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WA-I-014

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST WORKSHEET

NOMINATION FORM
for the
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES, NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: St. James School

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: College Road

CITY OR TOWN: St. James

STATE: Maryland | COUNTY: Washington

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☒ District ☐ Building ☐ Site ☐ Structure ☐ Object	☐ Public ☒ Private ☐ Both	Public Acquisition: ☐ In Process ☐ Being Considered	☒ Occupied ☐ Unoccupied ☐ Preservation work in progress	Yes: ☒ Restricted ☐ Unrestricted ☐ No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Agricultural	☐ Government	☐ Park	☐ Transportation	☐ Comments
☐ Commercial	☐ Industrial	☐ Private Residence	☐ Other (Specify)	
☒ Educational	☐ Military	☐ Religious		
☐ Entertainment	☐ Museum	☐ Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: The Trustees of St. James School

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: St. James | STATE: Maryland

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Washington County Court House

STREET AND NUMBER: West Washington Street

CITY OR TOWN: Hagerstown | STATE: Maryland

Title Reference of Current Deed (Book & Pg. #): INI/116

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: ☐ Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: | STATE:

WA-I-014

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One) ☒ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated ☐ Ruins ☐ Unexposed	
	(Check One) ☒ Altered ☐ Unaltered	(Check One) ☐ Moved ☒ Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

St. James School is located about one-half mile north of Maryland Route 68, at St. James, Maryland about six miles south of Hagerstown in Washington County.

The school, which was founded in 1842, consists of several main buildings located around a central campus. The administration building, Claggett Hall, is situated on the site of the original structure which was destroyed by fire in 1926. The present Claggett Hall appears to be vaguely reminiscent of the original building in form. Constructued of brick laid in Flemish bond at the facade, it is basically neoclassical in design.

The original structure was called "Fountain Rock." It was the dwelling of General Samuel Ringgold who held an estate of over 17,000 acres, called "Conococheague Manor." General Ringgold's manor house is said to have been built in 1792 and designed by Benjamin H. Latrobe, architect of the U.S. Capitol. The house was situated on a bluff just north of a large spring called "Bai Yuka" by the Indians which is translated as Fountain Rock.

Drawings and prints that survive of Fountain Rock show that it was a large two-story dwelling with a hipped roof and a projecting pedimented central pavilion. It had two large internally placed chimneys rising symmetrically. The central or main section was seven bays in length and flanked by attached dependancies on both ends. Pedimented dormers were present on the east and west ends of the building. A circular drive led to the main or north entrance.

By the time General Ringgold died in 1829, most of his fortune had been dissapated. His remaining land holdings were sold at auction to satisfy his debts. When a 20-acre portion of Fountain Rock was purchased in 1841 for a church school, the house was in delapidated condition. The mansion house was remodeled and named Claggett Hall before St. James School was officially opened on October 2, 1842. In 1869, Claggett Hall was enlarged to three stories and apparently a mansard roof was added. The original Fountain Rock, renamed Claggett Hall was totally destroyed by fire in 1926. Shortly after the fire, the present Claggett Hall was erected.

All that remains of General Ringgold's complex are the front steps and a small stone smoke house located to the northeast of Claggett Hall. The smoke house is now a pottery studio.

The first structure to be built by St. James School was Kemp Hall, completed in 1851. It was totally consumed by fire, however, in 1857. Kemp Hall was rebuilt in 1869.

Other buildings on the campus date from the 20th century. The St. James campus contains approximately 328 acres and is not now in danger of destruction.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

WA-I-014

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

- Pre-Columbian
- ☐ 15th Century
- ☐ 16th Century
- ☐ 17th Century
- ☐ 18th Century
- ☒ 19th Century
- ☐ 20th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) *(If Applicable and Known)* school opened in 1842

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

- Aboriginal
- ☐ Prehistoric
- ☐ Historic
- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Architecture
- ☐ Art
- ☐ Commerce
- ☐ Communications
- ☐ Conservation
- ☒ Education
- ☐ Engineering
- ☐ Industry
- ☐ Invention
- ☐ Landscape Architecture
- ☐ Literature
- ☐ Military
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Political
- ☐ Religion/Philosophy
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Sculpture
- ☐ Social/Humanitarian
- ☐ Theater
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Urban Planning
- ☐ Other *(Specify)*

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. James School is significant not only for its role in the progress of education but also for its association with General Ringgold and Fountain Rock. Although little physical evidence remains of Ringgold's compound, it should be noted that he was a wealthy and influential resident of Washington County. A Brigadier General in the Maryland Militia, he entertained at Fountain Rock such visitors as James and Dolly Madison, Henry Clay and James Monroe. Fountain Rock was one of several buildings in Washington County designed by Benjamin H. Latrobe. Fortunately a few early pictures of the Latrobe structure remain.

