

The Y.M.C.A. Graduate School, Nashville 1919-1936

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Wesley Hall, located on Twenty-first Avenue, South, in Nashville, and currently being used by Vanderbilt University as a gymnasium and classroom facility, was erected in 1927 to house the Southern College of the Young Men's Christian Association. This institution, later known as the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School, operated with varying degrees of success from 1919 to 1936, and was established primarily to provide trained personnel for the Y.M.C.A.'s of the South.

The school was largely the creation of one man, Willis Duke Weatherford, who proposed to a February 1919 meeting of the Supervising Secretaries of the Y.M.C.A.'s of the South that a full time "Y" college be established in the region. This group appointed a "Central Training Committee" with Weatherford as acting chairman to "arrange as promptly as possible to establish a training school.¹ Weatherford's proposal, and its ready acceptance, came as a result of long-time involvement in the "Y" movement. His association with the organization began as a youth in Weatherford, Texas, and became an abiding interest as a student at Vanderbilt University, where he was active in the leadership of the "Y" group on campus. He earned three degrees at Vanderbilt: The Bachelor of Arts degree in 1899; the M.A. in 1901; and the Ph.D. degree in 1907. Upon completion of the M.A., Weatherford accepted a salaried position with the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A., and until 1919 and the opening of Southern College, he was Student Secretary for the Southern region. The Student Secretary's primary function was to bring assistance and encouragement to the "Y" organizations on the college campuses of the South. The position required extensive travel throughout the region and a close working relationship with the various state and local associations.

¹This quotation is from a letter to James Hampton Kirkland from W. D. Weatherford, in the Kirkland-Weatherford Correspondence, Special Collections Department, Joint University Libraries, Nashville. Numerous other quotations from this collection appear in this paper, and unless otherwise cited, may be assumed to be from that collection.

As a result Weatherford became a well-known figure in "Y" circles and gained a thorough knowledge of the workings of the organization.²

Most salaried "Y" workers during this period were untrained and they generally approached their work on a temporary basis. Weatherford saw this as limiting the effectiveness of the organization. His perception of the function and scope of the Y.M.C.A. was considerably broader than its practice and he believed that the "Y" was not fulfilling its potential as a social agency. Traveling throughout the region for nine months of the year, Weatherford became acutely aware of the social ills of the South, particularly in respect to the racial problem. He maintained that the "Y" organization, with its local associations, could be an effective agency for social uplift if the leadership was trained to know and able to meet its responsibilities.

The training issue was not a new one in "Y" circles. There had been attempts in the past to meet this need, yet with little success, especially in the South. Two permanent Y.M.C.A. training centers had been established in the late nineteenth century: Springfield College in Springfield, Massachusetts; and George Williams College in Chicago. Both located in the North, and urban in orientation, they offered little to the "Y" worker of the more rural South. Weatherford noted that few students went North to these schools, and of the few who did go, fewer still returned. The higher salaries and greater opportunities offered by the "Y" organization in the North were too great a temptation.³

In addition to the colleges, a number of Y.M.C.A. summer training camps had been located around the country. Weatherford's initial involvement in "Y" training came in 1906 when he organized the Blue Ridge Association, a summer training facility on a large tract in western North Carolina. Beginning in 1912, Blue Ridge was the scene of extensive summer programs under Weatherford's direction. A number of permanent buildings were erected, includ-

² Weatherford also became widely known through the numerous books and articles he published in this period, many dealing with racial problems in the South. Two of his books, *Negro Life in the South* (New York, 1910), and *Present Forces in Negro Progress* (New York, 1912), were widely used in Y.M.C.A. organized study sessions in southern colleges. Weatherford has been recognized as one of the pioneers in the work to change Southern racial patterns. See Jerome Dowd, *The Negro in American Life* (New York, 1926), 550; and Francis Butler Simkins, *A History of the South* (New York, 1956), 529.

³ Weatherford, "The Training Program of the Southern Y.M.C.A.'s" (unpublished typescript, Historical Library, Y.M.C.A., New York, 1950), 19-20.

ing a large hotel-type structure named Robert E. Lee Hall. It was a training program at Blue Ridge that provided the immediate stimulus for the creation of Southern College.

