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RECOLLECTIONS

*Of The
East Building
Before It Was
Church Home & Infirmary*



William N. Batchelor

Published to commemorate
the 125th anniversary of the founding of
Church Home & Hospital
Baltimore, Maryland
1857-1982



The author, William N. Batchelor, at the age of 82.

The East Building is by far the oldest structure on the Church Home & Hospital campus. It was built for the Washington Medical College in 1836 during Andrew Jackson's second term and was the site of Edgar Allan Poe's pathetic death 13 years later.

Worn by time and hardly adequate for the care of patients, the building was destined for demolition under a project planned for the late 1970's. But the project was delayed for three years, during which the estimated cost of construction increased 50% through inflation alone. A more modest alternative emerged, and the East Building was saved.

These recollections tell of the years 1855-57 when William Batchelor 2nd, a veteran of the War of 1812 and a flag-bearer at the Battle of North Point, and his family lived in the building as caretakers. They were written in later life by Mr. Batchelor's grandson, William N. Batchelor (1850-1938) and were found among the possessions of his daughter by his granddaughter, LaVerne Fleming. The Batchelors occupied the building in the days immediately before it was bought by the trustees of Church Home & Infirmary to house the enterprise they had just founded.

Church Home & Hospital — the name was changed in 1943 — first published these recollections in 1976 on the occasion of the closing of the School of Nursing. But the press run was short and the publication received little notice. Now that the East Building is being renovated for offices, a major building project is in the offing, and Church Home & Hospital is marking the 125th anniversary of its founding, a second publication seems particularly appropriate.

Not all that Mr. Batchelor wrote is included here. Five or six pages having no bearing on the building have been omitted. Misspellings have been corrected and punctuation added here and there. Otherwise, the recollections are as he wrote them. Explanatory notes will be found in the back.

Frederick T. Wehr
May, 1982



*Old Defenders.
Heroes of the Battle of North Point Sept 12-1814
And Bombardment of Fort Mifflin Sep. 19-1814*

This photograph, taken at City Hall in 1878, is of the surviving members of the Old Defenders, veterans of the War of 1812. The caption is in William N. Batchelor's hand. The man in the center holding the flagstaff is William Batchelor 2nd, the 'grandfather' referred to in these recollections. The flag, which unfortunately does not show, is the one Mr. Batchelor carried at North Point and which is now on display at the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House.

I was born on April 25, 1850 in Wilmington, Delaware, at 12:30 A.M. I was the son of Christopher Columbus Batchelor and Liza Jane (nee Johnson). I was named William Nicholas, William after my father's father and Nicholas after my mother's father.

My mother was a Catholic. My mother's grandfather, Paul Ritchard, was one of the founders of St. Patrick's Church on the corner of Broadway and Bank Street. He came to America from France with General Lafayette and was an aide-de-camp to General George Washington when he resigned his commission as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army on the 23rd day of December, 1783.

I was brought to Baltimore at the age of six weeks to the home of my grandparents, William Batchelor 2nd and his wife Elizabeth (nee Kelley). It was the beginning of my life under the same roof he lived under. It sheltered me the most of my life while he lived. From what I have heard them say of William Batchelor 2nd, his love for me was great and he called me his baby. I believe up until he died no boy or man ever had a better grandfather than I was blessed with. No man ever knew another man better than I knew William Batchelor 2nd.¹

What you are about to read is from my memory of things I have seen and heard about the 1850's.

My grandfather, William Batchelor 2nd became watchman at the Fells Point Savings Institution on Broadway, third door from the northeast corner of Fleet Street, right after it had been robbed the latter part of May, 1850. My grandfather was 63 years old at the time. It was about this time, when I was six weeks old, that my parents brought me to the home of my grandparents to live.

