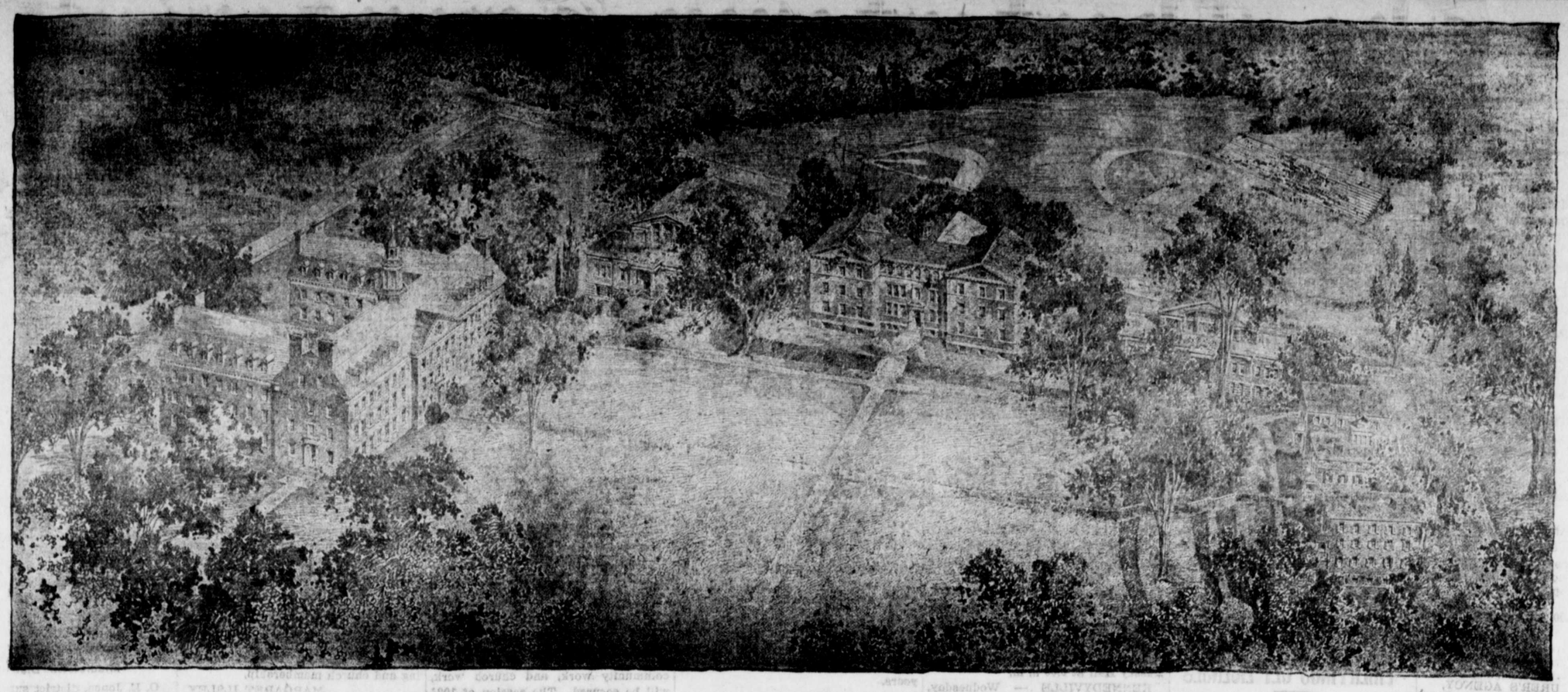

AN ARCHITECT'S PICTURE OF THE FUTURE WASHINGTON COLLEGE

One who is familiar with the present location of the buildings at Washington College can hardly recognize the old institution as it will appear when the present plans material. ize.

The three buildings to the right of the picture are East, West and Middle Hall, then following comes the present gymnasium and William Smith Hall. The large building on the left is the proposed new boys dormitory and between this building and William Smith Hall is the proposed new library.

While the completion of these new buildings is still a dream, yet continued increase in enrollment of students will necessitate this dream coming true. This pictured dream will give those interested in Washington College something to work for.