During World War I the Y.M.C.A., through the War Work Council, sought to organize spiritual, educational, and entertainment activities at virtually every base and camp of the American forces. A total of nearly 26,000 workers staffed the "Huts" and canteens that served as the centers of non-military activity. During the course of the war Weatherford made Blue Ridge a training center for "Y" volunteers, and approximately 2,500 volunteers received instruction there.⁴ It was the success of this program that suggested other programs of "Y" training, and with the Armistice Weatherford proposed to the War Work Council that "Y" personnel be given some training and preparation for the problems that would be engendered by returning soldiers. It was in apprehension of an upsurge in racial animosity that caused Weatherford to propose two training schools, one at Blue Ridge for white personnel, another in Atlanta for Negro "Y" workers. The Council provided \$75,000 to support the program and the schools operated during the winter and spring of 1918-1919. It was during this period that Weatherford called the Supervising Secretaries to Blue Ridge and proposed the establishment of a full-time college in the South.

The type of college program envisioned by Weatherford was to provide "Y" secretaries and other personnel with a basis for community leadership in meeting pressing social problems. Achieving this would require extensive academic resources at great cost, far more than Southern "Y"s were able to expend in this effort. At this point Weatherford had little more than promises of support. His solution was to locate the new college in the midst of existing institutions and work out a cooperative arrangement with these institutions. Weatherford's long association with Vanderbilt University and the existence of an academic center in Nashville were factors that convinced him that Nashville would be the ideal academic location. The central geographic location of the city was also considered an advantage for an institution that proposed to serve the entire South.

Weatherford wrote to the Chancellor of Vanderbilt University, James H. Kirkland, on February 14, 1919, with a proposal of co-

⁴ C. Howard Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America* (New York, 1951), 541.

operation. What he proposed was a reciprocal program with the various schools of Vanderbilt and with the George Peabody College for Teachers for the interchange of faculty, students, and credits. Kirkland responded favorably a week later, indicating that he had discussed the proposal with the Executive Committee of the Vanderbilt Board of Trust and they were "favorably disposed toward the plan outlined" Weatherford then submitted a document detailing the "Terms of Affiliation of Southern College of Young Men's Christian Associations with Vanderbilt University." On Sunday afternoon, June 8, 1919, Weatherford, along with Edwin Mims, professor of English at Vanderbilt; Oswald Eugene Brown, Dean of the Vanderbilt School of Religion, and later an important member of the faculty of Southern College; and Wilbur F. Tillett, Dean Emeritus of the School of Religion, met at the home of Chancellor Kirkland to work out the final details.

As established in 1919, Southern College was closely associated, physically and intellectually, with the Vanderbilt School of Religion. The offices of both schools were located in the original Wesley Hall on the Vanderbilt campus. The students of the two institutions were housed in the same quarters. This close association allowed the free passage of courses, students, and faculty members between the two schools, and to a lesser degree, among other schools and colleges in the community. Southern College began with the "advantages of fifty years' growth of rich resources in libraries, laboratories, and well-established faculties of experts. . . ." These advantages were only partially due to Weatherford's foresight. Without the good-will and assistance of Vanderbilt University the task would have been far more difficult. During this period Vanderbilt was largely under the direction of one man, Chancellor Kirkland, and his beneficent interest was to be a significant factor throughout the history of the "Y" institution.

From the beginning, Weatherford intended that Southern College would be concerned primarily with graduate work. He believed that only men matured by four years of undergraduate work were prepared to make the decision to enter Association work and to undergo the vigorous training necessary. This ideal of a highly specialized graduate school had to be modified to meet the realities of the situation. The number of fully prepared students who were

⁶J. L. Kesler, "The Southern College of the Y.M.C.A.'s" in *The Scy* [Yearbook of the Southern College of the Y.M.C.A.] (Nashville, 1921), 16.

willing or able to undertake "Y" graduate training was quite small. The 1921 graduating class, for example, consisted of three men, of whom only two really graduated. The two who did graduate, moreover, were Vanderbilt graduate students who took some of their course work at Southern College, and with the addition of summer work at Blue Ridge, which was being operated as a fourth quarter of the "Y" college, were to receive a Master's degree from Southern College. Although enrollment would eventually grow to approximately one hundred full-time students, the "Y" college found it necessary to accept students who had completed only two years of college work, and even allowed that men who have the equivalent of this preparation might enter as a candidate for a degree. This latter category was meant to encourage men already in Association work to broaden their educational background, and they were required to take additional course work at either Vanderbilt or Peabody.

