

Virginia Magazine

OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

VOL. 116 • NO. 1



PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2008

sophistication of black public schools was to limit the training available to black teachers. Fairclough cites the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute as an example. VNCI trained 222 teachers and granted forty-nine degrees between 1886 and 1900. After 1900 the governor ousted its black Republican president and reduced funding. The commonwealth removed all collegiate courses from the curriculum and changed the name of the school to the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute. It became the equivalent of a three-year high school. By the 1930s, however, the historically black colleges had either regained collegiate status or introduced college courses.

Not all critics of black teachers were white. No one was more outspoken in his criticism than Carter G. Woodson, the so-called Father of Black History. Woodson disliked black teachers' focus on white middle class morality, something that he regarded as the legacy of white missionary teachers during Reconstruction. Fairclough notes that many of Woodson's criticisms were ironic. "Accusing the white missionaries and their black protégés of disdaining the folk culture of the masses, Woodson himself looked askance at the behavior of many lower-class blacks" (p. 21). Much later, black teachers often enjoyed both praise and disdain from civil rights activists. The teachers had done much to inspire their students to activism, but they risked losing their jobs if they joined the NAACP or participated in demonstrations.

Students and scholars who have an interest in southern history or African American history have much to learn from Fairclough's study. Famous villains like James K. Vardaman and Ben Tillman appear on these pages along with the names of hardworking, dedicated teachers whose names are not well-known. Fairclough never sugar-coats black teachers. Some were snobs, and others spied on NAACP meetings for white superintendents in order to enhance their own salaries or to gain more secure positions. Fairclough also demonstrates the equality gap between black and white public schools and carefully explains the mean-spirited racial politics that characterized the South before the civil rights movement. This is one of the finest books this reviewer has read in many years.



The Architecture of William Lawrence Bottomley • Susan Hume Frazer • New York: Acanthus Press, 2007 • 350 pp. • \$85.00

Reviewed by Bruce J. Wentworth, AIA, president of Wentworth, Inc., located in Chevy Chase, Maryland. He has published numerous articles on residential design and remodeling.

There were only a handful of memorable American architects who practiced tradi-



tional residential architecture during the 1920s and 1930s. Although William Lawrence Bottomley was not a star-architect among the contemporary architects of his time, such as Frank Lloyd Wright, he was a remarkably skilled traditionalist. As such, Bottomley was one of the finest talents of his era. Sharing the stage with fellow architects Mott B. Schmidt, John Calvin Stevens, William Adams Delano, among others, Bottomley's breadth of talent elevated him among his peers.

Susan Hume Frazer is to be commended for her thoughtful and extensive research into Bottomley's life and work. The traditionalists of American architecture, such as Bottomley, are often overlooked and underappreciated. His skillful detailing and ability to create beautiful buildings is wonderfully illustrated in Frazer's sumptuous book.

The author provides an in-depth view of how Bottomley's personal and professional lives intertwined. Born to a wealthy family, he did not squander his opportunities. He was well-educated, attending Columbia University and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Like many of his peers, he traveled throughout Europe to study architecture. Using his social connections, he was able to build a successful career with prominent clients.

Within the realm of residential design, Bottomley's work provided a sophisticated range in both scale and style. His projects ranged from the smallest, such as the Davis family mausoleum, to a large country home called Redesdale in Henrico County. His design skills allowed him to work in a range of styles from Georgian, Colonial, and Mediterranean to Art Deco—all beautifully and thoughtfully executed.

Sadly, many of the book's photos are faded, obscuring Bottomley's beautiful architectural details. Frazer wisely included floorplans to supplement the photos. The pairing of photos and floorplans will be appreciated by architectural enthusiasts interested in studying Bottomley's creative and very American design solutions.

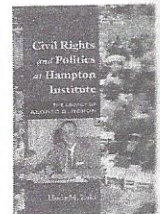
One standout project illustrates Bottomley's exceptional design skills. It is the "One-Man House" in New York City, designed for Benjamin Wood in 1925. A narrow thirteen-foot-wide row house was remodeled into a spectacularly grand space that expanded it vertically with a two-story living room. "Modeled after the great hall of an Italian villa, the living room was 12 feet wide and almost 100 feet in length" (p. 133). Frazer also describes Bottomley's clever use of false perspective in the home's garden design to fool the viewer: "Columns and capitals were gradually reduced in size toward the terminus, a diminutive fountain" (p. 134).

Later in life, Bottomley designed several apartment buildings. One was River House in New York City. In 1930, he moved his family into a custom-designed apartment there, which Frazer includes in her book. She weaves in background information about the friendship of Bottomley's daughter with Eileen Loo, whose subsequent wedding to architect I. M. Pei took place at the Bottomley apartment. Architects often take design risks with their personal residences, and Bottomley's Art-Deco eclec-

tic design illustrated a client. One in brass and aluminum.

Bottomley's skillfully illustrated the much by studying.

The Architect life, design projects, ated when talent meets



In *Civil Rights and Politics at Hampton Institute*, author Hoda M. Zaki reveals the quiet history-making and happy story of victory and interests conflict.

We all recognize education. Its students working with their his institution for a

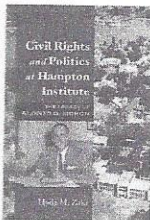
Zaki reveals a real offer leadership in the South. We learn that historically dominant cy, he envisioned

Zaki provides a and socio-political but not extraordinary recognized boundaries

tic design illustrates this. He indulged in whimsical details that might not have suited a client. One such must-see detail is "the stair rail with stylized horse figures cast in brass and alternating with wavy and straight uprights" (p. 243).

Bottomley's skill with classical architecture and the Orders of Architecture is clearly illustrated throughout his work. The current generation of architects can learn much by studying Bottomley's work for traditional detailing and proportions.

The Architecture of William Lawrence Bottomley synthesizes the architect's personal life, design projects, and clients. It illustrates how great residential architecture is created when talent meets opportunity.



Civil Rights and Politics at Hampton Institute: The Legacy of Alonzo G. Moron • Hoda M. Zaki • Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2007 • xvi, 190 pp. • \$35.00

Reviewed by William H. Watkins, professor at the College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago. Most recently he was editor and contributor to the book *Black Protest Thought and Education* (2005).

In *Civil Rights and Politics at Hampton Institute: The Legacy of Alonzo G. Moron*, author Hoda M. Zaki presents a study of a savvy leader operating in changing times. Alonzo Moron, the first black president of Hampton Institute, was one of the many quiet history-makers mostly unknown in America's bumpy racial ride. This is not a happy story of victory over adversity but rather a study of the real world where wills and interests conflict, and the good guys do not always ride off in triumph.

We all recognize Hampton as the historical nest of accommodationist politics and education. Its students were trained toward the pious acceptance of obedience and working with their hands. Nurtured in those old ways, Moron readied himself and his institution for a new day.

Zaki reveals a rock-solid man, of Caribbean stock, well-trained and well-suited to offer leadership in the dramatically changing environment of the post-World War II South. We learn that Moron was a fierce opponent of the segregation and injustice historically dominating the region. Using the tools and ideology of liberal democracy, he envisioned Hampton in a new South.

Zaki provides a penetrating examination of his subject's philosophical, religious, and socio-political views. One finds Moron stable, smart but not seminal, talented but not extraordinary, and brave but contained. Moron, above all, was a person who recognized boundaries. We can locate him as a charter member of the Talented Tenth.