

1851, Ward graduated with an A.B. degree from Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee. Two years later he completed his law degree at Cumberland, and thereafter practiced law in Texas for three years. After this short stint in the legal profession Ward returned to Cumberland University to enroll in divinity school. Preaching and traveling throughout the South, he gained a great deal of experience in ministry and public speaking. It never replaced his passion for academia, however. As he traveled through Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri, Ward carried "a library of books in his buggy for study at odd hours, which he thoroughly saturated in swimming rivers in the Indian country."¹⁶

Following his career as a minister, Ward purchased the *Banner of Peace*, a newspaper primarily serving the Cumberland Presbyterian church, and moved to Nashville in 1857. He served as editor until February 1862, when the paper was discontinued due to the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson. In 1859, while working for the religious periodical, Ward married Eliza H. Hudson. Hudson was a rare early product of southern higher education for women—she graduated from the Nashville Female Academy in 1839. Together, the Wards raised five children and lost another four, all of whom died in infancy.¹⁷

Little is known about William Ward from 1862 to 1865, although he did travel extensively and lived in New York City in 1864. He visited and observed countless

schools during this period, and returned to Nashville in 1865 with a plan to start a school for girls.¹⁸ Ward Seminary for Young Ladies opened that year with six boarding students and forty day students. The city's papers generously covered the school's opening, with the *Nashville Daily Gazette* going so far as to say that it had "met with unanticipated success... Educate your children it is their best legacy."¹⁹

During the school's inaugural year, Ward rented the Kirkman building near the Tennessee State Capitol to serve as a temporary campus.²⁰ In March 1866, the Wards purchased a property on Spruce Street (now Eighth Avenue) and acquired a new four story (4,000 square foot) building for \$125,000, which included seventy rooms for housing and classes, and a large recitation hall also used for dining, and a chapel.²¹ Students delighted in the "splendid chapel with new style walnut desks."²² The school charged \$140.00 tuition for the 1865–1866 school year, which included room, board, heat, and laundry.²³ Ward operated the school on a cash basis without an endowment and without a board of trust. He believed this gave the school more autonomy over its curriculum and fiscal needs.

In the school's first year freshman students attended classes in Latin, grammar, United States history, French, and geography. Sophomore courses included mythology, Caesar, ancient history, the "Life of George Washington," and French. Juniors took algebra, rhetoric, Virgil,

Ward Seminary, Nashville, Tenn.



In 1866, William Ward acquired a 70-room building to serve as his school. Tuition was \$140 for the school year, including room and board. (Ward Seminary in 1913, from the Harpeth Hall School Archives)

chemistry, mental philosophy, French, and elocution. Seniors studied trigonometry, logic, English literature, astronomy, moral science, Cicero, letter writing, elocution, and "dictionary."²⁴ The 1877 catalog for Ward Seminary suggests that the school maintained higher academic standards than other women's schools. "Some schools have no apparatus," it pointed out. "The scholar must memorize the dry details of chemistry and philosophy. No wonder they are irksome. In the Seminary these gases are made before the pupils. In botany, flowers and plants are

picked to pieces. Science is illustrated in this most important and neglected branch of education."²⁵ Though few today would view this description as an endorsement of feminist intellectualism and scientific inquiry, Ward Seminary boasted that "The patrons of this Seminary for thirteen years have been among the most intelligent, wide-awake, and progressive people in the South."²⁶

Elocution, a subject largely removed from educational curricula by 1900, centered on the "art" and development of reading aloud or reading/speaking in pub-