Southern College offered work leading to three degrees: Bachelor of Arts; Master of Arts; and Doctor of Physical Education. The B.A. required two years of prior college work and eight quarters of eleven weeks each at Southern College. The master's degree, the substance of the program, required a bachelor's degree from an acceptable institution and eight quarters in residence at Southern. The "D.P.E." was a concession to the proponents of narrow professional training for "Y" personnel. This degree required pre-medical work on the sophomore level and eleven quarters at the "Y" college. Students were encouraged to be in residence throughout the year, that is, three quarters in Nashville and the summer quarter at Blue Ridge. The requirements made this virtually mandatory.

The curriculum was divided into two distinct areas: courses designed to promote knowledge of "broad general culture," and courses designed to develop technical skills for the various activities of the Y.M.C.A. The emphasis was in the former area, with a concentration of religiously-oriented courses. One prospectus of the College stated that "Emphasis will be placed on sound constructive scholarship in the Bible, in fundamentals of Christian faith, history of Christian organization, and history of the Christian church at work in the world today."⁶

Of special interest is the advanced position that Southern College took in making the investigation of racial issues a required part of

⁶ Y.M.C.A. *Yearbook and Roster for 1920-1921* (New York, 1922), 482.

a student's work. "One of the first graduate courses established was that of Applied Anthropology, which deals with the question of racial contacts, giving special attention to race relations in the South."⁷ It was in the racially tense days following World War I that Weatherford determined that the study of race relations would be an intrinsic part of the "Y" college program. In the years after 1919, he proposed to make the college a center for racial studies in the mid-South. He had been convinced by his own research into racial problems that there was a definite need for serious scholarship and teaching in this area. Weatherford chose to press the issue despite the resentment he realized would be engendered against both him and the institution. How much financial support Southern College lost because of this may only be surmised, but it was most certainly significant.

The physical situation that Southern College shared with the Vanderbilt School of Religion was viewed by Weatherford as a temporary arrangement, but it was almost eight years after the college opened before he was able to acquire a suitable plant for the institution. In November of 1922 Weatherford wrote to Chancellor Kirkland to "request that the piece of property which the University holds on Hillsboro [Twenty-first Avenue, South] facing Wesley Hall be sold to Southern College for a site on which we desire to build our permanent equipment." The property, which Vanderbilt had purchased from the Thompson heirs of Nashville, was sold the "Y" college for \$25,000. The terms of the purchase were \$1,000 in cash, and \$24,000 on a ten-year note at four per-cent interest. Weatherford was operating with very little financial backing during this period, and Kirkland's acceptance of the purchase proposal demonstrated the Chancellor's faith in Weatherford and Southern College.

In 1925 Weatherford acquired offices for the "Y" college at 2015 Grand Avenue, a short distance from Wesley Hall. The college program was not effected as the students continued to take their classes and to reside on the Vanderbilt campus. In 1926 Weatherford launched a campaign to raise the funds necessary to build what he considered to be adequate facilities, and by mid-summer of that year he had cash and pledges of approximately \$450,000. The pledges, however, were payable over a five-year period and Weatherford did not intend to wait that long to begin building.

⁷ Weatherford, *The Negro From Africa to America* (New York, 1924), 449.

With the assurance of past success he again went to Chancellor Kirkland and Vanderbilt University.

Kirkland usually spent the month of August at Mount Magnetawan in Canada. Unable to await the Chancellor's return, Weatherford wrote to Kirkland at his summer retreat and proposed to borrow \$250,000 from Vanderbilt University in order to begin building immediately. He offered to secure the loan with a mortgage on the building, which was to contain three complete gymnasiums with a capacity of 1800 students, a library, classrooms, dormitory space, and administrative offices. A few weeks later, on September 14, Weatherford submitted a detailed proposal and informed Kirkland that the building plans were drawn, and that the Rock City Construction Company of Nashville would erect the structure at a cost of \$400,000, with a completion date of September 15, 1927. He listed the assets of Southern College, noting that the subscribed amount exceeded the cost of the building by approximately \$50,000. The subscriptions were broken down by states and individuals, the largest single subscription being \$75,000.

This ambitious and sanguine proposal was favorably received and the loan was granted. Construction began almost immediately and the building was completed in the fall of 1927. It was at this time that the name of the institution was officially changed to the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School. The name change was brought about because of a concern to avoid the ubiquitous term "Southern" and also as an indication of Weatherford's renewed determination to concentrate on graduate level training of "Y" personnel.

