitation Benches

The most dominant objects by their sheer number in Howe Memorial Chapel were the ninety-five eight-foot recitation benches each bearing a number on its back (Figure 24). More than any other object in Howe Memorial Chapel these benches represented the vast majority of people on Spelman's campus, the African-American female students. Each recitation bench with its intricately stenciled numbers spaced neatly apart was a tool displaying order and guiding students toward Christ. Spelman College administrators advertised the school as "A Christian Home School for Women and Girls," so it comes as no surprise that the motto of the school was "Our Whole School for Christ" and that much of the college's curriculum focused on religious teachings.<sup>36</sup> The recitation benches in Howe Chapel regulated the bodies of student worshippers so that they would perform the administrator's desired order and spiritual striving while also exemplifying worship and educational processes.<sup>37</sup>

For late nineteenth-century students, recitation benches were objects that through their purpose, design and location in the classroom told students how to perform. Often recitation benches sat in the front of the classroom between the teacher's desk and the student desks isolating those students reciting from those at desks working. A review of the inventory included in the appraisal book of Room #5 in Rockefeller Hall, listed the room's eight-foot recitation bench between the fourteen student desks and the pine lid

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<sup>36</sup> "Spelman Seminary," *Spelman Messenger* 24, no. 8 (May 1908): 6.

<sup>37</sup> For more see Pedro Moreno Martinez, "History of School Desk Development in Terms of Hygiene and Pedagogy in Spain, 1838 – 1936," in *Materialities of Schooling: Design, Technology, Objects, Routines*, ed. Martin Lawn and Ian Grosvenor (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2005).



topped teacher's desk.<sup>38</sup> The inventory for Room #5 suggests that the appraiser listed the objects beginning in the rear of the room moving to the front of the room placing the recitation desk in its historically correct position between the student desks and the teacher's desk.

The performance that recitation benches induced included the orderly recitation of lessons, often poetry, and in the case of Spelman, recitation was a key component of the college's Elocution classes. Additionally, Rockefeller Hall contained fourteen classrooms whose sole purpose was to act as classrooms for recitation. The appraisal book details that each of these recitation classrooms contained at least one eight-foot recitation bench. Recitation benches also lined the first-floor corridors of Rockefeller Hall.



Fig. 24. Recitation benches in Howe Memorial Chapel with numbers stenciled on the back highlighted. (Photograph, Howe Memorial Chapel, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

<sup>38</sup> The American Appraisal Company, *Appraisal Inventory of the Spelman Seminary Atlanta, Ga.*, vol. 1 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The American Appraisal Company, 1923), 108.

The stenciled numbers located on the rear of the recitation benches in Howe Memorial Chapel echo the numbering of pews in eighteenth-century American churches. By numbering the seats, it is obvious that Spelman administrators were assigning seats to students. What remains unclear, is if there was a hierarchy to the seat assignments like those in eighteenth-century churches where pew locations were often connected directly to social status with some parishioners even paying pew subscriptions.<sup>39</sup> The use of recitation benches in Howe Chapel, much like traditional pews or benches in churches, emphasizes the idea of a body of parishioners worshipping together and not worshipping alone in individual seats. These recitation benches not only shaped relationships among the students but also among administrators, as the administrators held power to assign seats. Additionally, these benches were affixed to the floor, restricting the movement of the benches while also preventing students from reorganizing the benches in a way that they saw fit.

The stenciled numbers and assigned seats communicated order. Students sitting on the recitation benches would be lined up each staring at the back of the student's head in front of them. From the elevated view of the pulpit, the speakers would have looked out at the audience and saw neatly lined rows of bodies visually communicating order and control, both things thought to be missing from African American churches. Through chapel services and the use of assigned seating, students quickly learned that everything about the chapel called for the best appearance and behavior. Hall matrons checked

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<sup>39</sup> Louis P. Nelson *The Beauty of Holiness: Anglicanism and Architecture in Colonial South Carolina* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 309.

student's clothes before chapel services sending anyone unkempt to change clothing.<sup>40</sup>

Assigned seating allowed Spelman administrators to swiftly notice if anyone was missing and not in their assigned space.

An analysis of existing early photographs of Howe Chapel reveals that while the recitation benches originally featured the stenciled numbers, they did not always feature the holders for hymnals found in later photographs (Figure 25 and Figure 26).



Fig. 25. Photograph of Howe Memorial Chapel dated 1881 - 1896. Note the recitation benches without hymnal holders on the rear. Note the hymnals placed on the seats of recitation benches. (Photograph, Howe Memorial Chapel, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

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<sup>40</sup> Butler, "Miss Grover - An Appreciation," 8. Spelman alumnae Selena Sloan Butler wrote an article for the *Spelman Messenger* upon the death of long time Spelman teacher Caroline Grover. Butler stated, "Vividly do I recall that before going to school or chapel services we had to report to her room for inspection."

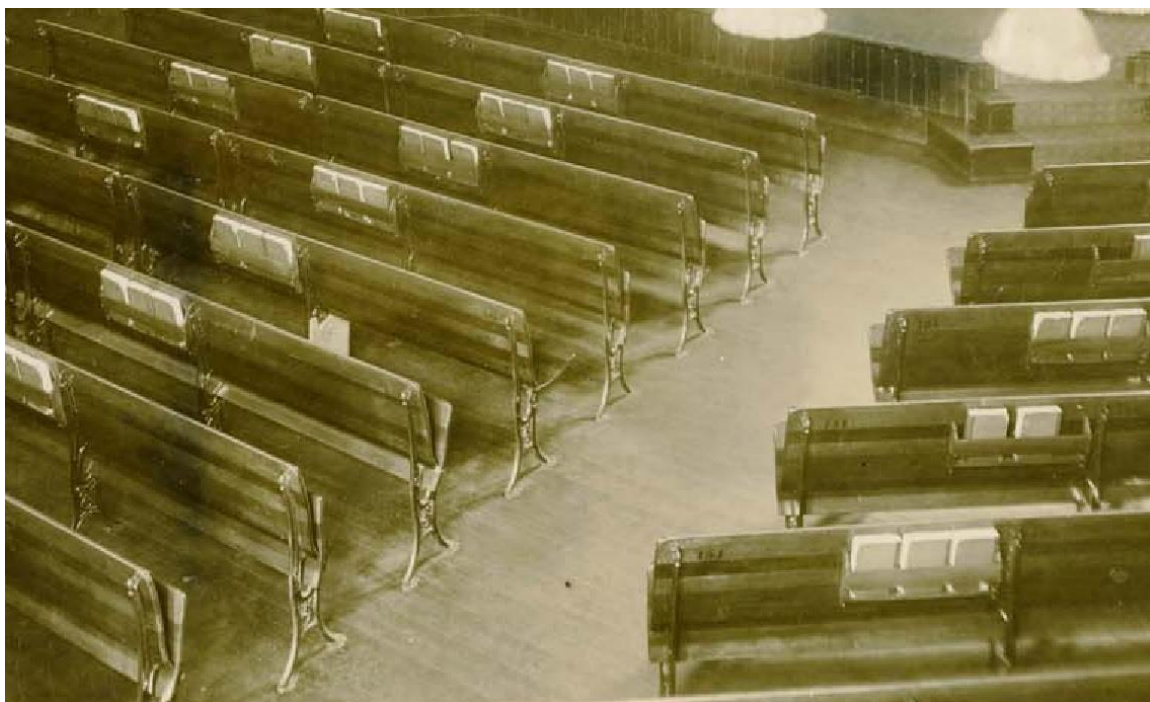


Fig. 26. Photograph of Howe Memorial Chapel with hymnal holders attached to the rear of the recitation benches. (Photograph, Howe Memorial Chapel, Spelman College Archives Photographic Collections, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA.)

Fastening holders for the hymnals to the rear of the recitation benches, objects that in themselves demanded order, added organization to the room and prevented hymnals from being strewn about as shown in older photographs. Figure 26 also shows that with the exception of one bench, all of the bench seats are in the folded upward position showcasing their utilitarian design. The cleanliness and order of the chapel reflected the standards for cleanliness found in the Spelman College curriculum. Spelman College catalogs note that each student was required to clean for at least one hour a day throughout the campus in addition to keeping their dormitory rooms cleaned daily.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Spelman Seminary, *Annual Circular and Catalogue of Spelman Seminary for Women and Girls in Atlanta, Ga* (Atlanta : Spelman Messenger Office, n.d.), 18.

## Conclusion

The position of Howe Memorial Chapel in the center of the college's primary building reinforced the school's motto of the whole school being for Christ. By occupying the center of Rockefeller Hall, all of the building's other purposes came second to the chapel. The mere layout of the building with the student rooms flanking each side of the chapel ensured that students remained aware of the chapel's presence as it interrupted the flow between the north and south wings of the building.

