

IV The Plan: Contexts and Precedents

The Urban Context of Colorado College and Colorado Springs

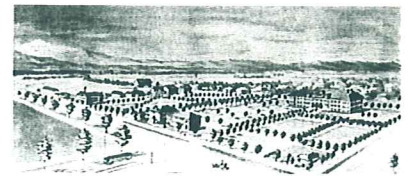
Located at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, Colorado Springs was laid out using a five-hundred-foot center-to-center street grid system. The site of Colorado College is decidedly an urban one, occupying approximately twelve city blocks to the north of the Colorado Springs downtown area. The College is bounded by residential neighborhoods to the north and the east, by commercial development to the south, and by the dramatic topographical drop of the Western Ridge to Monument Valley Creek to the west.

The Historic Campus Plan in the Context of American Campus Planning

The formal organization of the Main Quadrangle at Colorado College is based on the principles and geometries of historic campus planning of the American Northeast. General Palmer's original layout of the campus provided a powerful and ceremonial relationship to the downtown core of the city, recognizing and reinforcing the urbanity of this campus condition while providing a lush and enclosed pause in the regularizing fabric of the gridded city. This condition will be restored in the Main Quadrangle of the Plan, reconstituting one of the most dramatic moments on campus. The long procession from the city's downtown along Tejon Street will once again be met by the vast expanse of lawn and allées of the Main Quadrangle. Palmer Hall rests squarely as a terminus of the Tejon Street axis, defining the northern edge of the Quadrangle. Other architecturally important or programmatically significant buildings such as Shove Chapel, Cutler Hall, Armstrong Hall, and Tutt Library complete the definition of the Main Quadrangle's boundaries, positioned with generous elbow room along the lawn's perimeter. Clearly recognizable, the principles of this arrangement belong to a long tradition of campus planning in America.

Distinctive American Campuses

Colorado College joins the ranks of important and distinctive campus plans in the country not only because of the dexterity of its initial campus planning but also because of its unique response to its geological site. The traditional and formal arrangement of the Main Quadrangle and its relationship to the city has been commented upon, but its prominence is further heightened by a unique view corridor to the West, capturing Cutler Hall and encompassing Pikes Peak and the Rocky Mountains. The orientation and view to the West locates this campus in response to the landscape, instilling a remarkable and specific reference to Colorado and the intersecting landscapes of prairie and mountain. One need only experience the approach along Tejon Street toward Palmer Hall, and upon entering the lush precinct of the Main Quadrangle look to the left, in order to appreciate the power of this expansive view.



First campus "aerial view," showing the relationship of the Main Quadrangle, defined by Palmer, Perkins and Coburn Halls, to the West Campus (drawing c. 1904).