Among the founders of St. James School were the Right Reverend William R. Whittingham, Bishop of Maryland and the Reverend Theodore Lyman, Rector of St. John's Church in Hagerstown, Maryland. St. James became one of the first Church schools in the United States, patterned after the St. Paul's School at College Point, New York, which had been the only such school in America. The school has functioned continuously except for a brief period from 1864 to 1869 when it was closed due to the Civil War and the Reconstruction.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

WA-I-014

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Minnick, Rosemary, "St. James, the School by the Spring "Bai Yuka'," The Cracker Barrel, Vol. 1, No. 5, October, 1971.

St. James School, "St. James School," Boston: Vincent-Curtis, 1967.

Williams, Thomas J. C., History of Washington County, Hagerstown, Md.: Mail Publishing Co., 1906.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY									OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES					
CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE						LATITUDE			LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds				Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"				°	'	"	°	'	"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"									
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"									
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"									

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 328 acres

Acreage Justification:

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:		COUNTY	
STATE:		COUNTY:	
STATE:		COUNTY:	
STATE:		COUNTY:	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Paula Stoner Dickey, Consultant

ORGANIZATION: Washington County Historic Sites Survey

DATE: January, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER: Court House Annex

CITY OR TOWN: Hagerstown

STATE: Maryland

12. State Liaison Officer Review: (Office Use Only)

Significance of this property is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

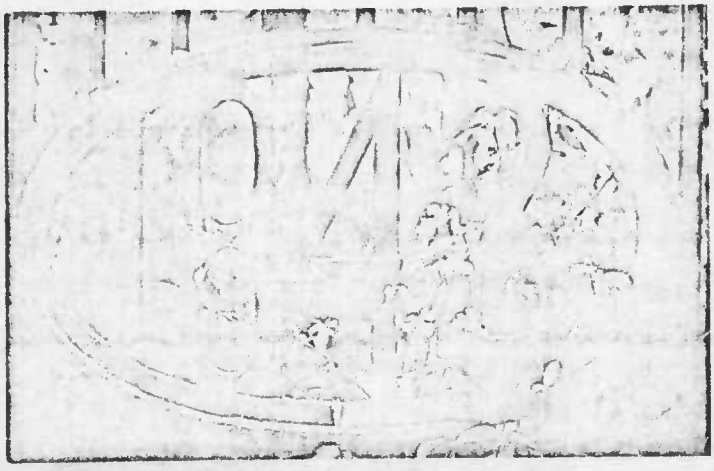
Signature

WA-I-014

THE CRACKER BARREL, VOL 1, NO. 5, OCTOBER, 1971

The Saint James School

by the Spring "Bai Yuka"



by Rosemary Minnick

Phantom coaches, a masked rider, and an Indian maiden figure in the legends of St. James School, the oldest Episcopal boy's boarding school in this country.

The story of St. James starts in 1792, when General Samuel Ringgold first came to this area and established an estate of over 17,000 acres, which was bounded on the south and west by the Potomac River, extended almost to the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east, and well beyond Hagerstown to the north. He named his vast property "Conococheague Manor." Thousands of Washington County residents today live within the boundaries of his original estate. Interested persons can trace their properties back to the early 1800's in the land records at the courthouse in Hagerstown.