Housing Howe Memorial Chapel within Rockefeller Hall and not as its own separate building meant that Spelman administrators had to distinguish that space so that it was recognized as a chapel and not just as a meeting space. Spelman administrators visually communicated the sanctity of the space through material culture and the architectural design within the room. The chapel's vaulted ceiling emphasized that this room was like no other in the building. Architectural historian Louis Nelson suggests that vaulted ceilings in church architecture were intentional as they connected parishioners to theological teachings.<sup>42</sup>

Howe Memorial Chapel not only connected students to Christ, but it also connected students to the seminary's founders, Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles. For example, not only was Howe Memorial Chapel sacred because it was a chapel, but it was also sacred because it was the space in which students gathered to pay reverence to the college's founders. The wall behind the pulpit became a shrine to not only the benefactor,

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<sup>42</sup> For more see Louis P. Nelson, "Sensing the Sacred: Anglican Material Religion in Early South Carolina," *Winterthur Portfolio* 41, no. 4 (December 2007): 203–38.

Angelina Howe, but to the college's founders with students decorating the portraits and bronze plaques of the founders with flowers. Decorating the portraits are but one example of how students responded to and displayed the sanctity of the space. The tradition of decorating the founder's portraits with flowers is one that continues to this day through the college's annual Founder's Day program.

What the material culture of Howe Memorial Chapel makes known is that these were not just random objects placed in a room. The objects discussed within Howe Memorial Chapel all exemplify what was expected of African American Christian women. These objects contributed to what historian Stephanie Shaw describes as “a formula that emphasized appropriate behavior, dedicated preparation, hard work, and community consciousness” while actively pushing upwardly mobility.<sup>43</sup> These objects also represent the goals of Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles in ensuring that their students became practicing Christians and that they had a proper place to practice their faith while students at Spelman.

The Chickering Grand Piano and XVI Victrola allowed for the chapel to be filled with music, but they also shared space on the stage with the chapel's pulpit denoting that all of these objects were important to worship services at Spelman. While these objects were important to worship services, it is the ninety-five recitation benches that dominated the chapel and held the students that Packard and Giles wanted to save. These recitation benches allowed for students to sit in an orderly fashion and receive the word of God.

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<sup>43</sup> Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers during the Jim Crow Era*, 14.

From their locations on the stage, Packard and Giles could look out across the room at the good that they were doing and the souls that they were bringing to Christ.

## CHAPTER FIVE - ADMINISTRATOR OBJECTS

In 1883 when Spelman College administrators purchased the five wood frame buildings of the former McPherson Army Barracks, administrators of the seminary had to decide which buildings would become classroom and living spaces. When it was time to select which building would house Spelman's administrators and teachers, Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles quickly chose the existing Officers Quarters known as Barracks Number One, later affectionately known as the Old Barn. As an Officers Quarters, Barracks Number One had substantial architectural embellishments, such as being divided into suites as opposed to the dormitory-style barracks reserved for soldiers.<sup>1</sup> This well-built building conveyed who was in charge for the Army, and now it could have the same role for the new college.

When Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles moved into Barracks Number One in 1883, they took with them the objects that they brought with them from their home in Massachusetts as well as objects they had acquired since their arrival in Atlanta, Georgia in 1881. Among those objects in Packard and Giles's living quarters were books,

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<sup>1</sup> "Bench Ceremony," *Spelman Messenger*, August 1941, 13, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library; Staff History Officer, *The Fort McPherson Story, 1885 - 1963*, 14. *The Fort McPherson Story* provides maps of the original McPherson Barracks that suggest that the remaining buildings purchased by Spelman Seminary in 1883 were the hospital, which Spelman administrators named Union Hall, and five of the Officer's Quarters Buildings. However, there were differences in the Officer's Quarters Buildings based on officer rank. According to sources, Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles lived in the nicest quarter which would have been the Colonel's Quarter according to *The Fort McPherson Story*. For more on the divisions and descriptions of living and working spaces at the McPherson Barracks, see *The Fort McPherson Story* pages 9 - 16.



pictures, jewelry, and furniture.<sup>2</sup> Additional sources further detail the objects of Barracks Number One and note that among those objects were Harriet Giles's photo album and a portrait of Mrs. Laura Spelman Rockefeller gifted to Giles by Mrs. Rockefeller.<sup>3</sup>

Barracks Number One was Sophia Packard's only campus living space due to her death in 1891. Barracks Number One remained the living space for Spelman's administrators for eighteen years until February 1901 when Harriet Giles, then President of Spelman Seminary, and Lucy Upton, Dean of Spelman Seminary, moved into Reynolds Cottage, the first campus building built specifically as living quarters for the presidents of Spelman.<sup>4</sup>

Actions such as choosing the barracks building with the most architectural embellishments in which to live and the purchase of finer objects for Barracks Number One and later Reynolds Cottage, as well as teacher's spaces and offices in buildings throughout campus, reveals not only what Spelman administrators thought of themselves, but also what objects they thought were necessary and appropriate for their station. These objects afforded Spelman administrators and teachers with a different quality of life than the students and exemplified their power and authority. Additionally, through objects, Spelman administrators communicated their intimate thoughts regarding their

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<sup>2</sup> Sophia B. Packard, "Sophia B. Packard Will" (Suffolk County, Massachusetts Probate Court, April 19, 1888); Harriet E. Giles, "Harriet E. Giles Will" (Fulton County, Georgia District and Probate Courts., March 16, 1892), Georgia, Wills and Probate Records, 1742-1992. In Sophia Packard's 1888 will she left all of her belongings to Harriet Giles. In Harriet Giles 1892 will she left all of her belongings described as "furniture, books, pictures, household property, jewelry, and other such like articles" to Mary Packard, Sophia Packard's sister and Spelman employee.

<sup>3</sup> Upton, "Our Portraits," 3. This article lists all of the portraits and photographs in Reynolds Cottage in May 1914 including details of provenance.

<sup>4</sup> For more on the significance of President's Houses on college campuses see Turner, *Campus*, 28. Turner notes that the construction of a President's House on college campuses followed the tradition first set by English colleges. American college's continued this tradition as early as 1655 with the construction of the first President's House, now demolished, on the campus of Harvard University.

relationships amongst themselves and amongst their students.<sup>5</sup> This chapter examines the administrators of Spelman Seminary through the objects that those chose to surround themselves with in the public and private spaces of Reynolds Cottage. Additionally, this chapter considers how those objects purchased and used by Spelman Seminary administrators worked to uphold and maintain the culture of white supremacy and white womanhood.

### **Reynolds Cottage**

In 1901, Spelman administrators chose to name the seminary's President's Quarters after Mary C. Reynolds who exemplified the traits of Baptist womanhood that administrators sought to instill in their students.<sup>6</sup> A 1903 article in the *Baptist Home Mission Monthly* described Mary C. Reynolds as cultured and capable. At the time, Reynolds was the Corresponding Secretary of the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society (WABHMS), which governed Spelman Seminary, and a member of the Spelman Seminary Board of Trustees.<sup>7</sup> Mary C. Reynolds was a native of Massachusetts and a devout Baptist like both Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles. Reynolds's father was a

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<sup>5</sup> Cary Carson, *Face Value: The Consumer Revolution and the Colonizing of America* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2017), 198. Material Culture Historian Cary Carson notes that "The history of material life tells its own important story, an account of people's growing dependence on inanimate objects to communicate relationships with one another and mediate their daily progress through the social worlds they inhabited." (198)

<sup>6</sup> David Charles Laubach, "Mary C. Reynolds," in *To Think That It Happened on Mulberry Street* (Vallery Forge, PA: National Ministries American Baptist Churches USA, n.d.), 29, <https://abccr.org/download/PASSIONARY/MulberryStreet.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> "The Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* XXV, no. 3 (March 1903): 54.

reverend in the Baptist church, and she married Asa E. Reynolds who was also a reverend in the Baptist church.

Reynolds Cottage is not a cottage but a substantial two-story twenty-two room with basement home styled in a restrained Colonial Revival tradition with classical elements such as a wrap-around porch (Figure 27). The front or east façade also features a projecting center gable front entryway. The design of Reynolds Cottage includes Flemish Bond brick with glazed brick headers, granite window sills and lintels, and a granite belt course that wraps around the building. The home features two chimneys on the north and south sides of the building. Officials held the formal dedication of Reynolds Cottage on November 17, 1901, during Spelman Seminary's Founder's Day programs.

Reynolds Cottage afforded Spelman administrators not only a more impressive place to entertain guests but more privacy than they had ever had on campus. Spelman administrators were no longer living next door to students and student classrooms. Reynolds Cottage was a statement of power and authority and at the time of its construction, it was the first building you saw as you entered the campus. It was a fitting building for the growing college and a representation of the hard work put forth by Spelman administrators over the years.

