

COLLEGIATE GOTHIC

It warrants a mention that ‘Gothic’ changed with time. Several of its features emerged in the 12th and 13th centuries as a solution to the engineering problem of achieving taller architectural heights. It was revived in the 17th century and in the 18th century it evolved as Victorians emulating it were combining it with other styles. Serving a specific function, the initial Gothic Revival style flourished in the US from 1830 to 1890. Its impressive and mediievally-inspired form suited the character of churches and institutional buildings. Collegiate Gothic, dating back to 1829 and flourishing in the early 20th century, was established as the movement that shaped many educational institutions across the US.

WHY GOTHIC? - TRANSATLANTIC ENVY

It followed Victorian Gothic but within certain parameters, determined by what its creators aspired to emulate; the glory of Oxford and Cambridge. The design and materials used for the exterior of the buildings, although somewhat pared down, still displayed a sense of authority and permanence and were scholastic in inspiration and effect. If there is one determining factor in why Gothic, it ought to be that Oxford and Cambridge were built in that style.

WHY THEN? - INDUSTRIALISM & MONEY

Educational institutions in the US did not have the money such elaborate constructions required. Campuses were built in stages, a building at a time and often in the preferred style of the donor; there was not enough money to complete a quadrangle. All that changed when in 1890s - 1920s industrialists began supporting American higher education. In Chicago, Rockefeller donated \$35 million in a decade (over \$1 billion in 2022 value).

HISTORIC PRECEDENTS



BUILDINGS



“Old Kenyon” at Kenyon College, Ohio - 1829



“Old Main” at Knox College, Illinois - 1857



“Pembroke Hall” at Bryn Mawr College - 1894

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

- Horizontal composition except towers
- Gothic pointed arch
- Brick exteriors highlighted by panels

- Crenelated parapets
- Tracery
- Flèche

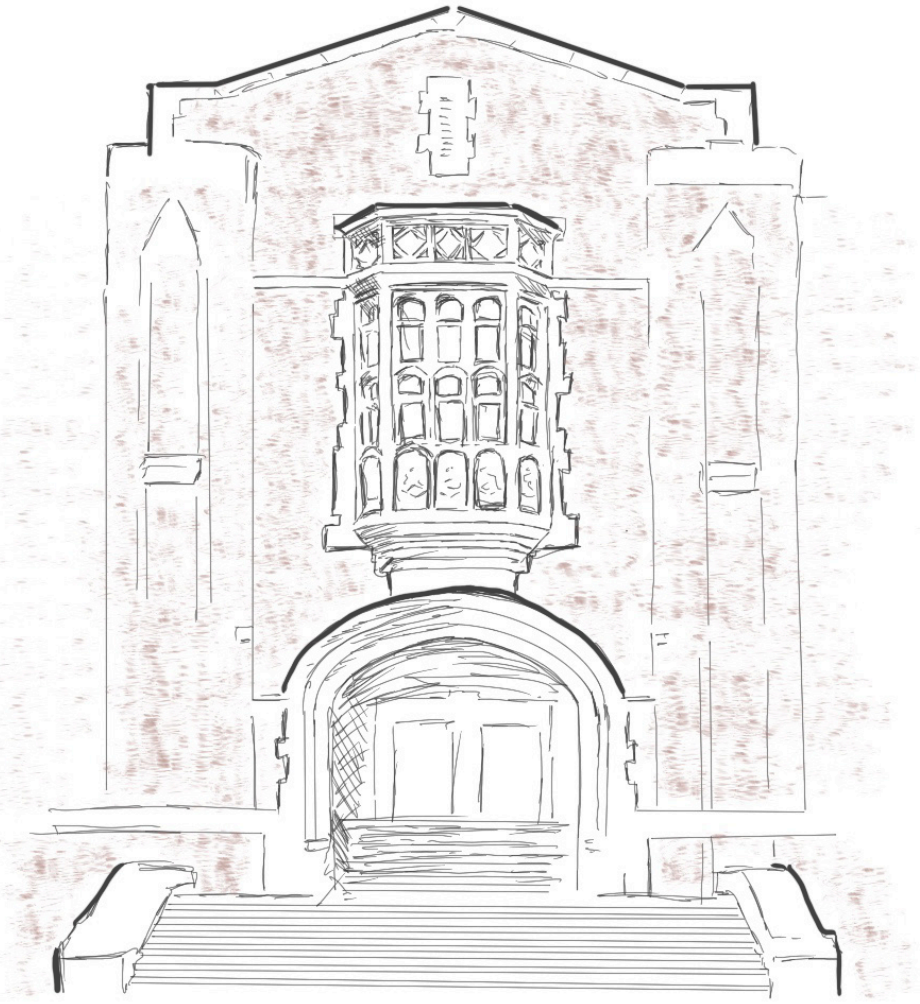
- Horizontal composition
- Rectangular in plan
- Exteriors highlighted by panels

