



FIDELITY HALL

NORTH FRONT HALL  
MAIN BUILDING (FACING CITY)

FOUNDERS HALL

Friendship Hall, was remodeled on at least two occasions—once when a third floor was added and secondly in 1909 when the assembly hall was enlarged. The latter renovation eliminated almost entirely the court and took off some feet of the mansion's north wings. At this same time the college also enhanced the north building by adding on the front a beautiful portico of Ionic columns, which many have erroneously assumed to be part of Belmont Mansion itself. The school renamed the mansion, "Faith Hall," thereby giving it a designation which conformed to the names of the three attached structures.

In 1913 Belmont College for Young Women merged with Ward Seminary, a school for women which had existed in Nashville since 1865. The name of the new institution was, "The Ward-Belmont School." Under the leadership of Dr. John Diell Blanton, who had been president of Ward Seminary since 1893, the school prospered. On the site of the old greenhouses, Ward-Belmont completed in 1914 the Academic Building, later named for Blanton and which burned in 1972, and on the east three dormitory buildings—Pembroke (1913), Heron (1916), and Hail (1923). The school also built Club Village, a cluster of buildings for college organizations built near the tower. In 1922-1923 Ward-Belmont sponsored the first radio station in Nashville (the third in Tennessee), WDAA, which broadcasted from the building on the north front of the mansion. In November, 1928, through funds donated by graduating seniors of Ward-Belmont and alumnae, the college, at a cost of \$13,000, installed in the tower as a memorial to veterans of the First World War a carillon of twenty-three bells. Ward-Belmont gained a national reputation for its high academic standards and its excellent training in the building of character and the development of the social graces.

On November 17, 1934, Ward-Belmont received a distinguished visitor, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who rode around the campus circle with the students lining the drive. On his visit to Nashville, Roosevelt ate breakfast at the Hermitage but, according to Mrs. J. D. Marshall, who was in charge of the food service at Ward-Belmont, he also ate at Belmont. Unknown to the student body Roosevelt was shifted to another car and brought into the small dining room on the basement level of the east wing of Belmont Mansion. He ate lunch with several others, guarded at all times by

two security officers. In its long career Belmont Mansion had again received a famous guest.

With changing times and beset by financial difficulties, Ward-Belmont was forced to close at the end of the school year of 1951. In the meantime, the Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, finding the Belmont property suitable for convention headquarters, voted in February to acquire it. With the Tennessee Baptist Convention assuming the liabilities of about \$650,000, the property now passed into the hands of new trustees who represented the convention. The Tennessee Convention moved into Fidelity Hall, remaining there until 1969 when it moved into a new facility in Brentwood. The Executive Board attempted to move Cumberland University, a school which the Tennessee Baptist Convention had controlled since 1946, from Lebanon to the new property, but the effort met with great resistance. Thereupon the Executive Committee voted on March 13, 1951, in case of failure in moving Cumberland University, to continue a school at Belmont, which led to the establishment of Belmont College. Unlike its predecessor, the new college, instead of being a preparatory school and junior college, would be a four-year senior college, co-educational, and church-related.

The new institution began with only 136 students. But under the effective leadership of its first regular president, R. Kelly White, serving from 1952 to 1959, and its second president, Herbert C. Gabhart, who arrived in 1959, the school reached within thirty years an enrollment of 1,700 students with a greatly expanded program. The college has erected a number of buildings including a gymnasium, Williams Library, Massey Auditorium and Fine Arts Building, Wright Hall (a women's dormitory), the Center for Business Administration, Hitch Science Building, Humanities Building, and the Gabhart Student Center. The Adelia Acklen Woman's Club, formed in 1955 for women related in some way to the college, has helped to perpetuate the memory of Adelia through its name.

Throughout its many years as a campus structure, designated in earlier years as, "Faith Hall," then later named, "Acklen Hall," and now in recent years as, "Belmont Mansion," the mansion has served a most useful academic purpose. For years a part of its facilities was used for dormitory space, but it has always remained an important social center, a focal point for the three colleges of which it has been a part.