The association between the "Y" Graduate School and Vanderbilt University was manifestly a fruitful one, especially as the School of Religion was the original nucleus of the "Y" program. In addition to this, however, Vanderbilt provided financial assistance throughout the entire life of the "Y" college. This was accomplished through the administration by the "Y" staff and the students of the Vanderbilt physical education program. In May, 1919, Weatherford discussed with Kirkland the hiring of a "physical work director" for the "Y" college and noted that Bruce Payne, president of Peabody College, was considering the possibility of using the services of the "Y" physical education director to augment the Peabody program. He suggested that Vanderbilt too would gain from participation in such an arrangement.

The "Y" college would of necessity have a rather extensive

physical education program and would require some form of laboratory conditions with large numbers of students. The involvement of other institutions was absolutely necessary, and what Weatherford sought in his proposal to Payne and Kirkland was a mutually beneficial arrangement. Peabody did not participate in the program, and Kirkland's initial response was not optimistic. Weatherford persisted, however, and finally prevailed, and from 1920 to 1936 the "Y" college operated the Vanderbilt physical education program. Until 1927 this was done in Vanderbilt facilities. With the completion of the "Y" structure the program was transferred to the new building.

There were occasions when relations between the two institutions were less than cordial. The financing of the Vanderbilt program at the "Y" gym is a good example. As the building was under construction in the fall of 1926, largely because of the Vanderbilt loan, Weatherford proposed to Kirkland that the Vanderbilt physical education program be broadened extensively, and that Vanderbilt pay the "Y" Graduate School \$20 per student for each term. Kirkland's response was that an enlarged program was neither desirable or realistic. Walter Fleming, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Vanderbilt, in a memo to Kirkland entitled "The Gym Problem and the 'Y' College," was scathingly critical of Weatherford. Fleming pointed out that the "Y" college depended heavily on Vanderbilt prestige for its continued existence, and that without Vanderbilt credits the "Y" degree would be meaningless. It was also his opinion that the "Y" school could not operate its training program for physical education directors without Vanderbilt students. In the preceding year, Fleming noted, Weatherford had charged Vanderbilt an additional \$600 for extensive records that were "needless and cumbersome" to Vanderbilt, but necessary to the "Y" program.

Undoubtedly Fleming had some justification for his criticism. Weatherford was doing his best for the "Y" Graduate School, but on occasion this amounted to taking advantage of Vanderbilt's beneficent interest. Kirkland and Weatherford were able to resolve the issue and beginning in the fall of 1927, Vanderbilt paid the "Y" college approximately \$8,000 per year on the basis of \$15 per student for each term. The arrangement continued on this basis until the closing of the Graduate School in 1936.*

* This relationship was not always smooth. One incident, which today appears

Other funds for the "Y" Graduate School were obtained from a variety of sources. When the school was organized the Supervising Secretaries pledged the support of the local associations. It was expected that the local associations would provide the major share of the institution's operating budget, which in the later years amounted to approximately \$100,000 annually. This was never to be the case and Weatherford was forced to spend much of his time in raising funds. Moreover, most of the money he was able to raise went into the operating budget and not into an endowment fund. This fundamental weakness in the financial structure of the institution became most apparent when sources of funds began to dry up in the 1930's.

Weatherford appealed to a number of philanthropic organizations for both operating funds and for the promotion of research, especially in racial matters. In 1929 he received matching grants of \$15,000 from the Julius Rosenwald Fund and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Fund, specifically for the purchase of materials dealing with race relations. The Phelps-Stokes Fund also assisted by giving \$3,526.50 for "Y.M.C.A. and Interracial work under direction of Dr. W. D. Weatherford."

In a 1930 application to the Rosenwald Fund for more extensive financial assistance Weatherford proposed the establishment of a teaching and research professorship in race relations. He noted that "from its very beginning, the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School has put emphasis on the understanding of racial problems, as a necessary qualification for a Secretary in the Southern Field." The Fund's directors provided \$50,000 for the establishment of a race relations department, to be disbursed as needed up to \$10,000 per year, and to end in June 1936.