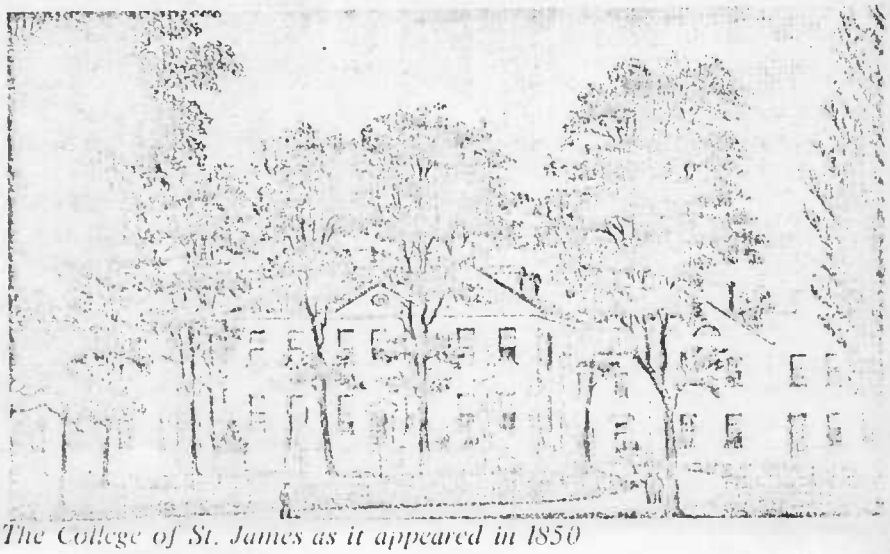
On his property, Samuel Ringgold built a mansion designed by Benjamin H. Latrobe, the architect who planned the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. In this home, Ringgold entertained lavishly, especially during the summers, until about 1820. Among the guests in his rambling, stucco manor were James and Dolly Madison, James Monroe, Henry Clay and other notables. After the death of his first wife, Ringgold married the granddaughter of President Madison, Maria Antoinette Hays, in a ceremony at the White House.

Dr. Kerfoot

There is a phantom coach w[illegible] some people claim to have [illegible] driving up to the steps and [illegible] porch of the main building, wh[illegible] all that remains of the original ma[illegible] after the fire of 1926. Each nigh[illegible] the clock strikes midnight, there [illegible] be the rattle of wheels, the sound [illegible] horses' hoofs and the rustling of si[illegible] dresses, as Samuel Ringgold retur[illegible] from Washington with his coach and four and his political friends.

The manor house was named Fountain Rock because of the spring nearby, which provides such abundant water that it is still the source of all the water for St. James School today. According to legend, an Indian Princess was abducted from her tribe long ago and, eluding her captors, fell exhausted at the edge of a rocky ledge. Wishing for a drink of water, she looked down and saw the rocks below her part, and clear water bubble forth as a fountain from a rock. Later she returned to her tribe and led them to the spring, which they called "bai yuka," translated as "fountain rock."

Ringgold's fortunes diminished before his death in 1829, and after passing through other ownerships, the house and twenty acres of ground were purchased in 1841 by some churchmen of the county, with the encouragement



The College of St. James as it appeared in 1850

WA-I-014

of their rector, the Rev. Theodore Lyman of St. John's Church in Hagerstown. They planned to found a church-oriented school with high academic standards.

St. James Hall opened October 3, 1842, and in 1844 the college received its charter from the Maryland State Legislature as the College of St. James. Ringgold's former ballroom and gambling hall was converted to a chapel. The first headmaster, Rev. John B. Kerfoot, soon incorporated a two year college preparatory course, as many of the early students were from the deep South and ill-prepared for college work.

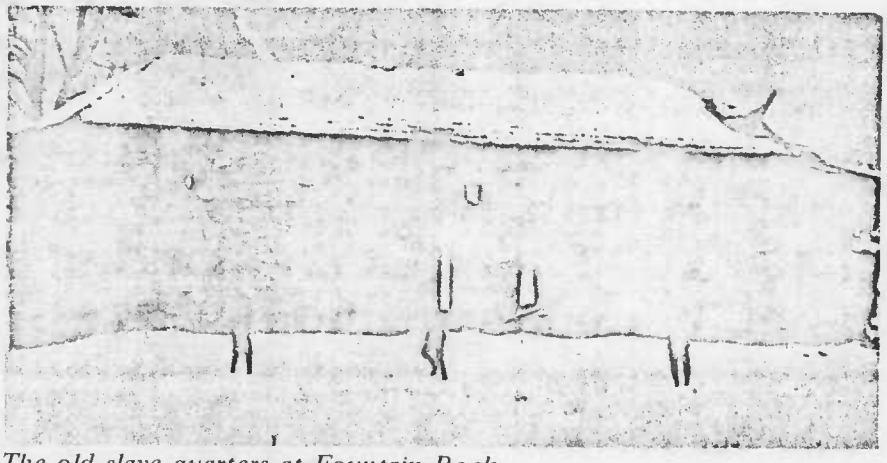
This program of study continued until the college closed for a few years near the end of the Civil War. In July 1863, the school was in the direct line of fire between the Union and Confederate forces. In 1864, the headmaster, Dr. Kerfoot, and Rev. Joseph Coit were arrested and held as hostages by the Confederates. St. James did not reopen until 1869, under the leadership of Mr. Henry Onderdonk. His wife was a great-granddaughter of Benjamin Latrobe, the architect of Fountain Rock. Their son, Adrian Onderdonk, served as headmaster from 1903-1939, by which time the school had an enrollment of more than 100 boys. Two of Mr. Onderdonks's grandsons are students now.