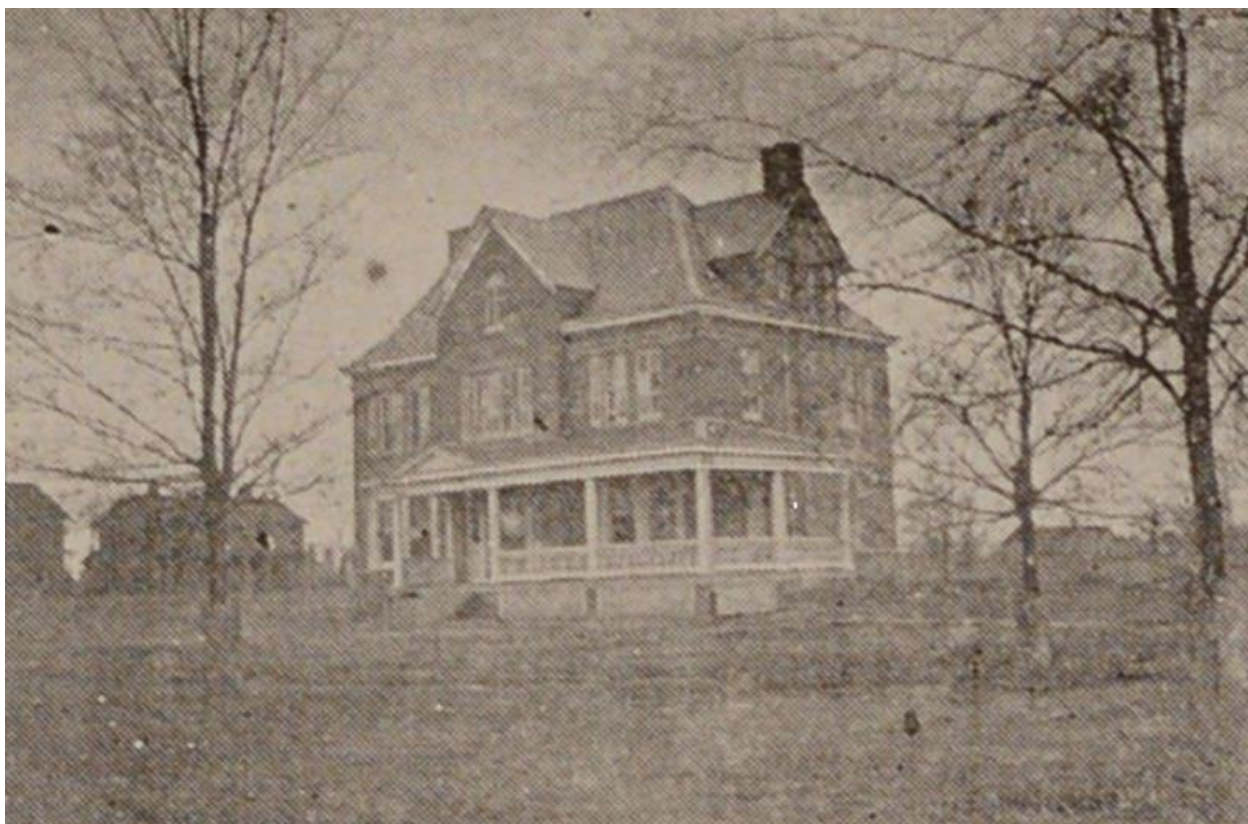


Fig.27. Reynolds Cottage (Photograph, Reynolds Cottage, *Spelman Messenger*, November 1901 edition, Atlanta, Georgia)

The March 1901 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* noted in the seminary's Annual Report that money was given to procure suitable and substantial furniture for the buildings that opened in 1901 including Reynolds Cottage.<sup>8</sup> Some of the objects that made up the materiality of Reynolds Cottage in February of 1901 more than likely belonged to both Giles and Upton from their former rooms in Barracks Number One. By the time of the 1923 inventory, the residents of Reynolds Cottage included then Spelman Seminary President Lucy Tapley.

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<sup>8</sup> "Annual Report," *Spelman Messenger*, March 1901, 1, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

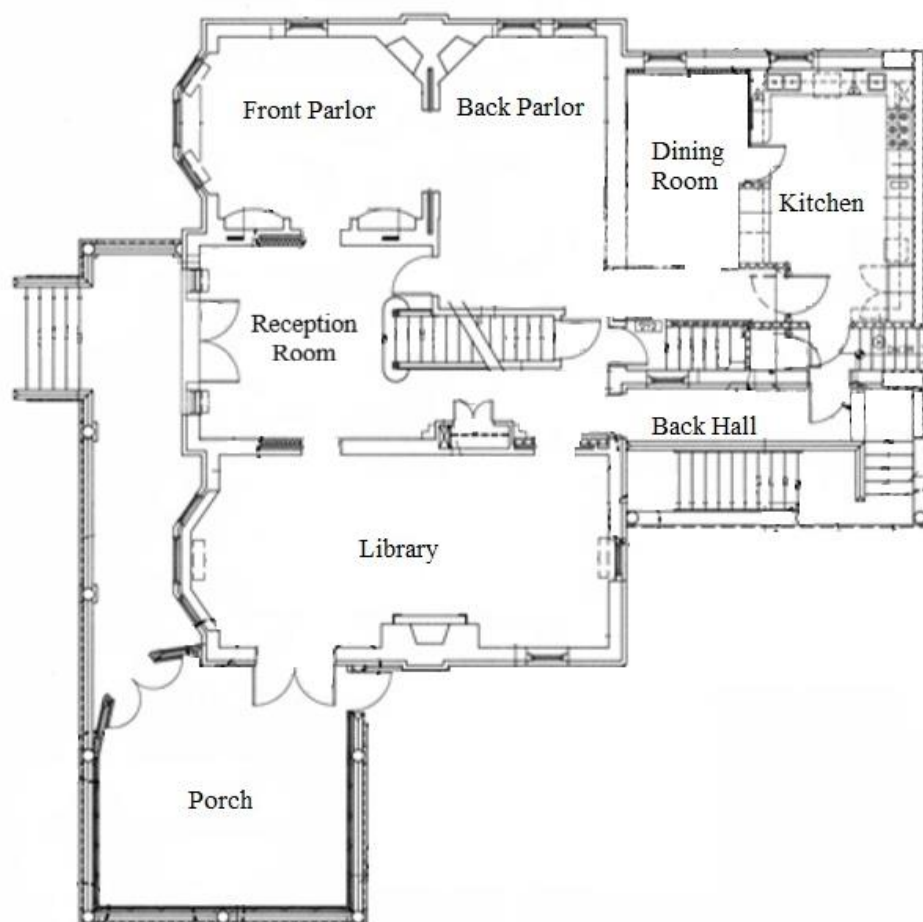


Fig.28. Conjectural first-floor floorplan of Reynolds Cottage based on recent floorplan using room titles listed in the 1923 inventory.

Photographs and articles within the *Spelman Messenger* reveal some of the early materiality of Reynolds Cottage. For example, photographs of Reynolds Cottage from the November 1911 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* reveal that the cottage's porch

featured three wooden rocking chairs along with a porch swing.<sup>9</sup> An additional photograph of the Reynolds Cottage library reveals the room's objects including a portrait hung above the mantle, table with turned legs, chairs, and two bookcases of books and other objects.<sup>10</sup>

The 1923 appraisal inventory provides a unique opportunity to analyze the contents of a college president's home during the first quarter of the twentieth century. What quickly becomes apparent through the placement of objects and functions of rooms is that the residents of Reynolds Cottage enjoyed a quality of life that was foreign to the majority of the students and graduates of the college.

### **The Reception Room (Hall)**

In 1901 the first visitors who entered Reynolds Cottage would have seen a carefully planned space extremely unlike the previous presidential accommodations on the campus of Spelman (Figure 28). The architectural embellishments and the material objects of the hall would have spoken to the Victorian sensibilities of the home's occupants despite the era technically ending shortly before the home's occupation. The hall served as an unforgiving first impression, not only of Harriet Giles and Lucy Upton,

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<sup>9</sup> "On the Piazza - Reynolds Cottage," *Spelman Messenger*, November 1911, 5, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>10</sup> "Reception Room," *Spelman Messenger*, November 1911, 5, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library. An analysis of the Reynolds Cottage floorplan and architectural features including fireplaces reveals that the photograph in the November 1911 edition of the *Spelman Messenger* labeled "Reception Room" is in fact the Library of Reynolds Cottage. The Reception Room of Reynolds Cottage was the entry hall and it had no fireplace.

the building's first occupants, but also of Spelman Seminary and its goal of refining African American womanhood.

A review of the floorplan (Figure 2) of Reynolds Cottage combined with the 1923 inventory allows for careful consideration of the placement of objects and their significance in the hall. The 1923 inventory labeled the entry hall of Reynolds Cottage as the Reception Room, taking the space beyond a simple entry point and elevating it to a room with a defined function. As Kenneth Ames noted in "Meaning in Artifacts: Hall Furnishings in Victorian America," upper-middle-class homes followed the hall as living space model which expanded the hall from a small entry point to a space complete with architectural embellishments and objects that emphasized its function as both a connector and separator of rooms.<sup>11</sup> The objects within the entry hall of Reynolds Cottage along with its floorplan emphasized its function as more than an entry space (Table 4). The materiality of the hall reflects that the occupants treated the space as a meeting room that held guests before their entry into other spaces of the home while also serving as a space that limited the movements of inappropriate guests.

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<sup>11</sup> Kenneth L. Ames, "Meaning in Artifacts: Hall Furnishings in Victorian America," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, ed. Thomas J. Schlereth (Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1981), 220.

Table 4. Reception Room/Hall (Reynolds Cottage) Objects <sup>12</sup>	
Object	Value
1 7'x9" high x 4' wide oak and walnut bookcase, double glass doors, 2 drawer base	60.00
1 42" oak hall bench with box seat	20.00
1 28" x 22" beveled plate glass mirror, 6" oak frame with clothes hooks	18.00
1 21"x 21" oak table, cabriole legs	12.00
4 oak side chairs	30.00
1 umbrella jar	4.50
1 bamboo stand	2.50
1 9'x12' Wilton velvet rug	85.00
4 27" window shades	5.00
Pictures and misc.	20.00
	257.00 Total Value

Ames's study of Victorian-era hall furnishings provides a lens with which to examine and interpret the objects within the hall of Reynolds Cottage. He argues that objects within the hall underline the emphasis on attire and appearance of the era.<sup>13</sup> Although the hall of Reynolds Cottage lacked the era's signature object, the hall stand,

<sup>12</sup> The American Appraisal Company, *Appraisal Inventory of the Spelman Seminary Atlanta, GA. Volume No. 3*, 3:326–27.

