

History

Construction of the main Emory & Henry campus began in 1836, and the first students were enrolled in 1838. Emory & Henry College is one of the few in the South which have operated for more than 180 years under the same name and with continued affiliation with the founding organization. The founding organization was Holston Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and Emory & Henry's church-relatedness remains strong. Today Emory & Henry is one of 122 institutions affiliated with The United Methodist Church.

Because of its distinguished history, the main campus of Emory & Henry is designated as a "historic district" on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Historic Landmarks Register. Emory & Henry was granted the honor for having pioneered in efforts to establish higher education in rural Southwest Virginia.

Four individuals were instrumental in founding Emory & Henry by raising funds and locating a site for the original campus: Tobias Smyth, a local farmer and enthusiastic Methodist lay person; the Reverend Creed Fulton, a Methodist minister; Colonel William Byars, a distinguished Presbyterian and political leader; and Alexander Findlay, an Abingdon businessman. As a tribute to these founders, Tobias Smyth's log house, dating to about 1770, has been preserved on the campus for use as a museum and meeting place. Emory & Henry's first president, the Reverend Charles Collins, and the first three faculty members were graduates of Wesleyan University in Connecticut, a Methodist school with a reputation for academic excellence. That legacy has shaped the character and history of Emory & Henry.

From its founding until the outbreak of the Civil War, Emory & Henry enjoyed growth in enrollment, expansion of course offerings, and additions to the facilities. When the war came to Southwest Virginia, the college temporarily suspended classes, although the faculty remained on duty; the administration building was used as a Confederate hospital. Immediately after the Civil War, classes resumed, but the political and economic instability of that era made the late 1800s a time of struggle for the college. With the inauguration of Richard G. Waterhouse as president in 1893 and an improvement in the regional economy, enrollment stabilized and the college began an ambitious building program.

Women first enrolled at Emory & Henry in 1899, and true coeducation was implemented gradually over the next three decades. In 1918, the administration of Emory & Henry was merged with that of Martha Washington College, a Methodist-affiliated, all-female school in Abingdon. When Martha Washington College closed in 1931, many of the students transferred to Emory & Henry. Today, the site of the former college houses the Martha Washington Inn.

The Depression era of the 1930s provided a severe test for the college, but strict financial management implemented in the early 1940s, as well as a World War II contract to host a Navy V-12 program on campus, put the college back on sound footing. With strengthened finances and stable enrollments built partly by military veterans aided by the GI bill, Emory & Henry embarked on a massive building program during the era stretching from the mid-1950s into the early 1970s. During this time, the main campus was transformed by the construction of Memorial Chapel, Wiley Jackson Hall, the Van Dyke Center, Hillman Hall, the Kelly Library, the King Health and Physical Education Center, and other major construction and renovation projects. This period of construction established much of what is considered the heart of the main campus.

A new era of construction and renovation began on the main campus in the 1990s. Weaver and Carriger residence halls were thoroughly renovated, and Martin-Brock Gymnasium was transformed into the Student Activities Center.

A new Physical Plant Building was constructed. The train depot was converted to an arts complex, with two renovated galleries. The year 2000 saw the completion of a new academic center, McGlothlin-Street Hall, and the expansion of King Athletic Center to include the new Robert Gibson III Fitness Center. Two new residence halls were built in 2006 in The Village. In 2007-2013, the college again embarked on a number of notable facilities projects. Byars Hall was renovated and expanded, and Wiley Hall was completely renovated. Designed to be "green" buildings, both Byars and Wiley received LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification. Artificial turf, perimeter fencing, and field lighting were added to the main athletic field and the complex was named Fred Selfe Stadium. The James H. Brooks Field House was completed in 2012. A new residence hall in the central campus was constructed in 2010 and a second opened in 2013. In addition, a comprehensive master plan for future growth and expansion of the college was completed. The Woodrow W. McGlothlin Center for the Arts opened in 2015 and a new Village Housing complex added 200 beds in 2017.

Currently, Emory & Henry enrolls over 1,000 undergraduate students, almost equally divided between men and women, along with a growing number of graduate students both on the main campus and at the school of health sciences. These students join with a dynamic faculty and staff to pursue the college's motto: *Macte virtute*, "Increase in Excellence." The academic program described in this catalog reflects some of the same ideals set forth by the founding fathers in 1836: commitment to the concept of liberal arts education, a desire for education of high quality, and a concern for spiritual and ethical issues. At the same time, the academic program reflects a learning community that fulfills every student's potential and affirms the liberal arts as the intellectual foundation that leads to lives of service, productive careers, and global citizenship. Members of the college community are proud of its past and excited about the future.