A more recent legend credits Mr. [illegible]on, who has been with St. James [illegible] 52 years, as having carried the baby grand piano from the main hall unassisted during the fire in March of 1926. Perhaps he did; no one else has been there long enough to remember. There are other valuable items in the rebuilt building - a portrait of Washington by Rembrandt Peale and a painting by William Singer, whose wife donated the building for the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts. Antiques and Oriental rugs decorate some rooms.

One of the oldest buildings still standing, dating from about 1792, is the old smoke house, which is now a pottery studio. Many buildings, and several hundred acres of additional ground, have been added to the campus in recent years, much of it under the directorship of Reverend John E. Owens, who has been headmaster of St. James since 1955. Father Owens has carried on the tradition of high standards of scholarship, discipline and religious training, but has kept pace with the new attitudes which current living requires.

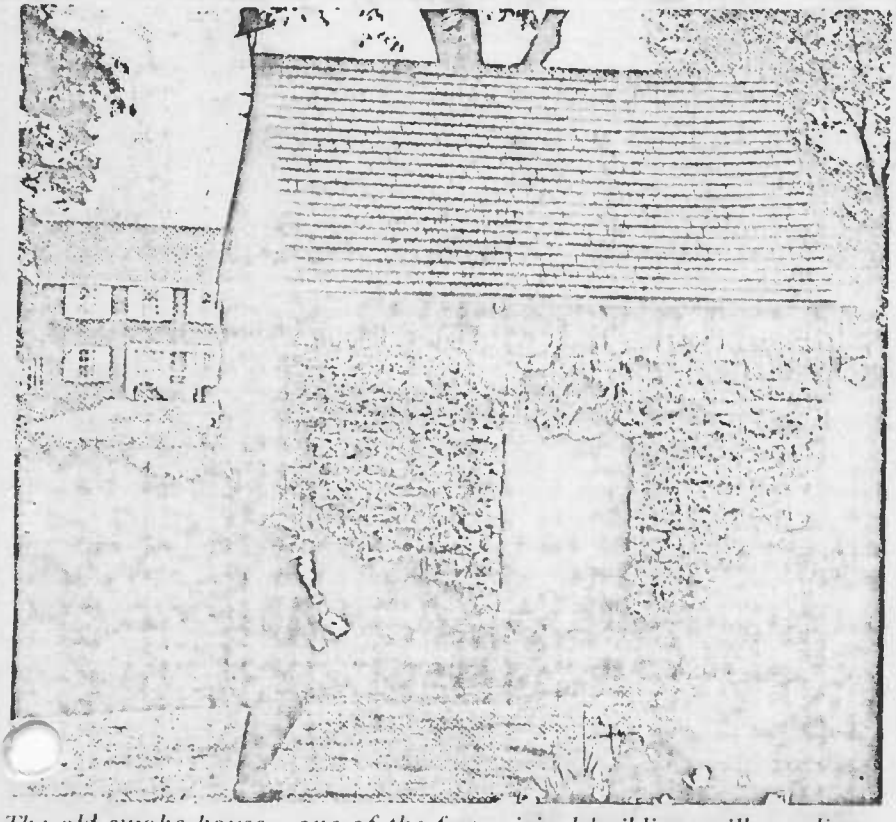
Students come to St. James from many states and countries. Every year there is an English exchange student and a German student. Usually there is also a boy from South America, the Orient, and the Sioux Indian tribe. There have been Buddhists - a student from Thailand graduated this year - Mohammedans, and Christians of all faiths. While nearby states provide a large percentage of students, a student from Nevis in the West Indies and one from Panama have enrolled this year.