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Ames, *Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture*, First Edition (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1995), 23.



other objects within the hall such as the umbrella jar and the beveled plate glass mirror with clothes hooks act as shrewd substitutes, perhaps representative of the change over time in Reynolds Cottage interiors. The beveled plate glass mirror served to remind visitors to adjust themselves accordingly before moving into one of Reynolds Cottage's more formal rooms while the clothing hooks of the mirror worked to remind visitors to remove their outer garments before moving forward.<sup>14</sup>

The most expensive object in the hall was the 9' x 12' Wilton velvet rug valued at \$85.00 in 1923 or \$1250.00 in 2018. Wilton rugs were machine woven rugs inspired by carpet loom construction techniques first developed in Wiltshire, Wilton, England in 1655. By the early twentieth century, Wilton rugs became synonymous with status as they were more than double the cost of the average rug.<sup>15</sup> The only other Wilton rug found in Reynolds cottage was in the Front Parlor. Both the hall and the front parlor were public spaces whose furnishings were meant to convey messages about the owners of the house. These two rooms may have been the only rooms that visitors to Reynolds Cottage ever saw. Because of their stature in the house, it makes sense that these two spaces featured more expensive objects imbued with meaning.

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<sup>14</sup> Ames, 25; Grant David McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990), 86–87.

<sup>15</sup> Gail Caskey Winkler and Roger W. Moss, *Victorian Interior Decoration: American Interiors, 1830-1900* (New York: Henry Holt & Co, 1986), 199.

## The Front Parlor

According to Katherine Grier in her study *Culture and Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850 - 1930*, the parlor in the American home was a room where American families could present their public face.<sup>16</sup> Grier also noted that the parlor often held the best possessions and because of this it was a space commonly used to entertain, to host small weddings, to lay out the dead, and to host club meetings and local dignitaries.<sup>17</sup> The parlor in Reynolds Cottage certainly fit Grier's definition not only in its use, but also in its materiality.

According to the 1923 inventory, Reynolds Cottage had two parlors known as the Front Parlor and the Back Parlor. The tradition of American houses having both a Front Parlor and a Back Parlor dates to the early eighteenth-century. Often, eighteenth-century homes had what they referred to as the Best Parlor, which was a space where they received guests much like the Victorian era Front Parlor. The Best Parlor contained the best furnishings and finishes much like the Victorian Front Parlor.<sup>18</sup> The Back Parlor was a less formal space used exclusively for private family use. Through the furnishings in each room, it becomes apparent that Reynolds Cottage's Front Parlor and Back Parlor followed traditional definitions of those spaces.

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<sup>16</sup> Katherine C. Grier, *Culture and Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850-1930*, Revised edition (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2010), 64.

<sup>17</sup> Grier, 64.

<sup>18</sup>For more see Gene Waddell, *Charleston Architecture, 1670-1860* (Charleston: Wyrick, 2003), 87.

Waddell notes that townhomes such as Charles Pinckney's 1750 Charleston, SC townhome contained both a front parlor and a back parlor. The front parlor had better interior finishes and furnishings while the back parlor was a private space for family use.

The objects in the Reynolds Cottage Front Parlor are greatly different from those found in the Back Parlor which also highlights the differences between the uses of the two spaces (Table 5).

Table 5. Front Parlor (Reynolds Cottage) Objects <sup>19</sup>	
Object	Value
1 31" x 23" mahogany table, shaped top with base shelf	22.00
1 23" dia. Mahogany table, pedestal base	24.00
1 24" x 18" mahogany oval stand with base shelf	18.00
1 45" mahogany finish settee, cretonne upholstered, spring seat	45.00
2 armchairs to match	60.00
2 side chairs to match	35.00
1 birch mahogany colonial rocking armchair	18.00
1 wicker armchair	16.00
1 oak side chair	6.00
1 pine corner seat with cushion and cover	8.00
1 9' x 12' Wilton velvet rug	85.00
4 36" X 7" cambric cloth shades	7.20
1 brass fireplace set	25.00
1 oil portrait in gilt frame	75.00
Pictures and Misc.	75.00

<sup>19</sup> The American Appraisal Company, *Appraisal Inventory of the Spelman Seminary Atlanta, GA. Volume No. 3*, 3:327–28.

1 Brass Fireplace Set	25.00
	519.20 Total Value

The Front Parlor was home to what the 1923 inventory referred to as “1 oil portrait in gilt frame” valued at \$75.00 making it one of the most expensive objects in Reynolds Cottage. A 1914 article titled “Our Portraits” written by Lucy Upton in the *Spelman Messenger* gave details on the oil portrait in a gilt frame. Upton wrote “As one enters the parlor of Reynolds Cottage, an oil portrait of our dear Mrs. Reynolds greets the eye. It was painted for that place by a former pupil of hers.”<sup>20</sup> Mrs. Reynolds portrait more than likely hung over the fireplace occupying one of the most significant spaces in the most significant room of Reynolds Cottage.

Mary C. Reynolds portrait and its location above the mantel, one of the most significant architectural components of the parlor, communicated to visitors of the room her importance in the success of Spelman. Not only was she the namesake of the President’s Quarters, but she was also someone to be revered and praised. The front parlor also contained other portraits and photographs including a picture of Mrs. Alice B. Coleman, President of the Woman’s American Baptist Home Mission Society. Harriet Giles’s photograph album which contained photographs of Spelman’s “true friends” rested on the table in parlor. Included in the photograph album were photographs of John D. Rockefeller, Dr. J. H. Hanaford, Deacon Mial Davis, Dr. William J. White, and Dr.

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<sup>20</sup> Upton, “Our Portraits,” 3.

George Sale, president of Morehouse College.<sup>21</sup> Through that lens, the front parlor and the objects within became a shrine to the people and things that were most important to the occupants of Reynolds Cottage.

As much as the front parlor served as a shrine to Spelman's supporters, it also served as a shrine to middle-class sensibilities and understandings of life. Objects such as the birch mahogany colonial styled rocking armchair may have also served as a shrine to a prior way of life. The armchair was an object designed in the Colonial Revival style of the early twentieth century. On a basic level, the Colonial Revival style hearkened back to the Revolutionary era in the United States. Objects of this style were symbolic expressions, to many whites, of the founding fathers and the republic that they created. Many historians associate the prominence of the Colonial Revival style in the early twentieth century to Americans disliking the changes taking place in the country brought by freed people (whom they assumed were all enslaved in the colonial era) and recent central European immigrants.<sup>22</sup>

The objects that Spelman administrators chose to decorate the parlor with speak to their middle-class identities and also reflect just how closely the occupants of Reynolds Cottage stayed within the boundaries dictated by society. Because the objects within the front parlor speak to the larger cultural values and behaviors of the time, the

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<sup>21</sup> Upton, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Andrew Denenberg, *Wallace Nutting and the Invention of Old America* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003), 5–6; William Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 35 (December 1976): 239–54.

objects then become a language communicating the proper décor of the home to all visitors, even Spelman students.

### **The Back Parlor**

Separated from the front parlor by a pocket door was the back parlor. The back parlor was a room exclusively for private use by the occupants of Reynolds Cottage. Because it was not a room with a public face and function, the objects within the room did not require the great attention to detail like those of the front parlor. Through this lens, the back parlor of Reynolds Cottage was a room where Spelman administrators could relax and practice hobbies free from the scrutiny and watchful eyes of Spelman benefactors, supporters, and students. The back parlor was such a wholly different room than the front parlor that the total value of the objects in the back parlor was \$314 less than the front parlor (Table 6).

Table 6. Back Parlor (Reynolds Cottage) Objects <sup>23</sup>	
Object	Value
1 24" Square Oak Table	8.00
1 Mahogany finish rocking chair, plush upholstered back and spring seat	18.00
2 walnut side chairs, plush upholstered back and spring seat	40.00
1 wood and bamboo rocking armchair	6.50
2 oak side chairs	12.00
1 Wheeler and Wilson drop head sewing machine	48.00
1 bamboo magazine rack	4.00
Pictures and Misc.	65.00
2 36" x 7' Cambric Cloth Shades	3.60
	205.10 Total Value

The objects in the Back Parlor of Reynolds Cottage reflect a private and utilitarian use. For example, the number of chairs in the Back Parlor does not indicate that this space hosted guests. Additionally, the Back Parlor is home to a Wheeler and Wilson Drop Head Sewing Machine (Figure 29). which is certainly not an object that would be on display in the front parlor because it implied production and work, not leisure and refinement.

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<sup>23</sup> The American Appraisal Company, *Appraisal Inventory of the Spelman Seminary Atlanta, GA. Volume No. 1*, 1:328.