By the time I was five years old, there was some trouble about Washington College which is known today as the Church Home and Infirmary.² I never did hear what the trouble was. Must have been money. Anyway, Washington College was taken over by the Fells Point Savings Institution in 1855 and, at the time, the college was better known as Fairmount College because it was built on Fairmount Hill.³

Before this college was built, doctors had a hard time trying to find their patients' trouble. If an operation was proposed by a doctor, nine times out of ten it would not be allowed by the patient. Doctors in the early years were not in many cases successful, which made the public dread operations, and they would rather die than let a doctor operate on them. Often when a person died and the doctor wanted the body he would get grave robbers to get the dead body which would be buried in the day and be delivered to the doctor's office in the dead of night. The cost would be about ten dollars to the doctor. Grave robbers never opened the whole grave. They only opened a small hole at the head of the grave till they hit the base. Then they took their iron rod with a hook on the end of it and would break a hole through the box or coffin they buried their dead in in those days. Then after they had broken through they would use this iron rod with a hook to catch the corpse under the chin and draw it up out of the grave, fill up the small hole, place the corpse in a bag, then deliver the corpse to the doctor that would be waiting for it. Building the Washington College was intended to break up grave robbing and dissection that was often done in the homes of doctors.

Washington College never met with any success with regard to operations which it was intended

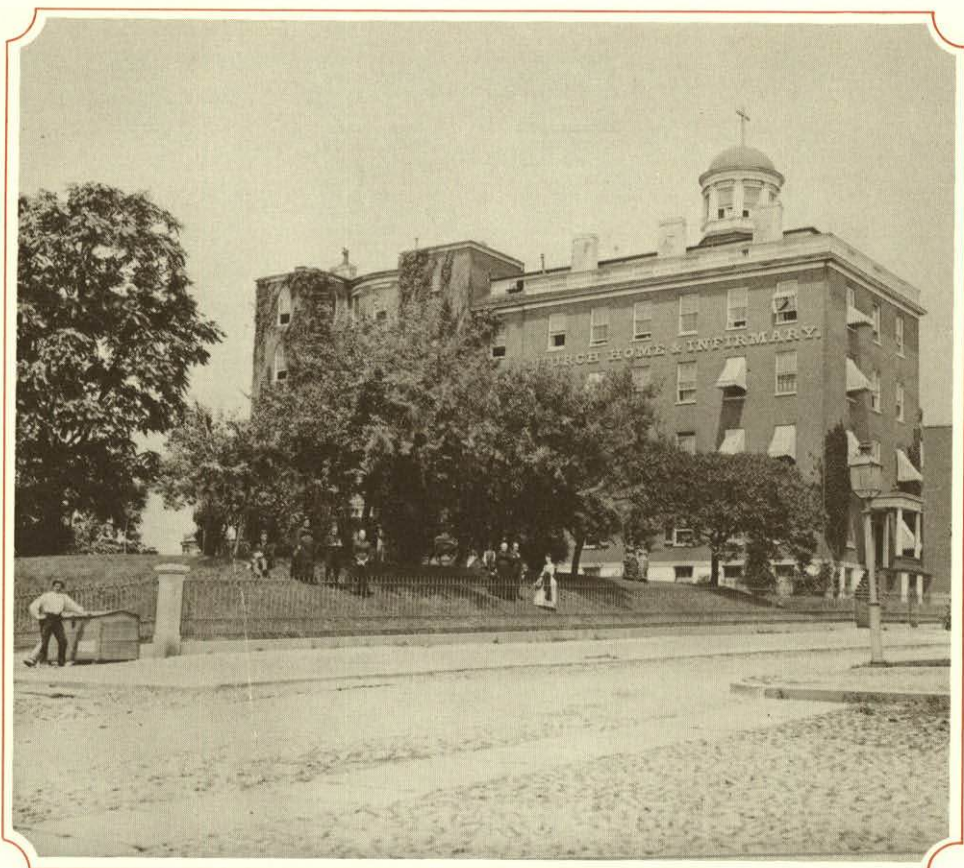
for. There were many corpses taken there which was about all they could get to operate on. It was said there had been people kidnapped and taken in there which made Washington College a horror to the people in the city of Baltimore. After the sun went down you hardly ever saw a person anywhere near it.

