

not pursue professional careers, increasing numbers used their education to enter the field of teaching. By the 1890s, the education profession had shifted from a male-dominated world to one acceptable for young, typically single, women. The demand for teachers grew alongside the post-bellum creation and expansion of state-funded public schools in western and southern states. Female teachers were economically advantageous, as women were paid far less than their male counterparts. By the twentieth century, women constituted 75% of all teachers on the primary and secondary levels. While Ward Seminary never operated as a "Normal School" to train teachers, many graduates did enter the field of education. Many taught only until they married; others continued after marriage and children. A handful of women, such as Eliza Ward or Anna Blanton, taught alongside their husbands as faculty members, principals, or as a dean of women.

By the early 1900s, female students also attended social functions and athletic events off-campus, without formal chaperonage. In doing so, many women discovered greater purpose and developed into constructive contributors to the public good, either as wives, mothers, professionals, or community activists. Progressive ideals, reinforced by the imbrication of women's educational training and increased community involvement, pushed cities such as Nashville through urban and educational reform in the early

twentieth century. In other words, "the feminization of teaching changed not only how society perceived women, but how women perceived themselves."⁶⁷

Dr. William E. Ward had warned that the "Coming Woman" should not seek excessive independence, and contended, "She ought not to seek to come to the political arena, where the rougher man contends, quarrels, and fights. She ought not, therefore, to want the ballot."⁶⁸ Contrary to his advice, educated females joined many progressive (and inherently political) causes through women's groups in Nashville's colleges and universities. Ward Seminary graduates were also likely to join local community campaigns, including sanitation/municipal reform, opposition to racial inequality, promotion of health care and prohibition, and even suffrage.

To be sure, Ward Seminary did not abandon the idea of women ultimately finding satisfaction with the home, family, and community. Even so, by its merger with Belmont, the Ward Seminary emphasized modern goals of gendered education, and wanted many students to continue in higher education:

Much caution should be exercised in arranging a course of study for girls and young women. An ideal course is not one that can be prescribed for all alike, and yet an ideal course must be comprehensive and thorough enough to provide for the development of the

true and *everywhere* efficient woman... The amount of work covered is considered not so important as are learning how to study, well-balanced mental discipline, and incentive to further knowledge. Courses of study are adapted to meet... present ideals of

education. The student who intends to enter college will, upon completion of the College Preparatory Course, be admitted without examination to Smith, Vassar, Goucher, Wellesley, Randolph-Macon, Vanderbilt, and many other colleges and universities.⁶⁹



In 1913, Ward Seminary joined forces with Belmont College for Young Women, moving from downtown to the latter's larger campus. The "new" Ward-Belmont operated from 1913-1951. (Belmont Mansion in 1936, HABS, Library of Congress)