Advertisements for Wheeler and Wilson Sewing Machines described them with such phrases as “no sewing machine on the market that more fully comes up to the requirements of the housekeeper,” “it has long been recognized as a boon to women,” and “to those who contemplate beginning housekeeping there is no piece of furniture more appropriate than the sewing machine and without which no home is completely furnished.”<sup>24</sup> Spelman administrators were training African American women to be housekeepers and domestics, not aspiring to be one themselves. There is no doubt that the sewing machine was an essential part of the home, but for the occupants of Reynolds Cottage, the sewing machine remained tucked in the private back parlor behind closed doors.

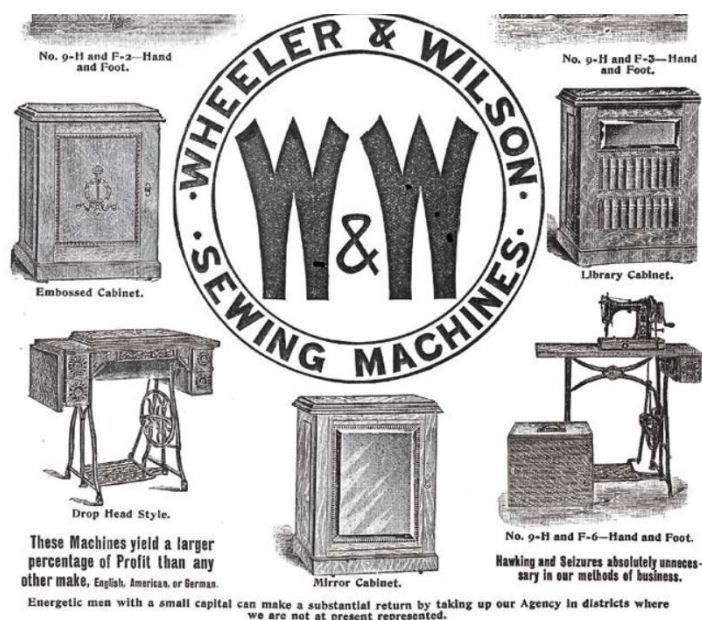


Fig. 29. 1904 Advertisement for Wheeler and Wilson Sewing Machines including the Drop Head Style Sewing Machine on the bottom left. (Photograph, Wheeler and Wilson Advertisement, International Sewing Machine Collectors Society, <http://ismacs.net/wheelerandwilson/wheeler-wilson-d9-advertisement.html>.)

<sup>24</sup> “The Light Runner,” *Atlanta Constitution*, January 20, 1901, 8; “Built for the 20th Century,” *Atlanta Constitution*, January 27, 1901, 7; “Essential to Comfort and Happiness,” *Atlanta Constitution*, April 3, 1901, 10.



Materially, the back parlor is an anomaly among the rooms on the first floor of Reynolds Cottage. While the back parlor does have a fireplace, it does not have a brass fireplace set like the front parlor or andirons like the fireplace in the library of the house. Moreover, the back parlor is the only room in the house that contained a magazine rack or a sewing machine. The contents of this room, unlike the public rooms on the first floor of Reynolds Cottage, would have held no social value. If visitors saw the back parlor, they would have had a markedly different impression of it than they would have of the rest of the house perhaps ruining the impression put forth by the objects in other rooms.

### **The Dining Room**

The Reynolds Cottage Dining Room was home to some of the most expensive objects in Reynolds Cottage speaking to its function as a public space. A 1974 article detailing the contents of the dining room stated,

The dining room was furnished by John D. Rockefeller Jr. in 1910. There is a handsome gold inlay mahogany table with 12 chairs each upholstered in striped velvet. A Hepplewhite sideboard is graced with a silver service and a pair of silver candelabra. Overhead is a large gold framed mirror and a matching hunt board. A corner fireplace near the south exposure of the room where a semi-alcove has two large windows with cream colored damask draperies offset with a red trim.<sup>25</sup>

The 1923 inventory lists the objects in the Reynolds Cottage Dining Room (Table 7).

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<sup>25</sup> Yolande Gwin, "Reynolds Cottage: Spelman President's Home Steeped in History," *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 27, 1974, 191.

Table 7. Dining Room (Reynolds Cottage) Objects <sup>26</sup>	
Object	Value
1 50" Oak Buffet with Mirror	70.00
1 36" Oak Server (server)	30.00
1 57" x 45" Oak Extension Dining Table	60.00
7 Oak Dining Chairs	42.00
2 Oak Host Chairs	17.00
2 Fern Stands	7.00
Pictures and Misc.	100.00
Table Linens	70.00
	396.00 Total Value

It is possible that the dining table listed in the 1923 inventory is the table given to Spelman by John D. Rockefeller Jr. He was a frequent visitor to both the Spelman campus and Reynolds Cottage. Also, beginning in the 1920s John D. Rockefeller Jr. became the benefactor of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and the building and restoration of Colonial Williamsburg would prove to be the era's most extensive Colonial Revival project. It is possible that the dining table was a gift given on the occasion of the start of Lucy Tapley's presidency. According to Mrs. Mary Jane Anderson Loftie, author of *The Dining Room*, a dining room table had to have two requisite features, steadiness

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<sup>26</sup> The American Appraisal Company, *Appraisal Inventory of the Spelman Seminary Atlanta, GA. Volume No. I*, 1:330.

and variation in size.<sup>27</sup> The Reynolds Cottage dining table had both as its medium of oak hardwood was considered sturdy, and it was able to extend.

The most expensive object in the Reynolds Cottage dining room was the 50” Oak Buffet with Mirror valued at \$70.00. Several historians describe buffets, known earlier as sideboards, as the most significant piece of furniture in Victorian-era dining rooms. Spelman administrators agreed as they acquired the Reynolds Cottage dining room suite in 1910.<sup>28</sup> Elaborate buffets were usually the single most expensive item purchased for a dining room and the Reynolds Cottage sideboard follows this trend.<sup>29</sup> The Reynolds Cottage dining room also held an oak server, which was a smaller version of the sideboard. The oak server worked to hold food between courses indicating that multi-course meals were served in the Reynolds Cottage dining room.

Having a dining set including a table, buffet, and oak server spoke to the order of domestic space prevalent in the late nineteenth century. Historian Susan Williams notes that furnishing the dining room was “a task of far-reaching social significance, since an entire complex of ideals and aspirations were made manifest within that room. The dining room - scene of one of the most important family rituals - was to be furnished in an appropriately inspiring manner, with visual cues to institutions or activities of noble and uplifting character.”<sup>30</sup> If the purpose of the dining room was to bring people together with

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<sup>27</sup> Mary Jane Anderson Loftie, *The Dining-Room* (New York, New York: Garland Publishing, 1878), 60–61; Susan Williams, *Savory Suppers And Fashionable Feasts: Dining Victorian America* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 61.

<sup>28</sup> Ames, *Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture*, 44; Williams, *Savory Suppers And Fashionable Feasts*, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Williams, *Savory Suppers And Fashionable Feasts*, 64.

<sup>30</sup> Williams, 59.

objects that gave them visual cues then the Reynolds Cottage dining room met its purpose. The Reynolds Cottage dining room also held a portrait of Mrs. Josephine Kemp, former Spelman teacher and hall matron. Kemp's portrait in the dining room was significant as a decorative art piece and a conversation starter. Kemp not only had a long career at Spelman, but she also purchased and gifted to Spelman the land on which they built Howard Hall.<sup>31</sup> Kemp's portrait reminded potential benefactors dining in Reynolds Cottage that if they too donated to Spelman they would be celebrated in a similar fashion.

The dining room ceremony did not end with furniture. Spelman administrators would have used the best china, glassware, and silverware available. The 1923 inventory indicates that \$160.00 worth of china and glassware and \$85.00 worth of silver were in the kitchen and pantry of Reynolds Cottage. Possibly included in that value is the silver tea service gifted to Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles by the Spelman Class of 1891.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, some of the silver in Reynolds Cottage may have been a gift from John D. Rockefeller Jr. Records indicate that he gifted dining objects for the teacher's dining hall in Morgan Hall as well. A 1914 article titled "Our Buildings" in the *Spelman Messenger* noted that Rockefeller Jr. donated the silver in the teacher's dining room. The article described the teacher's dining room as having four long tables covered in white linen and silver that sat a dozen each. Folding doors separated the teacher's dining hall from the student's dining hall. The article also notes that the student's dining hall had similar

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<sup>31</sup> Upton, "Our Portraits," 3.

<sup>32</sup> "Gift," *Spelman Messenger*, June 1891, 5, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library. For more see "Grand Bargain Opening Day at The Fair" *The Atlanta Constitution*, September 20, 1891. Atlanta, Georgia store The Fair advertised in the September 20, 1891 edition of *The Atlanta Constitution* triple-plated silver tea services for sale for 8.89 for a set of three pieces.

dining objects as the teacher's dining hall, but no silver donated by Rockefeller Jr.<sup>33</sup>

While the dining halls were similar, the silver in both Reynolds Cottage and the teacher's dining hall clearly used objects to set those dining spaces apart from student dining spaces.