Washington College became a complete failure and in the spring of 1855 the Fells Point Savings Institution took over the building. On the day it happened, William Batchelor 2nd and his whole Batchelor family moved into Washington College to take care of it. By the time they all got in the college, night was closing in. The dread of the college with the dead and the moaning of the wind and slamming of doors through the college that night drove the whole Batchelor family into one room on the southwest corner and there wasn't one of them closed their eyes that night. About twelve o'clock that night there was a rattling of the front gate that made things worse. The rattling kept up till my father, Christopher Columbus Batchelor, and my two uncles went out to see what it meant. They found a man with a bag standing up against the fence that had a dead body in it that was to be delivered that night to the college. They had a hard time making the man understand there were no more doctors at the Washington College. The only thing he could do was to carry the corpse to the home of the doctor that ordered it. Everyone was anxious for William Batchelor 2nd to come from the Fells Point Savings Institution where he was a watchman to let him know they were going to move right out — one night was enough for them. At this time I was about five years old but I remember the excitement there was in that room that night.

At that time there was an old cemetery that ran from Wolfe Street to Chester Street in between Baltimore and Lombard Streets. I think it was the oldest cemetery in east Baltimore. No doubt in the world, many that had been buried there never stayed in their grave twenty-four hours before they were on a dissecting table. Some, no doubt, were taken to Washington College. I saw a body of a woman dug up that had turned to a dirty yellow stone in this cemetery in 1858.

Not a lonelier or darker place could be found than around the college at night. Outside you could not see anyone you would be talking to. The only light outside was a lamp on the corner of Hampstead Street⁴ and Broadway and one on the corner of Fayette Street and Broadway. They burned fish oil, and the light they gave was a very little but better than a tallow candle. Only thing they were good for was to let you know you were at the corner of that block. Inside, the only light used then was tallow candles at night and tinder boxes to light the candles and make fires.

All were glad when daylight came and William Batchelor 2nd came home. He found the women had made up their minds to go right out and get a house and move out of the college immediately. After William Batchelor 2nd finished talking to them and ridiculing them for being afraid, they all quieted down and went to work getting breakfast ready. After breakfast was over, the women commenced to straighten themselves out selecting the living quarters they wanted on each side of the hall that ran from the front of the college on Broadway back to the hall that ran north and south and where the stairs led up to the following floor from the hall.



This photograph was taken in 1876, the year of the U.S. Centennial. Nineteen years earlier, in 1857, the building had been acquired for \$20,500 to house Church Home and Infirmary, a merging of St. Andrew's Infirmary and the Church Home Society. The new owners mounted on the cupola the cross which had survived the fire which had destroyed old St. Paul's Church. Otherwise, the building would have looked much the same during the days when it was occupied by the Batchelors. Note that the windows of the cupola are open for ventilation. Almost all the iron fence in the foreground is still in place today.

I remember a great many things I saw and heard them talking about I never forgot. After breakfast, William Batchelor 2nd and his two sons, Christopher Columbus Batchelor and Andrew Jackson Batchelor and his son-in-law David Young, gathered a lot of rope and heavy cord and started to investigate the Washington College. I went along with my grandfather. We went to the basement first. There wasn't much in the front part but a lot of rubbish and three barrels lidded up. I heard later on they contained human bones. In the back part of the basement was a large pile of tan and cord wood which the doctors would not saw, and they could not get anyone to come in there to saw it for them. Instead, they burned tan. That was nothing more than bark of trees ground up which made a fire most like coal.

After going through the basement we went up to the second floor into a very large round room⁵ in the back part of the college on the west side of the hall than ran north and south. There was a door at each end of this hall and all the water that was used in the college was gotten from a pump on the outside of the door on the north side of the college.⁶ This door sat back in a recess about ten feet and on the west side of this recess the windows were boxed in and were used to hoist corpses to the fourth floor, the floor the dissecting room was on. This spot outside of the college was a dark and lonesome spot. No one went out there for water after night closed in on the college. Childlike, I was afraid to go out there even in the daytime.

After we left the second floor we went up to the third floor. This round room, just like the one below it, was thought to be a lecture room. There was a gallery⁷ where the students sat, a large table, chairs,

blackboards with skeletons drawn on them, and a few glass cases around the sides of the room containing a lot of books was mostly what was in the room.