Plans are underway to alter the Shauber home, which was recently purchased for the college, into an annex of the present girls dormitory, Reid Hall.

Washington College is one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in the United States. Its origin is lost in the past, for it began as a school established at Chestertown some time before 1723. In that year the assembly of the Province of Maryland passed an act appropriating land and providing an organization for a public school in each county. This was one of the earliest public school systems in America. The school already established at Chestertown is said to have been incorporated in the new system.

The history of Kent County public school is lost, but in 1782 the institution was so flourishing that it was thought wise to raise it to the rank of a college. This task was undertaken by the Rev. William Smith, D. D., a close friend of Benjamin Franklin, and one of the best known scholars and divines in the colonies. He was the first provost of the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Smith interested prominent men in the enterprise, chief among whom was General George Washington. In 1782 a charter for the college was secured from the Maryland assembly. This charter provided that the Board of Visitors of the Kent County School might enlarge its numbers to between seventeen and twenty-four and undertake the founding of the college. When it should secure an endowment of not less than 5000 Lbs. current money, including the estate of the school, it was to be declared a body corporate with full power to conduct a college, to direct the holding of examinations, and to confer degrees. This is the present charter of Washington College.

By soliciting subscriptions throughout the Eastern Shore and by the sale of leases for lots belonging to Kent County School Dr. Smith raised the initial fund amunting to 10,300 Lbs. General Washington was one of the original contributors, subscribing fifty guineas to the cause, and also gave permission to call the college by his name. This is the first educational institution and the only college to bear his name with his personal consent. He also accepted a position on the Board of Visitors and Governors, and is known to have attended at least one board meeting at Chestertown.

The first buiding of the college was erected in 1783. It was placed at the site of the college, on an eminence on the land that had been laid out for the county school of 1783. This building was one hundred and sixty feet in length, and seems to have been a very pretentious school building for that day. It was burned in 1827.

The history of Washington College has been one of many struggles. After the destruction of its first building in 1827 classes were held in rented houses in the town for about seventeen years. The institution, however, had sufficient vitality to survive this period of depression, and in 1844 another building was erected, now known as Middle Hall. Ten years later the present East and West Halls were erected. Just previous to the Civil War an active campaign was conducted on the Eastern Shore, and a greatly increased attendance was secured. During the post-bellum period the college again languished until it was reduced in 1886 to only two professors and about thirty-five students.

In the charter, the State undertook to provide funds for the maintenance of the college. This obligation was but partially met; and by a series of agreements, legislature enactments, and judicial decisions, (the last arising out of litigation against the State instituted by St. John's College), this provision was abrogated. All formal connection with the State then ceased. About 1890, however, the State began to appropriate more largely for college education, and Washington College has since received a considerable annual appropriation.

This renewal of State appropriation marks quite a new era in the history of Washington Colege. Additional scholarships were soon offered. In 1892 the citizens of Chestertown presented the college with a new gymnasium. A normal department was instituted in 1896 and the State erected a building for its accommodation. The department was discontinued in 1910. In 1906 a very fine administration building was erected and named William Smith Hall. It was burned in 1916, but was immediately replaced by another William Smith Hall very similar to the first. At the same time a separate plant was installed to provide for the heating of all the college buildings except Reid Hall.

The original William Smith Hall was erected on what had been the athletic field, so it became necessary to purchase additional land and lay out the recent Washington Field. With the development of college athletics the gymnasium became inadequate, and in 1912 a new gymnasium was built by the State.

The three older buildings and the building erected for the normal department are used as dormitories, and the new William Smith Hall houses all the instruction, the laboratories, and the library. Since the loss of the first William Smith Hall an entirely new library has had to be collected.

The outstanding feature of Washington College is its remarkable vitality. It was created in a time when life in the colonies was extremely crude. It was enlarged into a college when the country was in a most depressed condition. It has had periods of low fortunes, but it survived and is new prospering because it fills a real need. An endowment campaign now under weigh will give it a more adequate financial basis. Enrollment is rapidly increasing. The Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Middle States and Maryland has placed the institution on its list of accredited colleges. Washington is now completing its 144th year of educational service—the oldest college in Maryland and the eleventh in date of founding in the United States.

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