In the order of spatial importance, the dining room was one of the most important rooms in Victorian-era homes signifying wealth and upward mobility. Consequently, industrial education courses in schools such as Spelman were obsessed with making sure that female students knew how to properly dress a table and serve dinner, Booker T. Washington once remarked: "It is discouraging to find a girl who can tell you the geographical location of any country on the globe and who does not know where to place the dishes upon a common dinner table."<sup>34</sup>

### **The Southwest Room - President Lucy Tapley's Bedroom**

The most important room of the second floor, a more private space overall than the first floor, was the bedroom of the college president. The appraisal inventory includes a listing for a room on the second floor called the Southwest Room. The Southwest Room was a bedroom as indicated by its contents (Table 8).

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<sup>33</sup> "Our Buildings," *Spelman Messenger*, February 1914, 2, Spelman College Messenger, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

<sup>34</sup> Booker T. Washington, "The Industrial Education for the Negro," in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today*, ed. Booker T. Washington (New York: James Pott & Co., 1903), 16.

Table 8. Southwest Room (Reynolds Cottage) Objects <sup>35</sup>	
Object	Value
One walnut bed, mattress, pillows, and bedding	40.00
One 44" walnut dresser	40.00
One walnut commode	20.00
One walnut writing desk	20.00
One oak wardrobe	30.00
One oak stand table	6.00
One cane rocking armchair	9.50
Two side chairs	7.00
Two cambric cloth shades	3.20
	175.70 Total Value

The walnut bed valued at \$40.00 is the only walnut bed and the most expensive bed in Reynolds Cottage. With the exception of an oak bed in the North Room on the third floor, all of the other beds in the house are iron beds. Several sources point to the walnut bedroom set as belonging to the third President of Spelman College Lucy Tapley. Sources also date the walnut bedroom set to 1880. A 1974 article titled “Reynolds Cottage: Spelman President’s Home Steeped in History” describes the bed as a

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<sup>35</sup> The American Appraisal Company, *Appraisal Inventory of the Spelman Seminary Atlanta, GA. Volume No. I*, 1:335–36.

beautifully carved double bed and describes the other pieces of the set as being walnut or walnut veneer (Figure 30). The article also dated the marble top table to circa 1860.<sup>36</sup>



Fig. 30. 1974 Image of Lucy Tapley's Walnut Bedroom Suite (Photograph, Lucy Tapley's Walnut Bedroom Suite, Atlanta Constitution, Atlanta, Georgia, October 24, 1974 edition)

President Tapley's bed commanded the space and set the tone of its primacy within the second floor. The Rocco-Revival bed's headboard had an impressive height, heavy carving, turned profile of the bed's legs, and the use of walnut as the primary

<sup>36</sup> Gwin, "Reynolds Cottage: Spelman President's Home Steeped in History," 190–91; Jill Sabulis, "At Home With... Spelman President Johnetta Cole's on-Campus Cottage Blends Family, College Heritage with Early-1900s Charm," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 18, 1996, 78.

medium. The use of walnut as a medium permitted the manufacturer to make the intricately carved designs which were popular during this period.<sup>37</sup>

Sources indicate that President Lucy Tapley's walnut bed was part of a six-piece bedroom suite.<sup>38</sup> Furniture catalogs from the period both feature beds in a similar style as President Lucy Tapley's walnut bed and illustrate how beds such as hers were sold in sets with coordinating pieces (Figure 31). An evaluation of the objects in President Tapley's bedroom in the 1923 inventory suggests that the walnut bed, 44" walnut dresser, walnut commode, and walnut writing desk may have been a set.

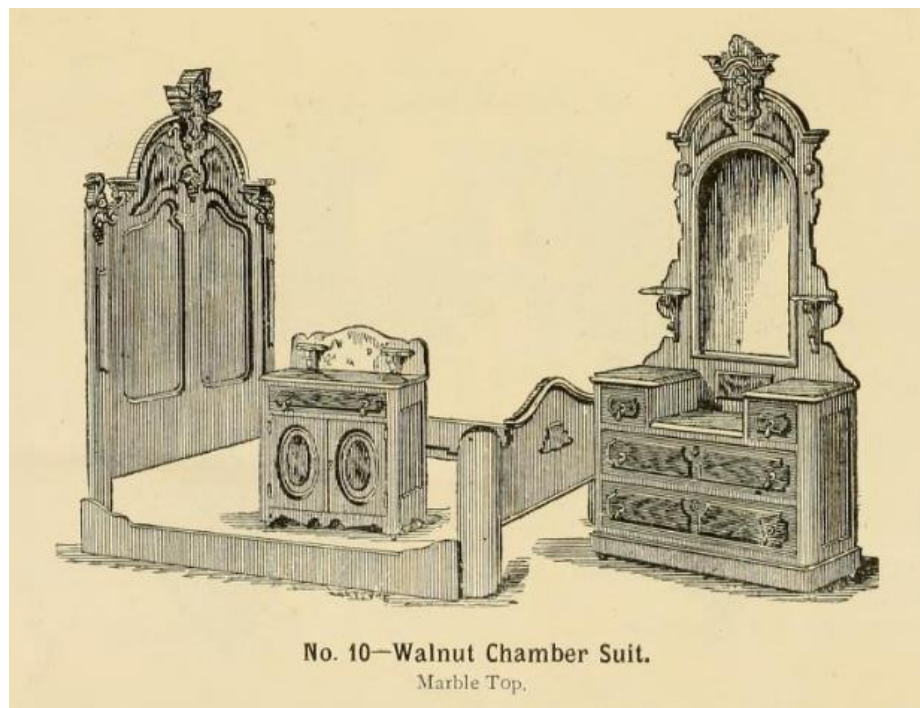


Fig.31. Walnut Chamber Suite featuring walnut bed, commode, and dresser sold by the Chas. Hollander and Sons Furniture Company. (Photograph, *Illustrated Catalogue of Chas. Hollander and Sons, Manufacturers and Wholesale Dealers in Furniture, Bedsteads, Chairs, Lounges*, Baltimore, Maryland, 1880)

<sup>37</sup> Antique Trader Staff, "Timeline and Descriptions of Antique Furniture Styles," *Antique Trader* (blog), February 18, 2009, [http://www.antiquetrader.com/antiques/a\\_primer\\_on\\_furniture\\_styles/](http://www.antiquetrader.com/antiques/a_primer_on_furniture_styles/).

<sup>38</sup> Gwin, "Reynolds Cottage: Spelman President's Home Steeped in History," 191.



Tapley's bed certainly was a status symbol among the other objects in Reynolds Cottage. A 1907 article titled "The Best School For Our Girls in Southern States" in the *New York Age*, an African American newspaper, described Reynolds Cottage as "the attractive home of our noble president." The article briefly mentioned that Dean Lucy Upton and secretary Mary J. Packard lived in the home with Tapley.<sup>39</sup> If both Lucy Upton and Mary J. Packard still lived in Reynolds Cottage during the 1923 inventory, they were sleeping on beds made of iron, steel, or oak.

Tapley's choice of bedroom furniture reflected her background. Lucy Hale Tapley was born May 18, 1857 in Brooksville, Maine to Captain Thomas Tapley and his wife Lucy Wasson Tapley.<sup>40</sup> Thomas was a prominent sea captain and by all appearances the family were well off financially and well known in their community.<sup>41</sup> As a child, Lucy Tapley attended Miss Lucy Henry's Private School in Brooksville, Maine and the Bucksport Seminary in Bucksport, Maine. Tapley's experiences at both of these schools no doubt informed how she approached education at Spelman continuing the New England Puritan tradition started by Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles.

Tapley was known for being a strict educator who used the industrial education philosophies of men such as Booker T. Washington and John F. Slater to guide the

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<sup>39</sup> "The Best School For Our Girls in Southern States," *The New York Age*, March 7, 1907, Vol. XX. No. 13, edition, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Harriet Silvester Tapley, *Genealogy of the Tapley Family* (Danvers, Massachusetts: Endecott Press, 1900), 38.

<sup>41</sup> "1870 United States Federal Census - Ancestry.Com - Lucy Tapley," Ancestry.com, accessed November 19, 2018, [https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db=7163&h=27148959&indiv=try&o\\_vc=Record:OtherRecord&rhSource=7667](https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db=7163&h=27148959&indiv=try&o_vc=Record:OtherRecord&rhSource=7667). The 1870 US Census for Brooksville, Maine indicates that the Thomas Tapley had real estate valued at \$4000 and a personal estate valued at \$1500 or about \$75000 and \$30000 in today's dollars.

educational program at Spelman. Additionally, she was a die-hard segregationist. John Hope Franklin, President of Morehouse College, recalled that although both institutions shared governing bodies and some facilities he and Tapley had hardly interacted. Franklin observed that “Tapley had insisted on maintaining a code of southern etiquette that made it difficult for a real friendship to develop between a black man and a white woman.” Franklin later thanked Tapley’s successor, Spelman President Florence Read, for defying prejudice in her interactions with him and even proclaimed that because of Read’s actions and her refusal to follow old south traditions that “a new chapter had been written in the history of Spelman College.”<sup>42</sup>

When Lucy Tapley assumed the presidency of Spelman Seminary in 1910 African Americans in the South were in the midst of the nadir of African American life fighting to justify their citizenship as well as fighting for their lives. By 1910, Tapley had been employed at Spelman and thus living in the south for twenty years. Tapley’s prior experiences with African Americans before moving to Atlanta and working at Spelman Seminary were very rare. In 1880, Tapley was a twenty-two year old school teacher living at home with her parents in Brooksville, Maine. In 1880 only two African Americans were living in Brooksville, Maine and both were men employed in the sailing industry. Given the stature of the Tapley family in Brooksville, Lucy Tapley would have had no contact with these men.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Leroy Davis, *A Clashing of the Soul: John Hope and the Dilemma of African American Leadership and Black Higher Education in the Early Twentieth Century* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 302.