We then went up to the fourth floor. The big round room on this floor was the dissection room. Part of a dead woman, salted down and covered over with a piece of white linen cloth, was found in this room lying on a table. Around the room against the wall there were a few glass cases with surgical tools of all kinds that were used in those days and two skeletons. I heard them say one was a man and one was a woman. There were bones from human bodies on top of the cases and some were in the glass cases that were against the wall. There was a gallery on the south side for the students to sit in when there was to be an operation or dissection of some part of a dead body. There were also several clean and dirty aprons hanging around this round room. It looked like they had been forced out in a hurry from the condition the doctors had left the college in. On each corner of the room there was a small room, except the southwest corner which was a stairway that led from the yard to the top floor and was used by the students after they came in through the gate on the southwest corner of the yard.⁸ In a small room on the northwest corner of the top floor they had a brick furnace in the corner of the room with a large iron pot in it which contained grease that looked very much like butter. Outside of this room lying around on the floor were pieces of the human body. A large quantity of human bones were found in the other small room on the northeast corner of the same floor.

As we went back downstairs, William Batchelor 2nd and his two sons and son-in-law fastened all the doors with rope and nailed the windows

throughout the west end of the college. What was seen was kept from the women, for it never would have been good for them to know what had been found in the investigation by the men folks.

When William Batchelor 2nd went to work, he told the president of the Fells Point Savings Institution what was found at the college. The next day, some of the bank officers came and looked the college over. The next day, Charles Elie and another man carried away the human bones and other parts of human bodies in barrels in their wagons. In two weeks most everything but the glass cases around the big round rooms was taken out.

The second night at the college was just as bad for getting on your nerves as the first night, and it made the Batchelor family huddle together again the best part of the night. The doors commenced to slam again and the wind coming through the broken panes caused a dreadful moaning through the college. My father's two hound dogs that were fastened outside would break out howling now and then throughout the night. All this was anything but pleasing to the Batchelor family to hear. When day came, after breakfast and after my father had fed his dogs, the men gathered more rope and nails. They went through the college again to fasten all of the doors in the front part of the building and placed glass in the most broken windows in the back part of the building. After they finished they felt that there would not be any more door slamming during the night and by placing new glass in the broken windows there would be less moaning through the college by the draft from the broken panes.

The third night at the college was a little better. The moaning from the draft died down a great deal and

occasionally when a door would slam it would sound far away. After the Batchelor family had been living at the college a week, they became used to it and very little attention was paid to what went on at night.

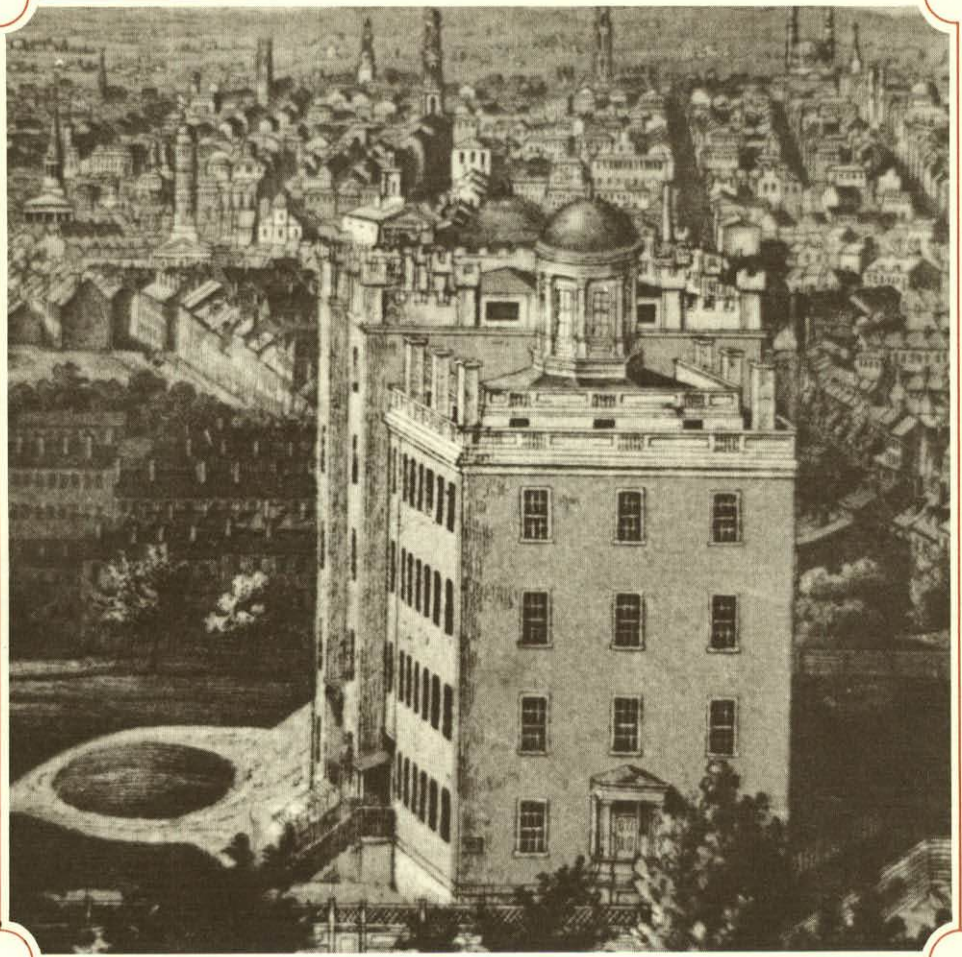
The family was in the college but a few weeks when my sister, my cousin and I used to go all over the college clear up to the dome where we could see all over Baltimore and the Chesapeake Bay. One time I got lost in the building. Father and uncle hunted till they found me. I got a spanking when they did for untying some of the doors they had fastened.

