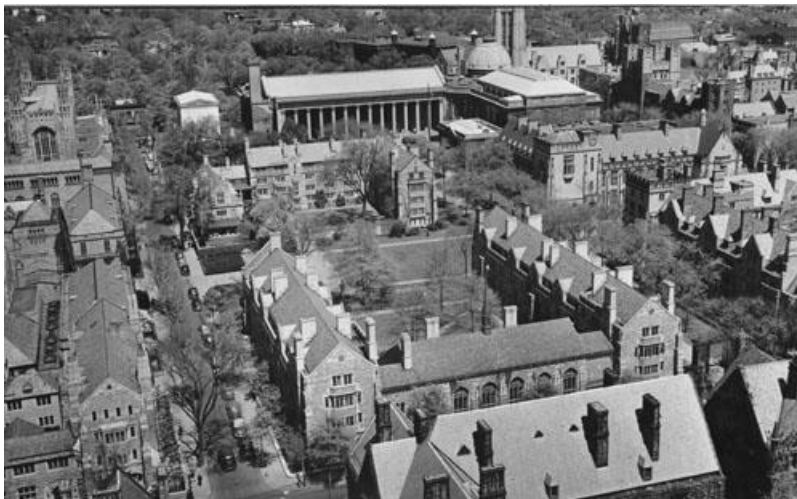


## The Residential College Plan

In 1930, the Corporation Committee on Architectural Planning authorized the establishment of the Residential College system at Yale. The approval of the College Plan initiated the construction of six new residential structures and the remodeling of four existing dormitories to accommodate the plan. The establishment of the Residential Colleges at Yale was motivated by two related factors: overcrowding in the dormitories and the perceived deterioration in undergraduate social life due to growing class size. During the 1920s, Yale found its facilities increasingly inadequate to accommodate the rapidly growing numbers of students. In 1900, enrollment for both Yale College and Sheffield Scientific School was 2,000; by 1920, enrollment had reached 3,000. With the growing Class size, administrators feared that Yale was losing its camaraderie and that classes were ceasing to be intimate communities. In 1923, the number of freshman admitted was limited to 850 for the first time in Yale's history—but even with the restricted class size and the newly constructed Memorial Quadrangle, freshmen were still forced to find lodgings in rooming houses and to seek their board in restaurants and eating houses. Alumni, university administrators, and the Corporation all agreed that something had to be done to alleviate the housing dilemma and restore Yale's atmosphere of collegiality.



In January 1925, President James Rowland Angell proposed that the Corporation consider the establishment of a Residential College Plan, suggesting that “it might ultimately be possible to try out...a plan of dividing the student body into a number of groups ‘somewhat resembling the English Colleges.’ Each ‘quadrangle’ would have its own eating facilities as well as dormitories. Such a plan could be a solution to the social problems resulting

from the large undergraduate registration.”

Although the Corporation had its reservations, it agreed that the idea should be explored as one of the solutions to the housing problem. In 1927, President Angell, Corporation Fellow Samuel Fisher, and James Gamble Rogers traveled to England to visit Oxford, Cambridge, St. Andrews, and other ancient academic institutions to investigate the English residential college concept.

On 3 January 1930, after two years of negotiations during which donor Edward S. Harkness, YC 1897, almost withdrew his support, Harkness announced he would contribute more than \$15 million to the construction, equipment, and endowment of eight Residential Colleges, which were to be completed by 1935. Yale welcomed the gift, stating that Harkness' gift would enable it to "revive amid the intellectual advantages of the great modern university the social advantages of the small Yale College of earlier generations." Over the next ten years, 1930-1940, the eight colleges funded by Harkness (Berkeley, Branford, Saybrook, Jonathan Edwards, Davenport, Pierson, Calhoun, and Timothy Dwight) were completed, and two additional colleges (Trumbull and Silliman) were added to the plan and funded by other donors.

[Jonathan Edwards College 1925/32](#)  
(remodeling)

[Trumbull College 1929](#) (remodeling)

[Pierson College 1930/31 & Davenport College 1930/32](#) (new)

[Calhoun College 1931/32](#) (new)

[Branford College & Saybrook College 1932/33](#) (remodeling)

[Berkeley College 1933/34](#) (new)

[Timothy Dwight College 1933/34](#) (new)

[Silliman College 1940](#) (remodeling)

Sources used for this portion of the exhibit are: Aaron Betsky, *James Gamble Rogers and the architecture of pragmatism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994); *Buildings and grounds of Yale University* (New Haven: Yale University, 1979); Thomas Bergin, *Yale's Residential Colleges* (New Haven: Yale University, 1983). All photographs are part of the collection of the University Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University. No part of this exhibit may be used without permission of the Archives.

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# The New Residential Colleges

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## **Integrating Living and Learning**

### **At the heart of the undergraduate experience**

The first of Yale's twelve residential colleges opened its doors in 1933, thanks to the vision and support of Edward H. Harkness B.A. 1897. Since that time, the colleges have been at the very heart of the undergraduate experience.

More than just buildings, or even dormitories, the colleges support the academic and social needs of every student. True to Harkness's original vision, the newest colleges will build on the best elements of the current system.

### **Bridging academics and student life**

Yale's residential colleges integrate living and learning, bringing together faculty and students in a way that is nearly unmatched in American collegiate education. Each college is led by a master and a dean, and both reside in the college with their families. Living together, students and faculty regularly cross paths, and the common spaces help facilitate this regular connection. The dining hall, in particular, exists at the center of college social life. Students, the master, dean, faculty, and fellows frequent the hall for meals, which helps to solidify a sense of togetherness.

For many students, the colleges bridge academic and social life, with programs of formal advising, seminars, and prizes as well as activities that encourage students' extracurricular interests. Each college's common spaces support these programs, providing students with opportunities to pursue the depth and breadth of their passions, from athletics to the arts.

### **Old Yale spirit in a growing University**

When Edward Harkness made his seminal gift to establish the residential college system, he did so with a desire to retain the strength and spirit of Yale as it grew to become a thriving university.

Mr. Harkness succeeded in his goal. Today, the residential colleges remain one of Yale's most distinctive assets, offering students the very best of both worlds in collegiate learning, a tight-knit small college experience combined with the exceptional resources that define a large research institution.

This tradition will continue as the residential college system expands to accommodate even more of the world's best and brightest young minds.



“The new colleges will give Yale even more opportunities to further its mission, to recruit new and diverse faculty, and, of course, accept more students to be a part of our incredible community.”

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A catalog of opportunities for supporting the [New Residential Colleges](#).

# Yale

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