Although academic pursuits occupy much of their time, the students still keep alive legends such as the masked rider. At midnight, an unknown rider on horseback is supposed to haunt the grounds. Some say it is General Ringgold, watching over his old homestead. Others say it is a young man named Fairfax, who was kept from meeting his love by French Ambassador Rambeau some sixteen decades ago. Many people have reported seeing the rider, especially at Halloween. Whoever it might be, look for him at the garden near the end of the main hall, after twelve, when the moon is brightest.



The old slave quarters at Fountain Rock

Waiting for the train, 1904

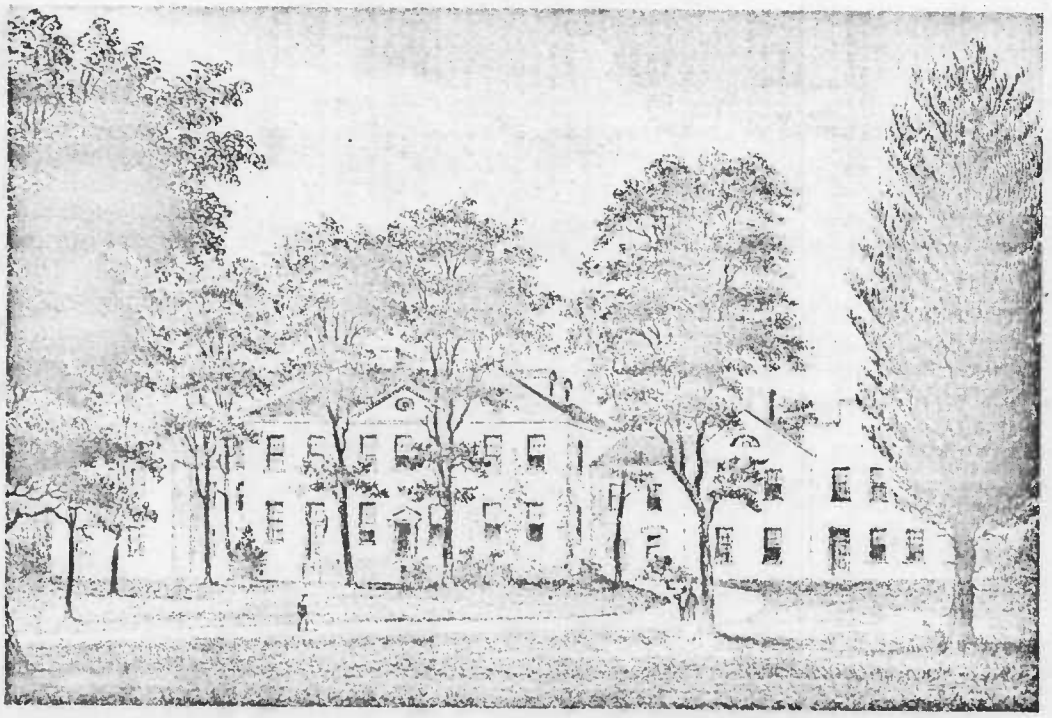


The old smoke house....one of the few original buildings still standing

Picture credits: St. James School

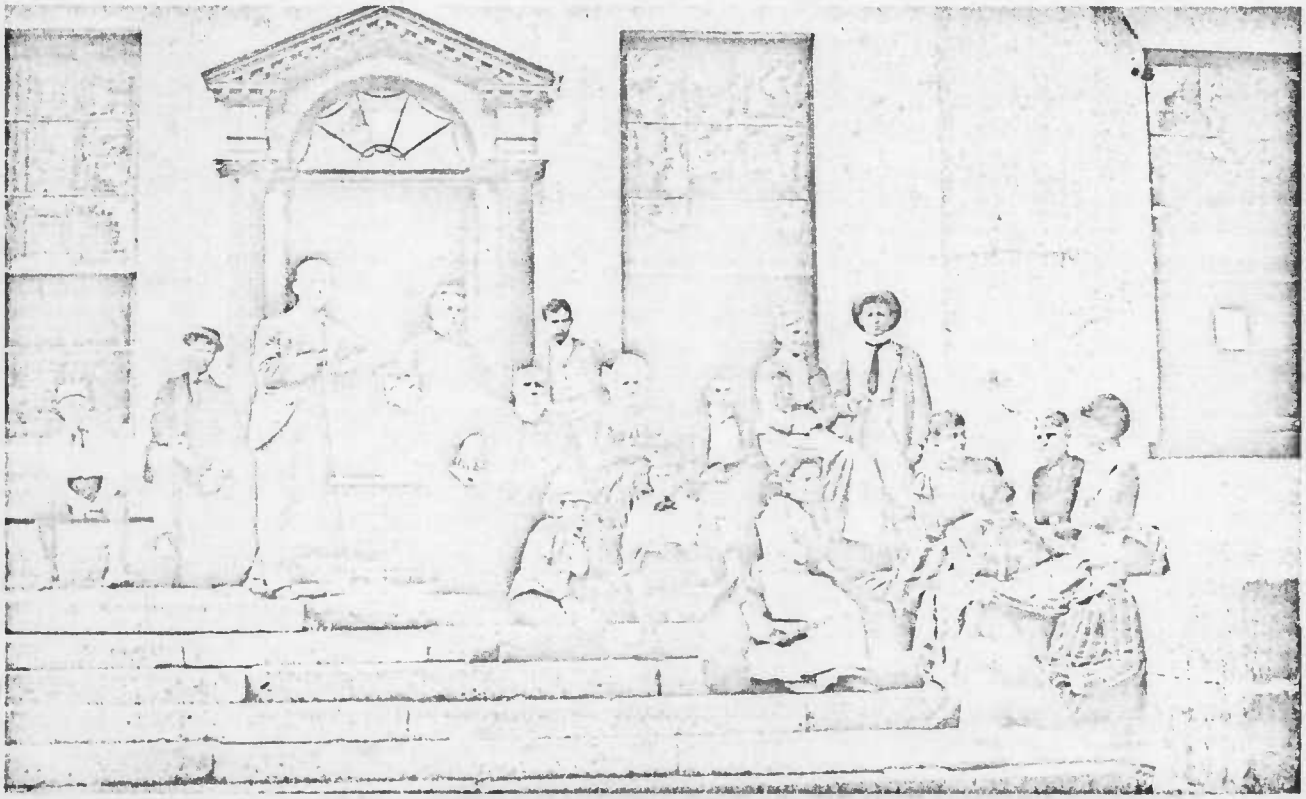
WA-I-014

The College of St. James as it appeared during the Civil War, and (below) in 1850.