In 1935, Edwin R. Embree, president of the Rosenwald Fund, informed Weatherford that the Fund would not be able to support the work of the "Y" Graduate School beyond the original grant

ludicrous, aroused Kirkland to anger. It seems that someone on the "Y" college staff, in order to publicize the activities of the institution, had arranged for a series of photographs in a local newspaper. Kirkland's reaction was as follows: "I presume you saw the full page of pictures of Vanderbilt girls in basketball costume in last Sunday's [Nashville] *Banner*. Not only were these girls in basketball costume, but some of them were specially arranged, apparently for the definite purpose of a nude exhibition very much as a sheet might be printed for a vaudeville show." Kirkland noted that this "nude exhibition" had "shocked a large portion of the best thinking people of our community."

period.⁹ Weatherford had counted heavily on the continuation of the grant, and in fact went ahead and submitted an application to the Rosenwald Fund in which he cataloged an impressive list of accomplishments. But the funds were simply not available. This loss of revenue was part of a series of financial setbacks that ultimately closed the Graduate School.

The solvency of the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School was almost immediately effected by the deepening depression following the financial crisis of 1929. The loan negotiated by Weatherford in 1926 had amounted to \$250,000, and it would appear that there had been little difficulty before 1931 in collecting the pledges necessary to reduce the note. By 1931 the principal had been reduced to \$60,000. By December of that year, however, Weatherford found it necessary to seek additional funds from Vanderbilt University. The remaining \$60,000 note was renegotiated and increased to \$100,000, payable over a five-year period. This measure was viewed by both parties as a temporary expediency, but this loan was never to be repaid.

In the summer of 1931 Kirkland broached the possibility of a closer relationship between the School of Religion and the "Y" Graduate School. What prompted the Chancellor to take this step was that Vanderbilt was also feeling the effects of the depression. The subject had been under consideration as Kirkland noted that "more than a year ago you [Weatherford] had a conference with me regarding possible changes in the relation of your School to our School of Religion." Apparently the matter had not been pursued in the intervening period and in June Kirkland wrote that the "future of our School of Religion is not definitely assured," and that if "ever advisable to make any change in the organic plan of our work this would seem to be [the] favorable time." Unfortunately nothing came of these discussions, and the "Y" college continued to have only "general relations of affiliation with Vanderbilt University."

By mid-1932 the financial condition of the "Y" institution was critical. In July Weatherford stated that "since the first day of January, 1932, we have collected scarcely a cent on the \$135,000 in subscriptions . . ." pledged to the Graduate School, and that "it has proved necessary to refinance the remainder of our obliga-

⁹ Letter, Edwin R. Embree to Weatherford, February 14, 1935, copy, Rosenwald Fund Archives.

tions." With this he appealed to Vanderbilt University for an additional \$65,650. It is indicative of the esteem in which Weatherford was held that the Executive Committee of the Board of Trust provided \$55,000, which he accepted. The entire note, now \$155,000, was to be repaid in three installments: \$25,000 at the end of three years; \$30,000 at the end of the fourth year, and \$100,000 at the end of the fifth year. In the early months of 1935 it became apparent that the "Y" school would not have sufficient funds to meet its obligations. During these months the subject of consolidation of the "Y" Graduate School and the Vanderbilt School of Religion was revived. Both institutions were in financial straits, although the condition of the latter was less pressing. Weatherford believed that consolidation would provide a strong fund-raising appeal, and he approached John D. Rockefeller, Jr. on the possibility of financing such a merger. The response was not encouraging.

Weatherford was not able to raise the funds necessary to make the payment of \$25,000 due on August 1, 1935. He wrote to Kirkland, apologizing for disturbing the Chancellor, who was vacationing in Canada, but was concerned that the "problem of preserving the fruits of my life work are wrapped up in it." The situation was indeed urgent—the "Y" Graduate School was subject to foreclosure on the mortgaged building. Weatherford proposed two alternatives for Kirkland's consideration. First, that Vanderbilt simply take over the "Y" building, valued at \$502,000, for an undetermined price. This would, he noted, "destroy the fruits of sixteen years hard work for me. . . ." The second plan proposed that the Board of Trust grant a five-year moratorium on the note and interest and the "Y" college would then establish a "working relationship with the School of Religion. . . ."

The five-year moratorium was apparently not granted for in September Weatherford requested a one-year moratorium. Fund raising during the preceding months had been virtually fruitless. The list of pledges yielded "no collections during the first eight months of the year." At this point the Graduate School was in arrears to the extent of the \$25,000 due on the principal and \$4,262.50 in interest. Weatherford prevailed on Kirkland to take no legal steps for at least a year, noting that "if we are unembarrassed for a year's time we can secure such funds" as are necessary to remove the indebtedness. This was rather an optimistic view.

