

Raleigh Academy ^[1]

Raleigh Academy

by Jerry L. Cross, 2006

See also: [Lovejoy Academy](#) ^[2]

The Raleigh Academy was established when the North Carolina [General Assembly](#) ^[3], responding to an 1801 petition from prominent citizens, passed an act to establish a school for both boys and girls and named 14 trustees. Funds for building were slow to come, and not until late 1803 did [John M. Goodloe](#) ^[4] complete a structure two stories high, 40 feet long, and 24 feet wide, with a brick chimney at each end. The new academy was located near the center of Burke Square with doors facing north and south.

The first four men to serve as principal of the academy averaged only one session each, and student enrollment stood at 60. Not until William Turner arrived in the fall of 1806 did the institution make real progress. He established a uniform textbook, formalized the curriculum, expanded the faculty, and enhanced the school's reputation. The number of students tripled to 180 during his three-year tenure, requiring the construction of a second building in 1807. [William McPheeters](#) ^[5] accepted the call to succeed Turner at the academy in late 1809. During his 16-year administration, he further expanded the curriculum, specialized the faculty, built a new structure for a preparatory school, and introduced the [Lancasterian](#) ^[6] system of education at the academy (requiring older students to teach younger ones).

Jonathan Otis Freeman took charge of the Raleigh Academy in 1827. Freeman had spent 30 years as an educator, but even that wealth of experience proved no match for an ever increasing number of private schools and academies competing for a limited amount of funds. The last closing ceremonies of the institution were held in November 1828. With financial resources drained, the trustees could no longer guarantee faculty salaries. Instead, they permitted individual teachers to rent classrooms for private instruction and to keep tuition payments. The fate of the Raleigh Academy for the next half century was to serve as rental space for a series of private schools, including one conducted by Freeman himself. In February 1830, Peter Le Messurier announced that he "would commence a school for gentleman only in the Raleigh Male Academy." This was the first time any structure on Burke Square had been called the Raleigh Male Academy, the name the school would bear in years to come.

[Jefferson Madison Lovejoy](#) ^[7], formerly of the Pittsborough Academy in [Chatham County](#) ^[8], moved his Classical and English School into the old building in 1843, which shortly thereafter became known as the [Lovejoy Academy](#) ^[2]. The [Civil War](#) ^[9] apparently forced the closing of the school. In 1870 S. G. Ryan reopened "the well-known Raleigh Academy on Burke Square." Seven years later, Capt. John J. Fray took over the Raleigh Male Academy and hired a University of Virginia graduate, [Hugh Morson](#) ^[10], later honored by having a Raleigh high school named for him. In 1878 Morson became a coprincipal with Fray; together they ran the Raleigh Male Academy until 1883, when plans for a new [Executive Mansion](#) ^[11] demanded that Burke Square be cleared of existing structures. The educational function of the lot ceased after eight decades of service, excluding the war years.

References:

Kemp Plummer Battle, *Memories of an Old-Time Tar Heel* (1945).

Hope Summerell Chamberlain, *History of Wake County, North Carolina* (1922).

Charles L. Coon, *North Carolina Schools and Academies, 1790-1840* (1915).

Elizabeth Reid Murray, *Wake: Capital County of North Carolina* (1983).

Additional Resources:

Raleigh Male Academy, Markeroni: http://www.markeroni.com/catalog/display.php?code=NC_M_00107 ^[12]

COMMON BEAUTY: HISTORY OF THE PHYSICAL FORM AND USES OF MOORE SQUARE

Common Beauty: History of the Physical Form and Uses of Moore Square [p. 6] http://www.rhdc.org/sites/default/files/Common%20Beauty_0.pdf ^[13]

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Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press. ^[20]

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