On the south side of Broadway in the front of the college there was a hill about ten feet high.⁹ The highest part was toward Hampstead Street and it tapered off at Fayette Street. There were a great many large trees on this hill. To the east, where Jackson Square is now, stood a two story white tavern which could be seen from the third floor of the college.¹⁰ The closest house on the west side of the college was on the west side of Bond Street. Fayette Street was on the north side and Baltimore Street on the south side. The college stood on Fairmount Hill all alone with its tall trees in the yard. On a moonlit night ugly shadows would be cast upon the college. My sister, cousin and I spent many a happy day in that big yard. We had a swing and a hammock under some of those high trees. We three children were having a fine time until Captain Hughes¹¹ put his horse in the college yard where there was plenty of grass for him to get. He was a black horse and he was a pretty wild fellow. He would rear and tear around the yard and to catch him they would have an awful time. Whenever he was in the yard we children were kept inside and I watched him many times from the window.

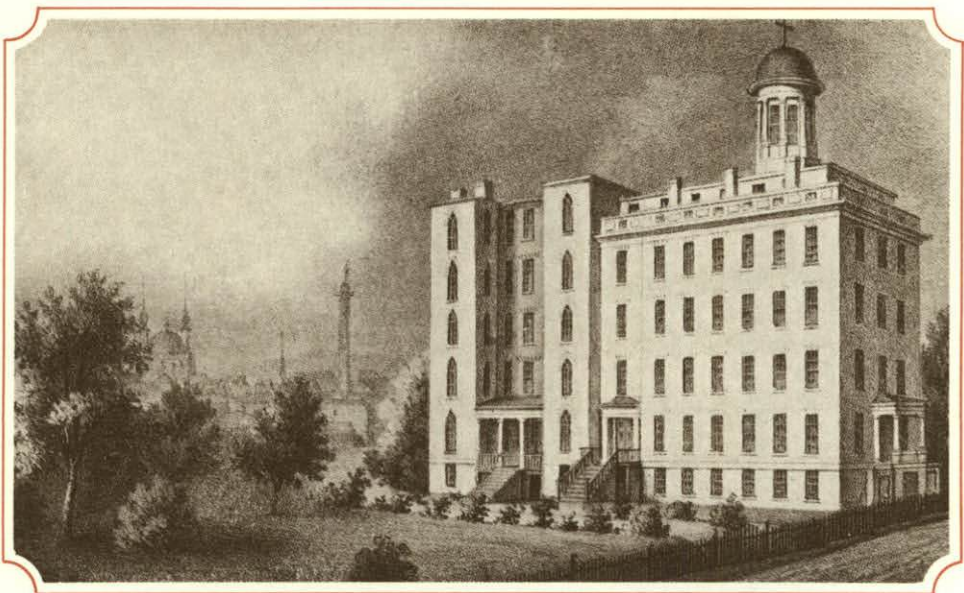
We had not been in the college very long when my uncles Andrew Batchelor and David Young went from the yard up the stairs in the southwest corner that led to every floor in the building. When they got to the top floor they saw a trap door in the ceiling but they could not reach it. Arrangements were made to get to it and instead of leading to the roof they found a loft. The loft contained the finest kind of male and female clothes. Besides common every day suits they found a man's work suit and a wood sawyers leather pad they put on their knee to hold the wood steady on the wood horse when sawing wood. Sometime before the Batchelor family moved into the college there was a man, a wood sawyer, who was missing and never was heard of again. There was no investigation about such things like we have in our day and the Batchelor family always believed that work suit and leather pad belonged to that missing wood sawyer. I never saw them, but I heard the clothes were sold to a rag man.