In addition to the amount in arrears, an interest note would fall due on February 1, 1936, followed by another interest payment, and a principal payment of \$30,000, due on August 1. During the next few months Weatherford made an intensive effort to save the Graduate School. In October, for example, he traveled to New York to present his case to the "Carnegie people." He also directed another appeal to the Rosenwald Fund in Chicago. In both cases the results were negative and by the first of the year it was clear that the necessary funds would not be available. This left the issue in the hands of Kirkland and the Vanderbilt Board of Trust.

Chancellor Kirkland informed Weatherford in January that the Board of Trust would meet on February 3, 1936, and that the "Y" Graduate School would be on the agenda. In effect, Kirkland apprised Weatherford of the decisions that would be made at the February meeting. He noted that the Executive Committee of the Board had decided not to embarrass the Graduate School during the current academic year, but would grant nothing beyond this. Kirkland also noted that \$8,525 in interest would be due on February 1, and the Executive Committee would not consent to accumulation of interest beyond this point, and would insist that the principal payments be made by August 1, 1936.

A biographer of Weatherford, commenting on the closing of the Graduate School, stated that "Vanderbilt University, under the leadership of its devoted Chancellor James H. Kirkland, showed surprisingly little generosity of spirit (and considerable shrewdness of mind) in its swift foreclosure on the Graduate School." This writer went on to say that the "Chancellor did not delay unduly in his foreclosure but obeyed the law to its last letter."¹⁰ This may be a harsh evaluation of the circumstances. From the very beginning the "Y" Graduate School depended heavily on the "generosity of spirit" of Vanderbilt University and Chancellor Kirkland. Without this assistance Weatherford's task would have been far more difficult, if not virtually impossible. Vanderbilt supplied the land and the financing, under very favorable circumstances, that led to the erection of the "Y" building, and during the seventeen-year life of the institution Weatherford turned repeatedly to Kirkland for financial assistance. During the trying years of the

¹⁰ Wilma Dykeman, *Prophet of Plenty: The First Ninety Years of W. D. Weatherford* (Knoxville, 1966), 177.

1930's, when Weatherford found his sources of funds failing, he sought relief from the one consistent source—Vanderbilt University. Unfortunately that institution was also affected by the continuing depression and was in no position to provide further assistance. This does not, however, evince a lack of "generosity of spirit."

There is also the implication that Chancellor Kirkland sought foreclosure in order to obtain facilities for the School of Religion, whose building, Wesley Hall, had been destroyed by fire in February, 1932. The evidence would seem to contradict this implication. In July of 1932, six months after the fire, Kirkland responded favorably to Weatherford's request for additional funds with which to keep the "Y" Graduate School open. Indeed, it would appear that without these funds the school would not have opened for the fall quarter. In late 1935, rather than foreclose on the "Y" building, Kirkland again entertained the possibility of merging the "Y" college with Vanderbilt University, which Weatherford pressed as the only realistic alternative to closing the Graduate School.

In a lengthy communication to the Chancellor, Weatherford presented a proposal that called for the reorganization of the "Y" Graduate School as a graduate department of Vanderbilt University. The University would acquire full title to the "Y" building, but would allow Weatherford and his staff to use the facility jointly with the School of Religion. Weatherford allowed that "Vanderbilt University may also attach the name of Wesley Hall to said building, if such action is found desirable." He believed that the difficulty in raising funds would be lessened as a result of such a merger. "A number of my constituency," he noted, "have said with conviction we could raise this [fund] if we became a graduate department of the University with a Vanderbilt degree behind us, but they had no enthusiasm for it if we were to continue as a separate unit, giving our own degrees." The success of the merger proposal hinged on two points: First, the willingness of Chancellor Kirkland and Vanderbilt University to continue the "Y" Graduate School program; and second, that Weatherford would be able to guarantee an annual budget of approximately \$30,000.