<sup>43</sup> “1880 United States Federal Census - Ancestry.Com - Census Place: Brooksville, Hancock, Maine; Roll: 480; Enumeration District: 147,” Ancestry.com, accessed November 27, 2018, <https://search.ancestry.com/cgi->

When Tapley entered Atlanta, Georgia in 1890 and began her work as an English and arithmetic teacher, it is fair to say that she had no prior experience in living and working amongst African American women. Tapley's understandings of African Americans more than likely followed suit with stereotypical notions of African American inferiority. When entering Atlanta, Tapley would have found it easy to assimilate into Southern white culture, and this likely assimilation contributed to her attitude and behavior towards Spelman students.

Scholars Yolanda Watson and Sheila Gregory concluded that the biggest change to the dress code at Spelman was the arrival and later presidency of Lucy Hale Tapley. Watson and Gregory also argued that it is probable that Tapley's strict dress code requirements were a result of the changes in women's attire by 1910 and through the 1920s as women's clothing became more liberal with the emergence of the flapper.<sup>44</sup> The dress code also reflected white assumptions about the submission of African Americans during Jim Crow.

Morehouse President John Hope Franklin's interactions with Tapley exemplify how Tapley was unwilling to cross racialized boundaries. Tapley was keen to keep African Americans of both sexes in their place. Her rules on the dress code and behavior of Spelman students came less from a place of their well being and more from a place of Tapley never wanting the students to forget their race and class. In 1910, Tapley's first

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essSource. The two African American men listed are William Higgins employed as a fisherman and born in South America and Robert Roper a sailor from Wisconsin. Interestingly, Robert Roper is listed as married to a white woman and living in a household with white children.

<sup>44</sup> Watson and Gregory, *Daring to Educate*, 95.

full year as the President of Spelman Seminary, the dress code required that “Clothing must be sensible, neat, and simple. Expensive and showy dress and jewelry are out of place and in bad tastes for school girls.”<sup>45</sup>

By 1920, ten years into Tapley’s presidency, the dress code for women at Spelman was much more defined and strict. For example, two pages of the *Fortieth Annual Circular of Spelman Seminary for Women and Girls in Atlanta, Georgia For the Academic Year 1920 - 1921* were dedicated specifically to the dress of students. Tapley began the “Requirements Concerning Students’ Clothing” section by first addressing the student’s parents. Tapley insisted:

We respectfully call the attention of parents and guardians to the following requirements, *which we shall rigidly enforce*, regarding the clothing of our students during the coming year. The growing tendency toward extravagance and lack of good judgment in the matter of dress is deplorable. We earnestly solicit your co-operation in our efforts to create and develop a taste for simple, suitable, and healthful clothing.<sup>46</sup>

Tapley then listed several clothing requirements specifically on jewelry and adornment: “While girls are young they should learn that much jewelry, cheap jewelry, clothing that is injurious to health, and showy and immodest styles and materials will be carefully avoided by the cultured and virtuous.”<sup>47</sup> Tapley next addressed requirements for student dress on special school days: “For evening, Founders’ Day, Class Day, and chorus wear a white wash dress simply made and simply trimmed and appropriate to the

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<sup>45</sup> *Thirtieth Annual Circular of Spelman Seminary for Women and Girls in Atlanta, GA. For the Academic Year 1910 - 1911* (Atlanta, Georgia: Spelman Messenger Office, 1911), 14.

<sup>46</sup> Spelman Seminary, *Fortieth Annual Circular of Spelman Seminary for Women and Girls in Atlanta, Georgia for the Academic Year 1920 - 1921*, 31.

<sup>47</sup> Spelman Seminary, 31.

season is in good taste. Girls are not to have *new* dresses when those they bring from home are suitable.”<sup>48</sup>

In 1922, Spelman student Mamie Seaton Clark discovered the hard way that Tapley meant for every student to follow the rules. On May 31, 1922, Dean Brill wrote a letter to Mamie’s parents regarding an incident on campus.

Dear Mrs. Seaton: - I do not feel that it is really necessary for me to add anything to the talk we had on Class Day relative to Mamie’s wearing the wrong shoes and stockings...She was expected to walk in with her class that day and to be in the escort march on campus. Any girl who had the right school and class spirit would have wanted to be with her class on that particular day. I am hoping that Mamie will awake to the reasonableness of our trying to make this a school safe for democracy, and will co-operate to make it a place where all girls can come and get a fine education without being unhappy about clothes, or embarrassed by seeing others dressed so much more expensively. One of the real dangers of this day is the love for extravagant clothes. Most young people cannot honestly have them, and so we are trying to cultivate in the students of Spelman Seminary the appreciation of what is really worth while, the things that they can adorn mind and character with. Those are to be placed above the dress...Please show Mamie that she should be placing the greater emphasis on loyalty to her school and to the development of her finest self. Very yours truly, Dean<sup>49</sup>

Mamie’s mother Mrs. Amelia Seaton wrote back to the dean regarding her letter.

Dear Miss Brill: - I received your letter this morning. I am very glad that it did not affect Mamie in her studies any way. I did not feel any way bad about you not letting Mamie go to Chapel but I felt bad about Mamie having on the wrong shoes and stockings. I am very much in favor of your dress in clothes and foot wear. I will see hereafter that she abides by the rules. I hope that there will never be any more trouble on her part. Very yours truly, Amelia Seaton<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Spelman Seminary, 32.

<sup>49</sup> Edna Lamson, “Letter from Dean Edith Brill to Mrs. Amelia Seaton,” May 31, 1922, Deceased Alumnae Files 4) Campbell - Crawl, Spelman College Archives.

<sup>50</sup> Amelia Seaton, “Letter from Mrs. Amelia Seaton to Dean,” June 3, 1922, Deceased Alumnae Files 4) Campbell - Crawl, Spelman College Archives.

According to the Spelman Seminary catalog, Mamie should have worn strong black cotton stockings, and an Oxford styled shoe with a sensible heel and lacing of only four or five eyelets. The catalog made it known that “we shall not expect fancy shoes or any variety.”<sup>51</sup> Mamie’s decision to wear clothing outside of the dress code exemplifies how Spelman students resisted President Tapley’s rules. Not only were Mamie’s shoes and stockings a violation of the dress code, but she also brought these items onto campus into her dormitory room, which was again violating another rule as all items in dormitory rooms had to meet the approval of the hall matron.<sup>52</sup> In short, Tapley as a white woman could have an expensive walnut bedroom suite, but her students African American women could not wear expensive clothing or fancy jewelry.

By controlling the dress, behavior, and appearance of African American women on the Spelman Seminary campus, Tapley was ensuring that they would always appear as domestics and not as African American professional women. Tapley was also just as concerned that those students of fairer complexions would remain racially identifiable. Historian Grace Elizabeth Hale emphasizes that systemized racial systems such as segregated waiting rooms and railcars and in the case of Spelman, dress codes, worked to ensure that African American women were always racially identifiable.<sup>53</sup>

Tapley’s insistence on plain and simple objects for students directly contrasts with the materiality of Reynolds Cottage. While some of the objects in Reynolds Cottage in

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<sup>51</sup> Spelman Seminary, *Fortieth Annual Circular of Spelman Seminary for Women and Girls in Atlanta, Georgia for the Academic Year 1920 - 1921*, 32.

<sup>52</sup> Spelman Seminary, 31. Spelman students were advised that when moving into campus dormitories that they had to label all items they owned and allow hall matrons to examine their trunks.

<sup>53</sup> Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1999), 130.

1923 more than likely were there before Tapley's tenure as President, she still saw no reason to rid the home of its extravagance and fill the home with simple objects speaking to her character as a consumer. Tapley's character as a consumer using objects to uphold racial boundaries directly ties into her character as an educator.

As both an educator and a consumer, Tapley chose to align herself with philanthropies such as the General Education Board (GEB) effectively exchanging the educational well-being of her students, the objects, for money provided by the GEB. The General Education Board was education philanthropy with roots in industrial education. Robert Ogden, a businessman with an interest in education and a member of the Board of Trustees for Hampton Institute, an HBCU in Virginia, approached John D. Rockefeller Jr. after the Fourth Conference for Education in the South in 1901 and invited him to tour Hampton Institute and Tuskegee Institute, both known for their strict adherence to industrial education. Rockefeller Jr., impressed with what he saw during the tour, approached his father for financial contributions to the HBCUs. John D. Rockefeller Sr. responded by creating the General Education Board in 1902 and funding its endowment to the amount of \$1 million.<sup>54</sup> Soon the General Education Board came to hold "virtual monopolistic control of educational philanthropy for the South and the negro."<sup>55</sup> The GEB used its power and influence to persuade cash strapped African American colleges to implement its chosen education programs in exchange for funding.

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<sup>54</sup> Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, 86.

<sup>55</sup> Anderson, 86; Louis R. Harlan, *Separate and Unequal*, 2nd edition (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 84, 89.