A PLACE OF TRADITIONS OR CONTRADICTIONS?

Florida State University acknowledges that its Florida campuses are located on the ancestral and traditional homelands of the Seminole Tribe of Florida and other Indigenous peoples.

The school’s athletic teams are called the Seminoles, derived from the Seminole people. The name was chosen by students in 1947 and is officially sanctioned by the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

It is not an easy task to ignore the contradiction, irony even, in the images of Osceola and Renegade on one hand and the Collegiate Gothic buildings on the other. The aesthetic of racial cultural triumphalism is too prevalent in the latter.



BUILDINGS



Landis Hall - 1939



Montgomery Hall - 1929



Westcott Building - 1910

Nevertheless, in its Land Acknowledgement Statement, “The University honors its unique and collaborative friendship with the Seminole Tribe of Florida... We encourage all to learn about the significance of Indigenous peoples in this region and throughout the nation. With a collective knowledge of the past, we are inspired to teach, live, and support a future that empowers all individuals.”



Originally a dormitory for women. Designed for senior students, they enjoyed privileges such as a later curfew and a smoking parlor. Function: co-educational residence hall for 400 honors students. In 2004, underwent a significant interior and exterior remodeling and renovation.

Often called “Miss Katie’s Gym” after Dr. Katherine Montgomery who led the physical education program and was the driving force behind the gym’s construction. Enamored with the building, she slept on the gym floor the night before the official opening. In 2004, underwent a \$17 million transformation. Function: state of the art dance facility.

The oldest site of continuous higher education in Florida. Functions: (i) architectural centerpiece of FSU campus (ii) houses the central administrative offices, including the Offices of the President and Provost. In 1969, a fire caused intense damage on the 4th floor and destroyed the art department.

