



On College Walk

GORDON WU HALL, BUTLER COLLEGE, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Architects: Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, Inc.

Location: Princeton, NJ

Client: Princeton University

Area: 29,900 gsf

Construction Cost: \$3,143,000

Completion: 1983

Gordon Wu Hall is the centerpiece of Butler College, a new undergraduate residential college at Princeton University. The firm faced the challenge of creating a new building that would provide an identity for the new college, serve as a focal point for its social life and also give a sense of cohesiveness with other Butler College facilities in two existing buildings of disparate styles. The site is irregular, sloping and narrow. Further constraints included the proximity of the other buildings and the need for the new hall to share an existing kitchen with adjacent Wilson College.

The building's design takes important cues from adjacent structures but also promotes an identity of its own. Its long shape and central position make Wu Hall a visual hyphen that connects the dormitories and unites them. Brick walls, limestone trim and strip windows adhere to the traditional Gothic architecture of Princeton. The main entrance, set off-center and broadside in the building, is marked by a bold marble and gray granite panel recalling early Renaissance ornament and symbolizing the entrance to the College as a whole as well as to the building itself.

Inside, the long dining room recalls the English Gothic halls traditional to Princeton. Two-story bay windows at each end of the building create a spaciousness and scale typical of historical prototypes, and admit lots of cheerful light. Furnishings chosen by the architects create intimate detail and promote comfort. To the left of the lobby, a stair rises by a bay window to a lounge. From the lounge, a hall leads past offices to a library–study area. The lounge and the library each include one of the large bay windows, visually expanding their relatively small spaces.

Both inside and outside spaces have been designed to provide opportunities for informal and spontaneous interaction among students. The stairway itself serves several purposes. The first flight extends to one side to form bleacher-like risers suitable for sitting. The extension suggests a grand stair sweeping upward, and serves informally as a spontaneous waiting and gathering place. On special occasions it becomes an indoor amphitheater. The building is fully accessible to the handicapped.



Entry



Front



Entry



Rear



A walk parallel to Wu Hall modulates the slopes of the north-south axis with a series of steps, ramps, retaining walls and small courts. These resultant outside spaces also serve as gathering areas with some opportunities for seating. At the south end of the building VSBA designed a small piazza for the junction of College Walk, a major campus pedestrian thoroughfare, and Butler College Walk. Here College Walk widens to accommodate access to new dormitories and to hold the Butler Memorial that identifies and unites the three disparate buildings that form Butler College. This arrangement in conjunction with the siting of Wu Hall has given identity to the western end of College Walk.

Awards:

Louis I. Kahn Citation, *American School and University*, 1984.

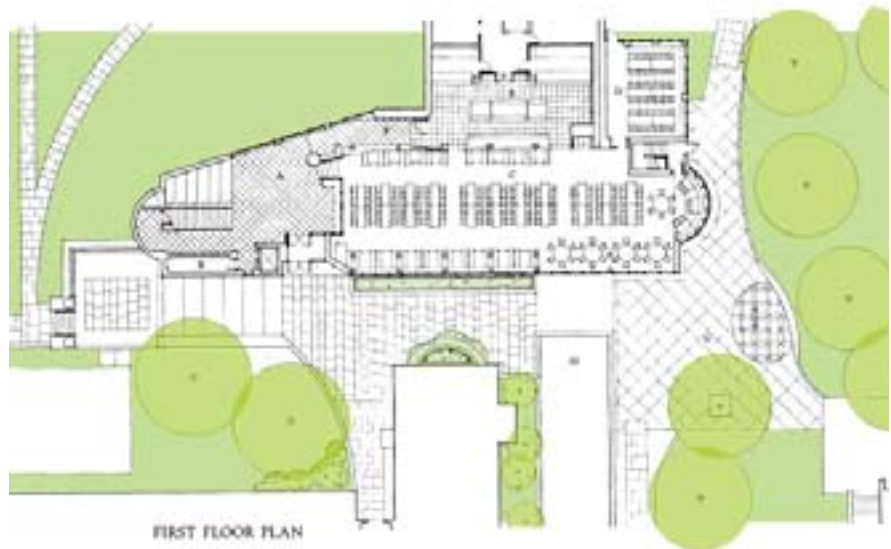
Gold Medal, Philadelphia Chapter AIA, 1984.

National Honor Award, American Institute of Architects, 1984.

Honorable Mention, Masonry Awards Program, New Jersey State Conference of Bricklayers and Allied Craftsmen and the Building Contractors Association of New Jersey, 1984.

Award, *Interiors Magazine*, 1983.

Merit Award, Pennsylvania Society of Architects, 1983.





Stair



Dining Room



Dining Room