Tapley's loyalty to the GEB was more than likely related to the fact that the Rockefeller Family, Spelman's largest benefactors, owned and controlled the GEB. The GEB encouraged Spelman's use of industrial education which placed a ceiling on students ending their potential to do more and limiting their choices due to racism. When Edith Brill, Dean of Spelman under the leadership of Tapley, inquired to the GEB about the relevance of Spelman's home economics course, Jackson Davis with the GEB responded,

...Of course some of our friends do not believe in industrial work and others take it as a necessary evil...Spelman graduates are making good as Home Economics teachers in our county training schools, and as county supervising industrial teachers. I only wish we had more of them...I see no reason why the Home Economic course should not be recognized as of equal value with the other courses.<sup>56</sup>

In exchange for Spelman accepting what the GEB viewed as the proper education for African Americans, the board provided funding for both a chapel and a science building.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, the addition of a Science Building to the campus of Spelman meant that Spelman students no longer had to use the Science Building at Morehouse College. Tapley thus had another reason to avoid Morehouse President John Hope Franklin, and her students interaction with Morehouse students, all men, was stunted as well.

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<sup>56</sup> Jackson Davis, "Letter to Dean Edith Brill from Jackson Davis General Education Board," April 27, 1921, Lucy Hale Tapley Presidential Collection, Box 1, Folder 44, Spelman College Archives; Watson and Gregory, *Daring to Educate*, 88–89.

<sup>57</sup> Watson and Gregory, *Daring to Educate*, 91. For more see *The Spelman Messenger* November 1911. In an article titled "Our Working Needs" written by President Tapley she comments on the relationship between Spelman and the GEB stating "The support given given to the school by the General Education Board is a high endorsement of the work at Spelman...The General Education Board has made its usual appropriation of \$12,000, and has again generously offered to help us by an extra appropriation of \$3000."



Tapley's purchase and use of such an expensive bedroom suite reflected her background; the objects also reflected her desire to set herself apart from both those she worked with and those students she oversaw and controlled. Living in Reynolds Cottage and sleeping in the walnut bed were signifiers that Tapley was in charge.

Following racial standards of the time and the precedent set by white northern missionaries entering the south, Tapley through her role at Spelman was brought together with a group of people, African American women, she would have had no interaction with in her hometown of Brooksville, Maine. On the campus of Spelman, white women were vastly outnumbered, but Tapley was able to restore racial order and superiority through the objects within Reynolds Cottage. In 1923 when the inventory was taken, Reynolds Cottage represented a house that those students could never live in and the position of President of Spelman that they could never attain. Through her industrial education mandate and her strict rules regarding dress and behavior she ensured that her students would always be identified as inferior African Americans, just as her walnut bed and living in Reynolds Cottage identify her as in charge.

## **Conclusion**

The spaced and objects of Reynolds Cottage exemplified the traits of cleanliness, order, and decorum that stereotypes of the period claimed African American homes lacked. However, while Reynolds Cottage acted as a model home, it was only a model home for white women. The materiality of the home clearly stated to the African American students of Spelman that they should place limits on their aspirations. That its

expensive objects and portraits were something that they would never attain as their curriculum trained them to only be teachers, missionaries, or domestics not college administrators or presidents.

Until the 1929 construction of Sister's Chapel visitors approaching the Spelman campus would see Reynolds Cottage first. In its position, Reynolds Cottage provided visitors with their first impression of the campus by firmly tugging on their Colonial Revival heartstrings reminding them of days past. Furthermore, the floorplan of Reynolds Cottage spoke to turn-of-the-century sensibilities of refinement, decorum, and order allowing Spelman administrators to communicate through architecture messages about the proper way to live.

The objects within the cottage powerfully conveyed white privilege, demonstrating why someone like Tapley was in charge as they reminded Spelman students of a world they could see but never obtain for themselves.

## CONCLUSION

“Spelman College, my church, and my family are the dearest things on earth.”

- Victoria Maddox Simmons<sup>1</sup>

In 1924, Spelman Seminary received its collegiate charter and officially became Spelman College. 1924 marked the culmination of an effort that first began in the spring of 1881 in the basement of Friendship Baptist Church when Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles set out to start an institution for the Christian instruction of African American women and girls. In preparation for the seminary’s transition to a college, Spelman administrators had every object on campus appraised and assigned a value. It is this inventory that both inspired and formed the basis of this study.

In many instances, objects can speak louder than words. Objects have the ability to give vocality to the voiceless and to shed light on the lived experiences of those who left behind no written records. In the case of Spelman, the objects listed in the 1923 appraisal inventory combined with letters, photographs, and copies of the *Spelman Messenger*, illustrate just how significant the objects on Spelman’s campus were to the educational curriculum, the experiences and growth of students, and the lives of Spelman’s teachers and administrators. Through the objects at Spelman we are able to see another aspect of the HBCU story that does not just focus on important dates and people. Rather it is one that focuses on how students were able to live, learn, and cope with an

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<sup>1</sup> Guy-Sheftall and Stewart, *SPELMAN*, 97.

educational environment founded by white northern missionaries who only understood the true experiences of southern African American women in very limited ways.

When the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary opened in the basement of Friendship Baptist Church, it was evident to Packard and Giles that they needed to do whatever it took to get out of that space as it was not conducive to their aspirations. That basement, often described as dreary and damp, was not the environment that they wanted for themselves or their students and it certainly was not an environment equitable to the northern schools where they had previously taught. The experience of moving from the basement to the former Union Army base of McPherson Barracks was indicative of not only the drive of Packard and Giles, but the drive of their students as they required students to help raise the funds for the purchase of a new building.

As exemplified by the Spelman story, architecture and landscape have the ability to both solicit and control behaviors. Upon the move to the army barracks site, Packard and Giles chose the officers' quarters, the most architecturally significant barracks building as their home. This practice of using objects to convey power and control would continue through their lifetime and beyond, following the example set forth by colleges before them, as Spelman administrators used objects to set themselves apart from their students. But more than just separating themselves from their students, Spelman administrators were setting themselves apart from the African American communities they sought to serve.

From the beginning, architecture played an important part in the development of Spelman College. A brief encounter with John D. Rockefeller led to the construction of

Rockefeller Hall in 1886. With the opening of Rockefeller Hall, Spelman's first brick building, the college received a sense of permanence on the landscape. Most importantly, Rockefeller would become Spelman's most significant benefactor. In fact, the Rockefeller family would influence the building program at Spelman for decades to come with the construction of six buildings (Rockefeller Hall, Bessie Rockefeller Strong Hall, Laura Spelman Rockefeller Hall, Sisters Chapel, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Hall, and the John D. Rockefeller Fine Arts Building) named for the Rockefeller family.

Spelman's relationship with John D. Rockefeller was just one of the many philanthropic relationships with which Spelman engaged over the years. Relationships with the Slater Fund and the General Education Board influenced the materiality of college. In fact, the Slater Fund's first gift of a printing press and its fittings produced several objects including the *Spelman Messenger*, Spelman catalogs, and other notecards and programs. But most importantly, the gift of the printing press despite the Slater Fund's racist and paternalistic declarations, produced a class of African American writers, typesetters, and printers who worked in African American newspapers offices across the south.

Even with the great amount of money and objects Spelman received, which placed its materiality on a higher aesthetic than other contemporary African American colleges, Spelman's administrators including Packard and Giles, the American Baptist Home Mission Society, and the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society knew that they needed to continue to collect both funding and objects. Spelman's administrators aggressively pursued donors. Packard and Giles instituted a savvy and

shrewd fundraising program that President Lucy Tapley followed throughout her presidency. Often, in the written histories of Spelman, northern whites receive a great deal of credit for their donations to Spelman which is well deserved, however, African Americans contributed a great deal to support the school. During the construction of Rockefeller Hall African Americans not only donated money, but those without money donated their services to aid in construction. African American Baptist Churches such as Friendship Baptist Church and Wheat Street Baptist Church both gave freely to Spelman. Additionally, African American communities such as the one in Bailey's Mill, Georgia gave what they could with donations ranging from one cent to \$1.70. African Americans knew they had to support the education of their people. African Americans were not simply waiting on the generosity of Spelman administrators and New England donors, but they were actively working to educate and better themselves.

Within the world that Packard, Giles, and Tapley made from donations from philanthropies, white New England donors, and African American donors was a world that students made for themselves. In order to make this world, students operated within the confines that Spelman set for them, but they also exercised their agency and autonomy by choosing to assert their African American culture and femininity.

Whether they were cognizant of it or not, Spelman students and their objects would directly contribute to the oft-described Spelman woman and her identification on the landscape of Atlanta. Students would often remark that others could identify them as Spelman women merely by what they were wearing. By the 1950s and 1960s, Spelman

women were easily identifiable through objects such as their white gloves, stockings, and purses that they were required to wear when they left campus.

Historic African American colleges and universities are unique spaces with objects and architecture that tell powerful stories. Here on these campuses the forces of Jim Crow, identity, whiteness, and African American culture engaged daily in a battle for the betterment of students. Students may not have known of this battle, but the few letters and objects they left behind remind us that despite the storied and respectable histories written about these institutions, that there was always more occurring that we could not see. Therefore, the study of historically black college and university objects adds to these stories, complicates some of them, and betters our understanding.

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