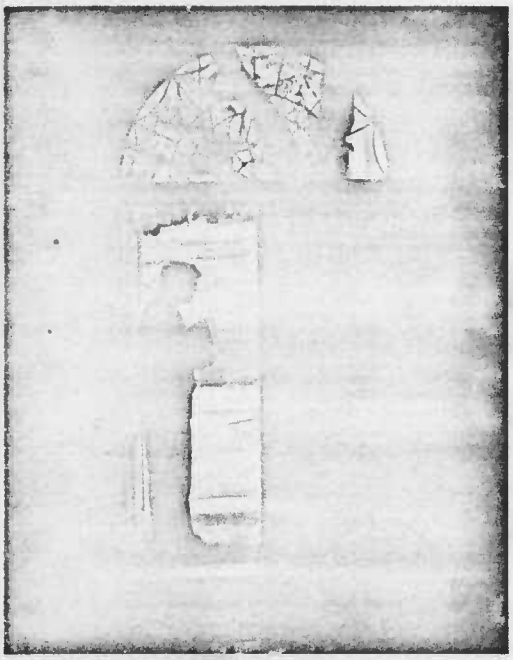
WA-I-014

Rear view of Claggett Hall before 1926.



Mr. Henry Onderdonk and family on steps of main building — 1893.

WA-I-014



Rear view of Claggett Hall, 1894.

Claggett Hall before the fire in 1926.

Near the end of the 1966 school year an architectural survey of Claggett Hall revealed that the building would have to be completely renovated in order to comply with State of Maryland safety regulations; this was a not wholly unexpected decision, since Claggett had not received major repairs since 1926. Time was obviously of the essence, so the Trustees reluctantly authorized the borrowing of sufficient funds to cover the cost. Remarkably, the whole renovating job was completed during the summer, and the building was ready for occupancy, even to new furnishings in all the rooms, when the boys returned in September.

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