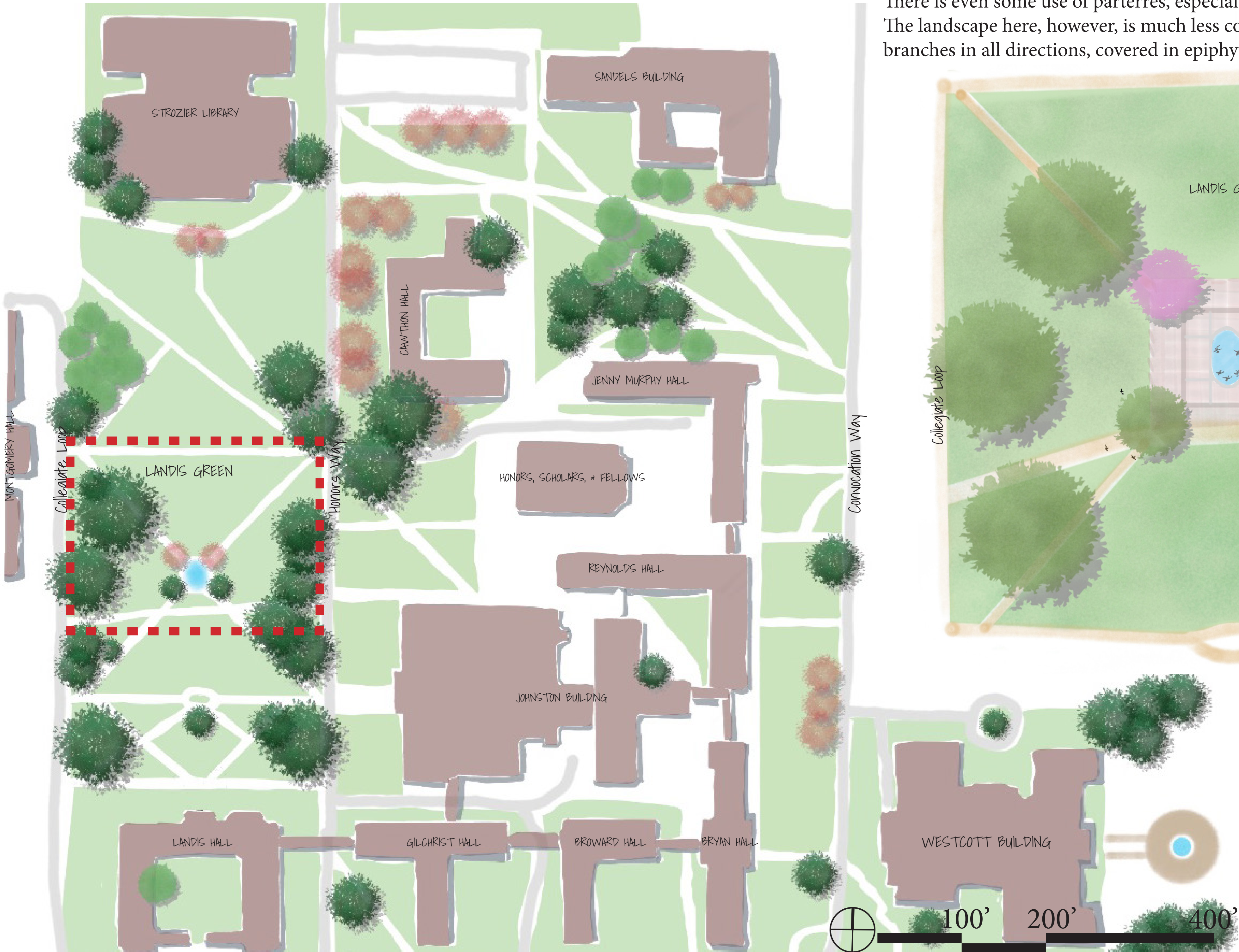


A Seminole warrior riding a horse, known as Osceola and Renegade, at FSU home football games, is one of the most enduring and beloved symbols of the university.

The design of university grounds surrounding buildings in the Collegiate Gothic style, display influences from several periods.

MEDIEVAL MONASTIC LIFE - CLOISTERS

The Collegiate Gothic architecture that came to dominate a lot of the university campuses in the US was largely influenced by the colleges at Oxford and Cambridge. Originating in the 13th century as places of learning for unmarried men, the majority of whom were trained for priesthood, they display design expressions similar to monasteries. Rectangular in shape, they contained a central open space, usually enclosed on all four sides. This was the cloister- the focus of the medieval monastic life. Although not so strictly enclosed, several of the Collegiate Gothic halls at the FSU have a courtyard. Taking a step back and looking at the entire central campus, one can see this layout on a bigger scale. Landis Green, the center of campus life, is enclosed by rectilinear halls many of which are connected to one another via open arcades. Although the atmosphere is far removed from that of medieval monastic life, this precedent is unmistakable from a plan view.



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY - TALLAHASSEE CAMPUS: ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES & HISTORIC PRECEDENTS



Cross axes and framed views.