After the Batchelor family had been in the college about two months it seemed like all dread of the college was gone. In the evening the family would sit out on the front steps long after dark and people would pass back and forth on Broadway which became a common thing day and night.¹²

By the time the Batchelor family was in the college about six months, three or four houses were built on the north side of the college from the corner store which was kept by Sergeant Ray of the new police force under Thomas Swann. On the south side of the college, on the southwest corner of Broadway and Hampstead Street, Mr. Conner built his home. What I am refering to happened in the 1850's while the Batchelors were living in Washington College.



This is a detail from the lithograph entitled *View of Baltimore City from Fairmount* published by E. Sachse and Co. in 1858, the year in which the East Building was occupied by Church Home and Infirmary and the year after the Batchelors moved out. There are two prints of this lithograph in the Hospital and one in the Home. The best preserved hangs in the Hospital's Admitting Office.



Another lithograph of Church Home and Infirmary, this one dated 1859. A comparison of this picture with the 1876 photograph substantiates the view that the exterior of the building was unmodified between 1859 and 1876.



The greatest attraction in those days were balloon ascensions. I remember well the time Mr. Elliott was to go up in a balloon and take a horse up with him from a lot on the northwest corner of Broadway and Baltimore Street. They had the lot all fenced in, and the people must have come from all parts of the city for the place was a human mass to see the wonderful feat Elliott was going to do. Besides the great crowd on Broadway there was a right good crowd on the grounds of Washington College beside the Batchelor family. They were a long time inflating the balloon. There was not much gas in those days. There was only one gas house at that time which was a one horse affair. It was located along Jones Falls south of Hill Street. After several attempts were made to lift the horse with the balloon the mob started to tear down the fence. Mr. Elliott jumped in the basket that was attached to the balloon and as he raised over the fence the crowd tried to get a hold of the basket to pull him down. Elliott grabbed a bag of sand (in those days they used sand for ballast) and threw the sand all over the mob. The balloon ascended faster and out of reach of the mob which nearly had their eyes put out with the sand. The air was coming from the southeast and the balloon headed right for Washington College. Mr. Elliott had to throw out another bag of sand so he could clear the college. He just missed the dome on the college as he went by.¹³

While the Batchelors were in the college, someone tried several times to set fire to the building but the fire was discovered before any damage was done. Both times it happened it was on the west side of the building and if they had been successful it could have been seen all over Baltimore in those days.

Also, while the Batchelor family was in the college there was a family by the name of Millwright who believed they were great prophets.¹⁴ I think it was in the year 1856 they prophesied the world would come to an end on a certain day in July. That year, a great many commenced to change their ways saying their prayers before they lay down to sleep and attending their churches as often as they could. From what I heard when July came, the great time when the end of the world would surely come to an end, a great many people actually lost their minds. They were giving away everything they possessed and the churches were packed. Finally, the day for the end of the world came. I can remember that day, for there was an awful storm that raised in the northwest. The clouds were so black and heavy and it got so dark we had to light candles to see. My aunt, Mrs. Elizabeth Davis, had set me on a broad window sill and held on to me. Every time the lightning flashed, I could see Captain Hughes' horse tearing around the yard. It lightnined and thundered terrible. I could feel the trembling of my aunt's arms as she held me tight. I saw my whole family in a great confusion like they did not know what to do. It rained awful hard, and while this trying time was raging on, an awful flash of lightning lit up the whole place and at the same time an awful crash of thunder shook the college. It tore part of the roof off the college and made a fearful crash when it fell against the wall and the windows of the room on the southeast corner of the college. The Batchelor family had gathered and they really did think the end had come when the roof came tearing down which made them think the college was tumbling down. After it was all over the sun shone and from what I saw and heard I don't think the sun was ever more thankfully received than it was by the excitable nervous shook people than on that

day the world was to come to an end in July, 1856.