At this time, in the early months of 1936, Kirkland was genuinely in favor of some degree of affiliation between the two institutions and received with unfeigned interest the merger proposal made by Weatherford. The Chancellor and the Dean of the Vanderbilt

University Graduate School, Oliver C. Carmichael, reviewed the proposal in detail. In a very enthusiastic letter, Kirkland suggested some slight modifications of Weatherford's plan. But despite the obvious enthusiasm of both Weatherford and Kirkland, the merger effort foundered. The major obstacle proved to be Weatherford's inability to raise sufficient funds to guarantee the annual budget of \$30,000. The "Y" college had no endowment and no promising possibilities in this area. While this loomed as the large problem, it was a much smaller figure that finally put an end to the question of merger.

In December, 1933, the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School had borrowed \$60,000 from the Life and Casualty Insurance Company of Nashville. This loan was secured by a second mortgage on the "Y" building. At the time the loan was negotiated Kirkland was aware of the proceedings and took no issue with Weatherford's course of action. In January, 1936, in studying the papers bearing on the indebtedness of the "Y" college, Kirkland "stumbled" on the second mortgage. In a letter to Weatherford he admitted that he was aware of the loan at the time but had since assumed that the indebtedness had been transferred to the Blue Ridge property. Speaking bluntly, Kirkland said, "If my present analysis of the situation is correct, it is necessary for me to state that I would feel no further interest in any of the negotiations which have been going on between us."

Weatherford hastened to assure Kirkland that while Life and Casualty Company did hold a second mortgage on the "Y" building, it was also backed by the Blue Ridge property. Apparently Kirkland was mollified, for he responded in a positive fashion, but indicated that Weatherford would have to settle with the Life and Casualty Company for the removal of the second mortgage. Sometime after this Weatherford prepared a draft of a proposed agreement which he submitted to the Chancellor. The draft stated that the Life and Casualty Company had agreed to release the second mortgage for \$10,000 in cash, with the remaining \$50,000 to be secured by the Blue Ridge property. Weatherford proposed to deed the "Y" building to Vanderbilt, who would in turn pay the \$10,000 to the Life and Casualty Company. The crux of the whole matter was the willingness of Kirkland and the Vanderbilt Board of Trust to expend additional funds to acquire the property in this manner.

In Kirkland's estimation, the expenditure of an additional \$10,000

for the "Y" building was simply bad business. He had earlier stated that it was not "such a building as we would erect, nor such a building as we would care to buy." He noted that the structure was a "combination building, providing accommodations for five difference services," and as such would not fit into the overall development of the University. "If we had to take over the building for the amount due us," Kirkland concluded, "we might be able to make use of it as would save us from loss, but we certainly do not care to buy the building. . . ."

This was in effect the end of any meaningful discussions regarding the possibility of joint operation of the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School and Vanderbilt University. In the next few months Weatherford continued in his efforts to keep the institution alive, but with no success. The "Y" Graduate School closed with the completion of the spring term, 1936. The last semester was spent in fulfilling the contractual obligation to provide the physical education program at Vanderbilt University. As for being a functioning institution, that had virtually ended a year earlier. Weatherford had held on with the hope that a return of economic prosperity would bring success to his quest for funds.

The closing of the "Y" Graduate School was a great blow to Weatherford, for it represented many years of intensive effort on his part, and he was somewhat embittered by the experience. He believed that Kirkland approached the issue in the manner of a "rigid business transaction," in effect to "crowd us to the wall at the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School."¹¹ This criticism of Kirkland was unwarranted, but understandable under the circumstances. More importantly, the closing of the "Y" college was a "sad picture of a great opportunity forfeited by the Southern Y.M.C.A.'s." The school sought to provide the "trained leadership [that] was so desperately needed" in the South, and for a time was moderately successful. The opportunity was forfeited, Weatherford maintained, because the Y.M.C.A.'s in the South "did not believe in advanced training for secretaries sufficiently to put themselves squarely behind it," and were "not fully convinced of the need of . . . graduate training which this school had made central in its scheme."¹² The lack of support from the "Y" organization, national and local, was

¹¹ Letter, Weatherford to Edwin R. Embree, July 8, 1936, Rosenwald Fund Archives.

¹² Weatherford, "The Training Program of the Southern Y.M.C.A.'s," 20, 23, 24.

undoubtedly most instrumental in the financial failure of the Y.M.C.A. Graduate School.

With the acquisition of the "Y" building, Vanderbilt University attached to it the name Wesley Hall, and it became the home of the School of Religion. Weatherford, who had maintained his spirit and zeal throughout the difficult affair, joined the faculty of Fisk University in Nashville, and thus began another phase of his long and distinguished career.