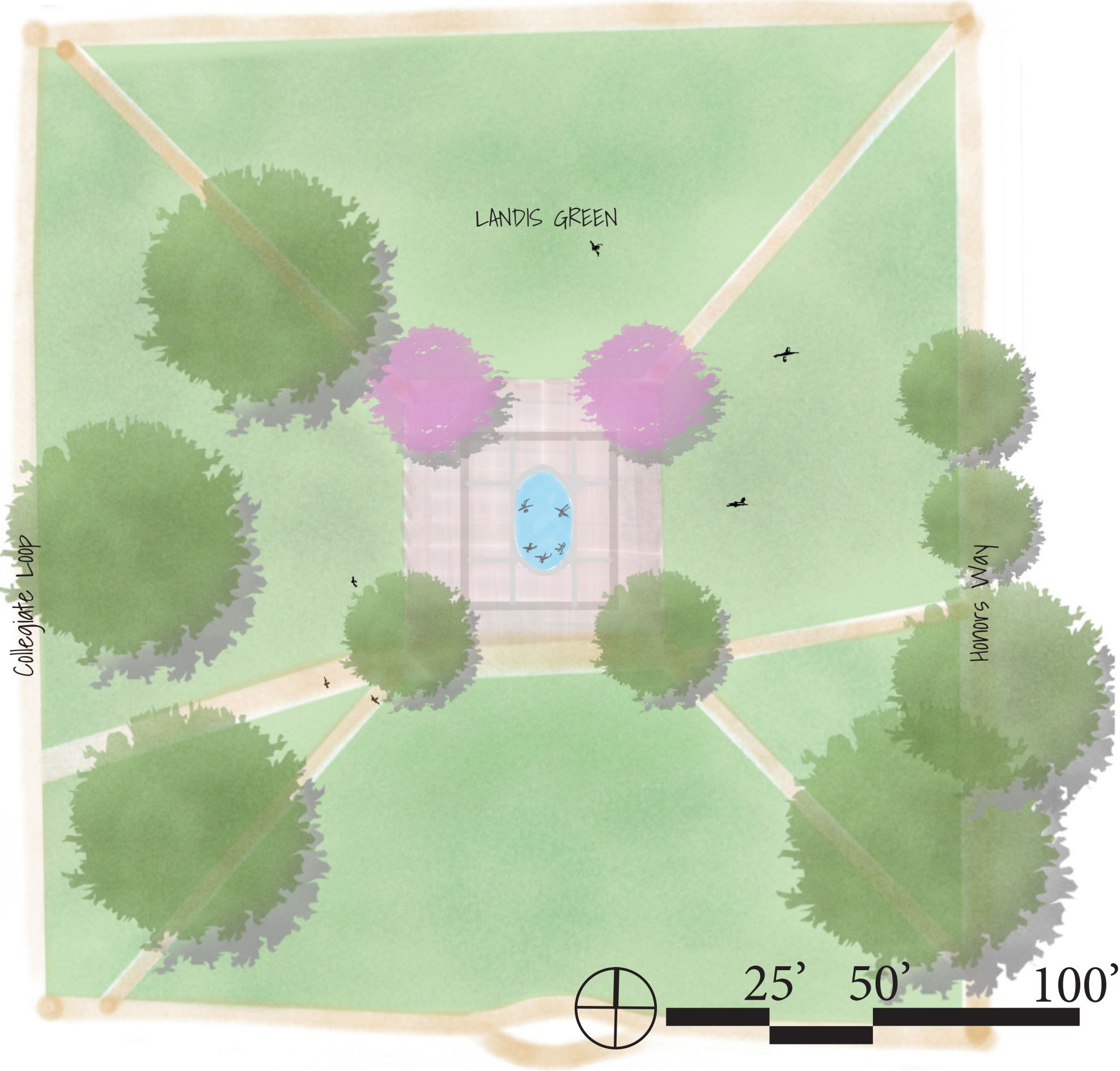
Open arcades connecting halls.

RENAISSANCE

Throughout the campus there is a sense of clear, open spaciousness, cross axes along lawned areas meeting at rond points and some elaborate fountains; characteristic features of the Renaissance Period (14th - 17th century), particularly as it took shape in France. In Landis Green, Legacy Fountain is at the intersection of two diagonal axes connecting important buildings at the heart of campus.

There is even some use of parterres, especially around the Westcott fountain.