An investigation began to see what damage had been done by the lightning. The upper floors of the college were pretty well washed out where the roof had been lifted off. The roof that had been torn away was a flat roof and had been covered with zinc instead of shingles or slate generally used in those days.

I was more interested in looking out of a window for Captain Hughes' black horse in the yard but I could not see him. I learned the wind had blown the gate open in the southwest corner of the yard and the horse had run home.

The Batchelor family lived in the Washington College 18 months. I think it was in the year of 1857 when it was taken over by the Episcopalian denomination and our stay at the college ended.¹⁵



Notes

1 William Batchelor 2nd, who was born at Ft. McHenry, died in 1885 at the age of 97. The author of these recollections was his devoted grandson who preserved old William's North Point flag until 1932, when he presented it to the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House. He died in 1938 and is buried with his grandfather in the same grave in Mt. Carmel Cemetery in southeast Baltimore.

2 The East Building has had a number of occupants since it was erected in 1836. The first was the Washington Medical College, which became Washington University of Baltimore in 1839. Washington University was well respected at one time, in part because it was one of the few medical schools in the world in which students lived in residence. In 1849, the faculty concluded that the school was too far from the center of Baltimore and moved some of the facilities to a building at Lombard and Hanover Streets, leaving the East Building to serve for a while longer as a hospital. By 1851, financial problems had become insurmountable. Both buildings were sold, and Washington University temporarily closed.

Although Mr. Batchelor's recollections indicate that the East Building was in use until shortly before the arrival of the Batchelor family in 1855, there are only vague references to its being used as a hospital after 1851.

It was in 1857 that the building was acquired for \$20,500 for joint occupancy by St. Andrew's Infirmary and the Church Home Society under the new name of the Church Home and Infirmary.

Washington University, incidentally, was reorganized in 1867. After several relocations, mergers, and changes of name, it was ultimately absorbed in 1916 into the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

3 The names Fairmount Hill and Washington Hill are, for all practical purposes, interchangeable. The local community association now refers to the neighborhood as Washington Hill, which name is derived from the medical institution referred to above. But a block away stands the Fairmount Hill Junior-Senior High School and Fairmount Avenue forms the southern boundary of the Church Home and Church Hospital campus.

4 Now Fairmount Avenue

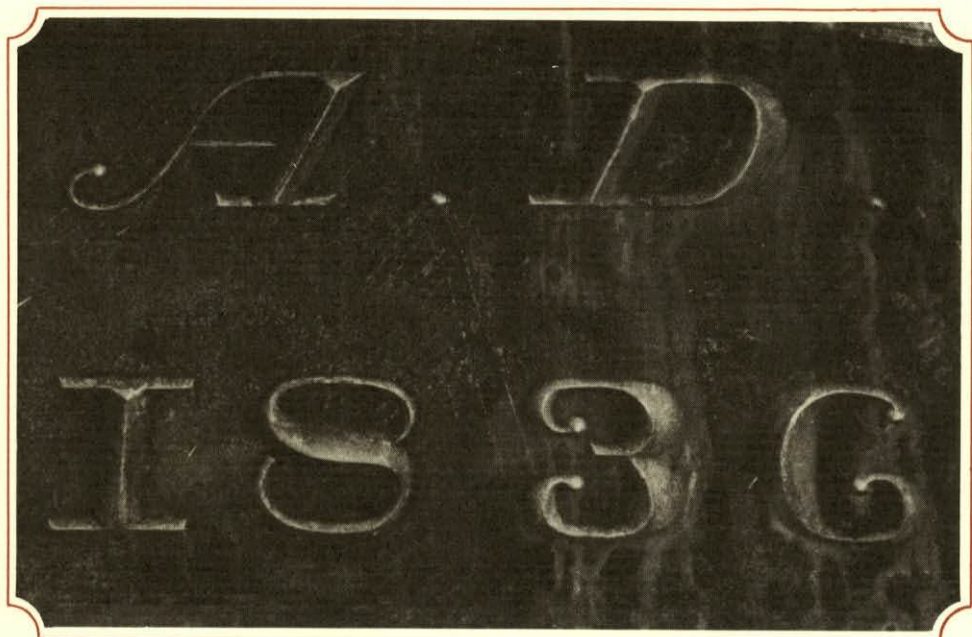
5 The Rotunda

- 6 In 1980, while replacing an access panel on the ground level of the Northwest Wing, workmen discovered the pump in a totally enclosed space which had been sealed years before.
- 7 Presumably, this is the gallery, portions of which are still in evidence on the fourth floor.
- 8 If Mr. Batchelor's orientations are correct, there was a staircase in 1855 running the full height of the East Building in the tower in the southwest corner. There is a staircase in that tower today. Yet there is a plaque under the third floor window of the tower which reads "Here, before alteration of this building, was the room in which Edgar Allan Poe died, October 7, 1849." Furthermore, on page 18 of Judith Robinson's *Ensign on a Hill* are these two sentences: "The tower room in which Edgar Allen (*sic*) Poe had died was among things improved away. A staircase serving all the upper floors ran where it had been in the southwest corner of the main building." The author is referring to improvements made in 1857 before Church Home and Infirmary moved in. Adding to the confusion is Jane Nash's excerpts from the annual report of 1887 in which she states "A Stairway extending its entire length will be placed in the South-west Tower."
- All this raises some questions. Did Mr. Poe die in the southwest tower? When was the staircase installed? The reader can doubtless think of others. Certainly, the tower landings are not big enough for both stairs and patient rooms.
- 9 This sentence is confusing since Broadway runs north and south and, consequently, can have no south side. Apparently Mr. Batchelor is referring to the steep slope between what is now the parking lot for the Annex and Fairmount Avenue, which, as noted above, was formerly known as Hampstead Street.
- 10 Jackson Square is the area now bounded by Fayette, Ann, Fairmount, and Broadway. Almost all of it is now occupied by the Fairmount Hill Junior-Senior High School.
- 11 Mr. Batchelor spelled the Captain's surname several ways in his manuscript.
- 12 The reader is reminded that, in the old days, the main entrance to the building was on Broadway. The original Broadway face of the building was covered over by a series of modifications, the first of which was made in the late 1800's.
- 13 'Professor' (he preferred the title) Elliott apparently made several balloon ascensions in the Baltimore area. *The Sun* of July 7, 1856 records the outcome of his well-advertised "Excursion to Jupiter and Mars" in "The Monster Balloon." This attempt fared no better

than the one described by Mr. Batchelor. After colliding with two buildings, the Professor and his tattered balloon " . . . came to a water landing in the Patapsco near Curtis' Creek." *The Sun* notes finally that " . . . had he not have lit in the water, a most uncomfortable jar would have been the result."

14 Mr. Batchelor is probably referring to the Millerites, followers of William Miller, who developed an interpretation of the Bible which indicated that a fiery end to the world and the Second Coming of Christ would occur in 1843. The year came and went with no apocalypse, but Miller's followers accepted his explanation that errors in calculation indicated a later date. For a decade after his death in 1849, his followers continued to set various dates for the Second Coming. The 1856 prophecy to which Mr. Batchelor refers was undoubtedly one of these. The Second Adventists are considered descendants of the Millerites.

15 It is probably worth noting that, from 1887 until 1907, there existed in the immediate neighborhood of Church Home and Infirmary another medical institution, the Baltimore University School of Medicine. It was situated at 21-29 North Bond Street in a building which later became a church and, still later, a furniture refinishing shop. The building was demolished a few years ago when Church Home's Fairmount Avenue parking lot was expanded to the west. At the time of the demolition, the only evidence of the old School of Medicine was a tarnished, concave mirror above what was once the operating room.



This is the datestone of the East Building. Hidden from public view by later construction, it is embedded in the south face of the round part of the building.



Church Home & Hospital
100 North Broadway
Baltimore, Md. 21231