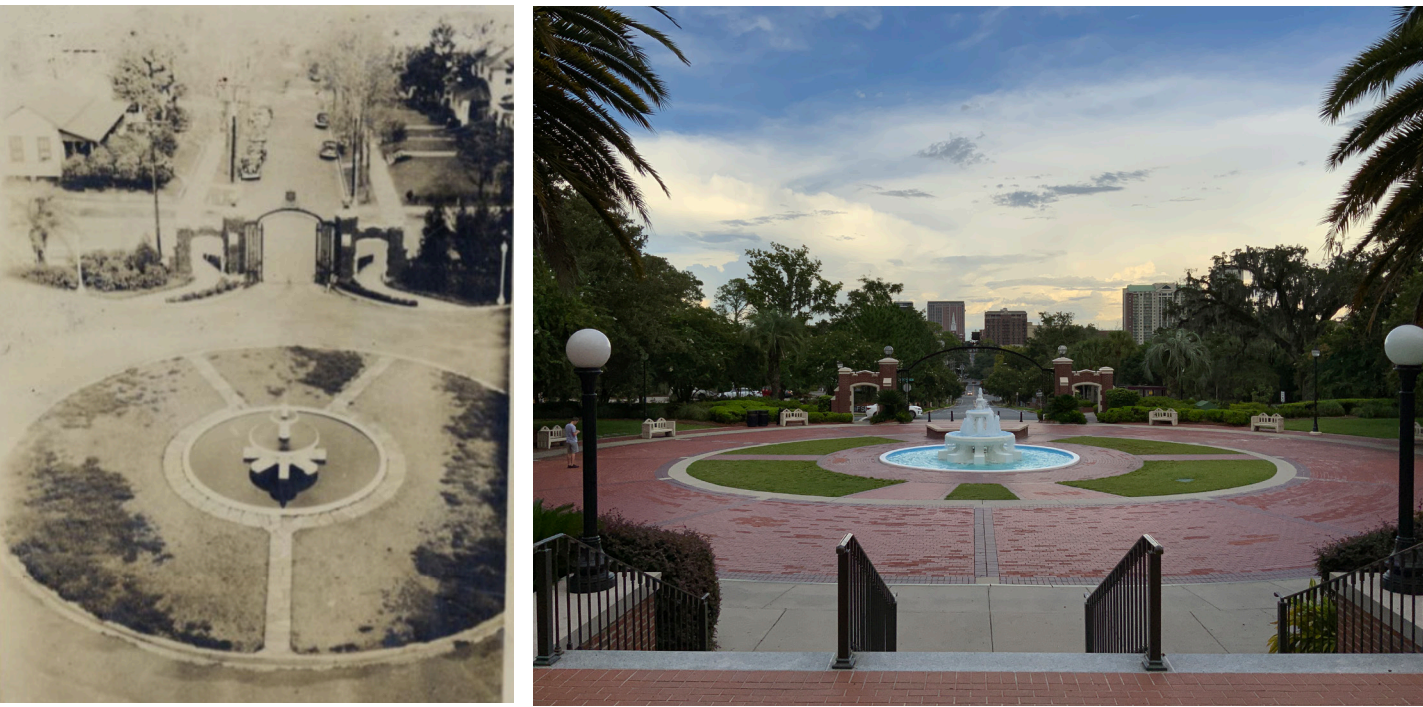
The landscape here, however, is much less controlled with majestic oaks expanding their branches in all directions, covered in epiphytes with *Tillandsia usneoides* stealing the show.



RESOURCES:

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FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
WESTCOTT & LANDIS GREEN



Westcott Fountain in 1940 and today facing west toward downtown Tallahassee.



Mature oaks covered in a variety of epiphytes in front of the Strozier.



Legacy Fountain represents the university’s evolution from a liberal arts college for women to the liberal arts and research university it is today. It displays six life-sized bronze figures. Three female figures symbolize the years as Florida State College for Women. Their attire reflects the college culture during its existence from 1915 to 1947. On the north side are two female figures and one male representing the students of today.