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**The Tucker Hall Fire**

and

**Plans for the New Law Building**

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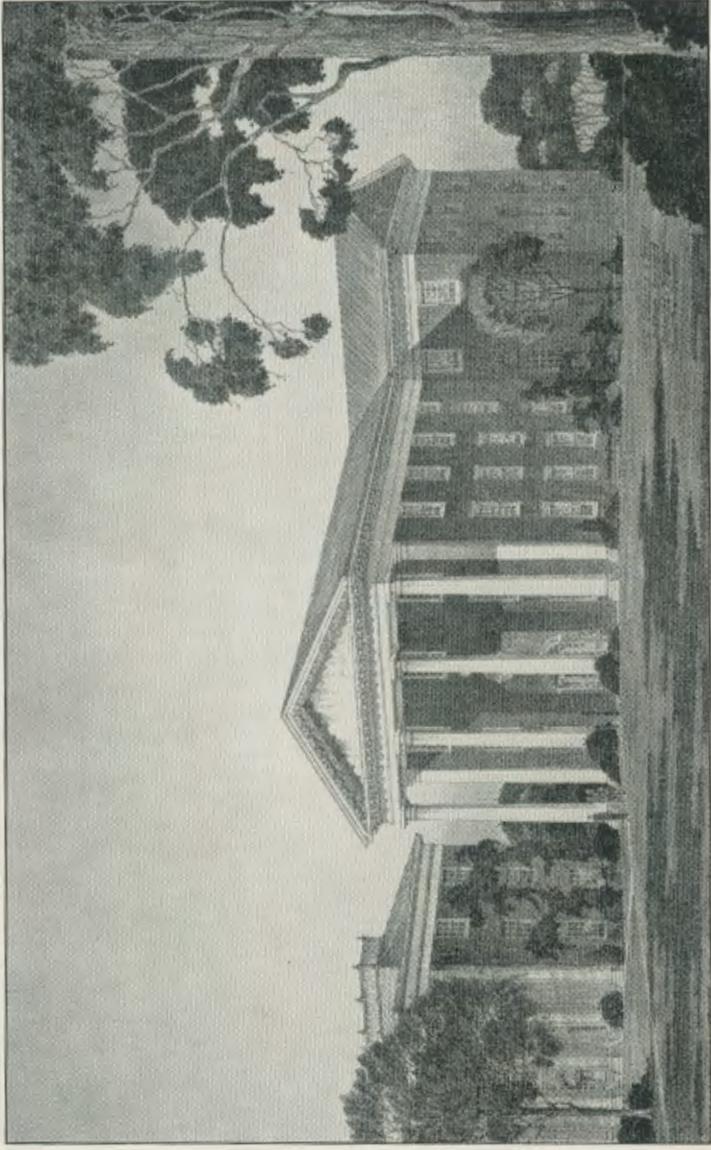
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SPECIAL BULLETIN

WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY

LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA



Architect's Sketch of Proposed New Law Building

# The Tucker Hall Fire

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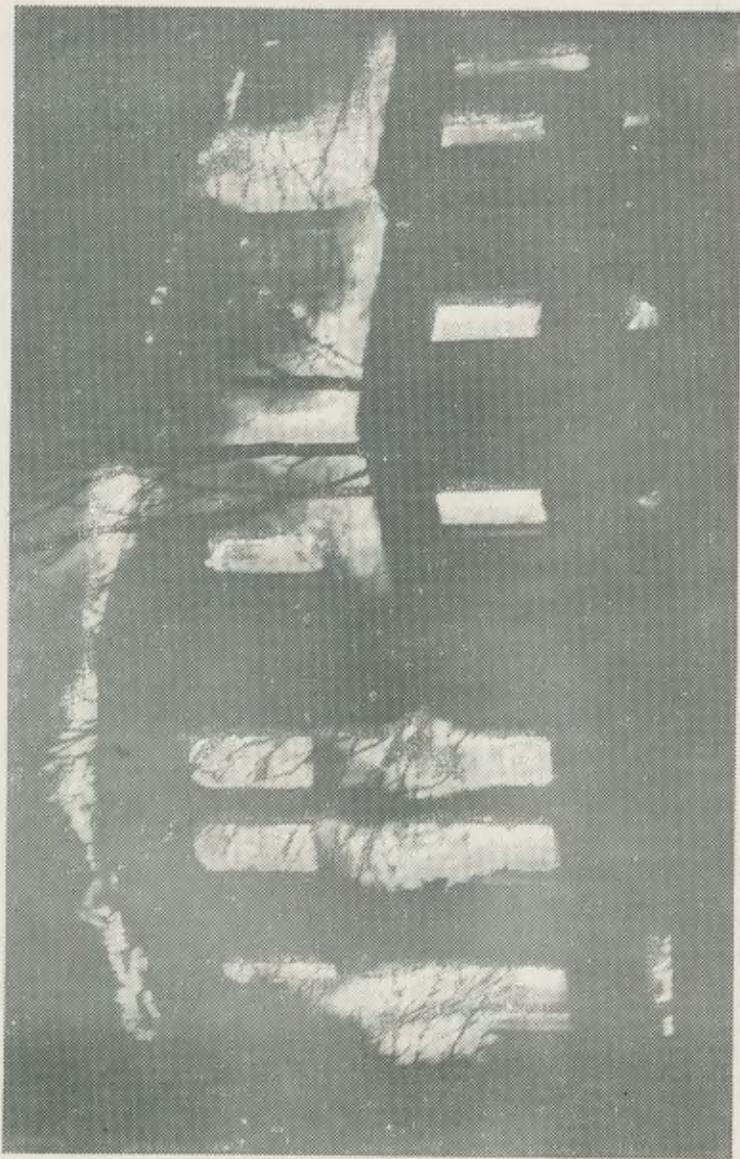
## I. THE BURNING OF TUCKER HALL

While the town of Lexington was already excited over a devastating fire in a large lumberyard during the early morning hours of December 16, the residents on the Washington and Lee campus were startled by students rushing across the lawn, shouting, "The college is on fire." Early arrivals who saw the flames darting from Tucker Hall, the law building, both in the front and the rear, realized that the building was certainly doomed.

So general were the flames that there was no opportunity to rescue the books from the library, or the portraits of John Marshall and the bust of John Randolph Tucker, both of which were highly prized by the generations of law students who were familiar with these countenances as a part of their daily associations. The books and private papers in Professor McDowell's offices were saved; the notes, manuscripts, and papers of Dean Moreland and Professors Williams, Johnson, and Light were a complete loss.

Though the Lexington fire department responded promptly to the alarm, some of its equipment had been injured in fighting the fire in the lumberyard, and it was at once evident that help would be needed, if Washington Hall and Dr. Howe's house were to be saved. So a quick call for aid was telephoned to Buena Vista and to Staunton. With the new road to Buena Vista the distance from Lexington has been so much shortened that in about twenty-five minutes from the time of the call, the Buena Vista fire department was throwing large streams of water on Dr. Howe's house, displacing the efforts of students who had been trying to keep the house cooled off with garden hose and buckets.

Those alumni whose memories date back to the days of the horse and buggy and the stagecoach can hardly imagine the speed



Tucker Hall in Flames, December 16, 1934

which the Staunton fire company made in reaching the scene. In five minutes less than an hour after the call, the Staunton company was drenching the walls of Washington Hall with water. The three fire companies working together rescued the college from a danger that threatened its entire plant.

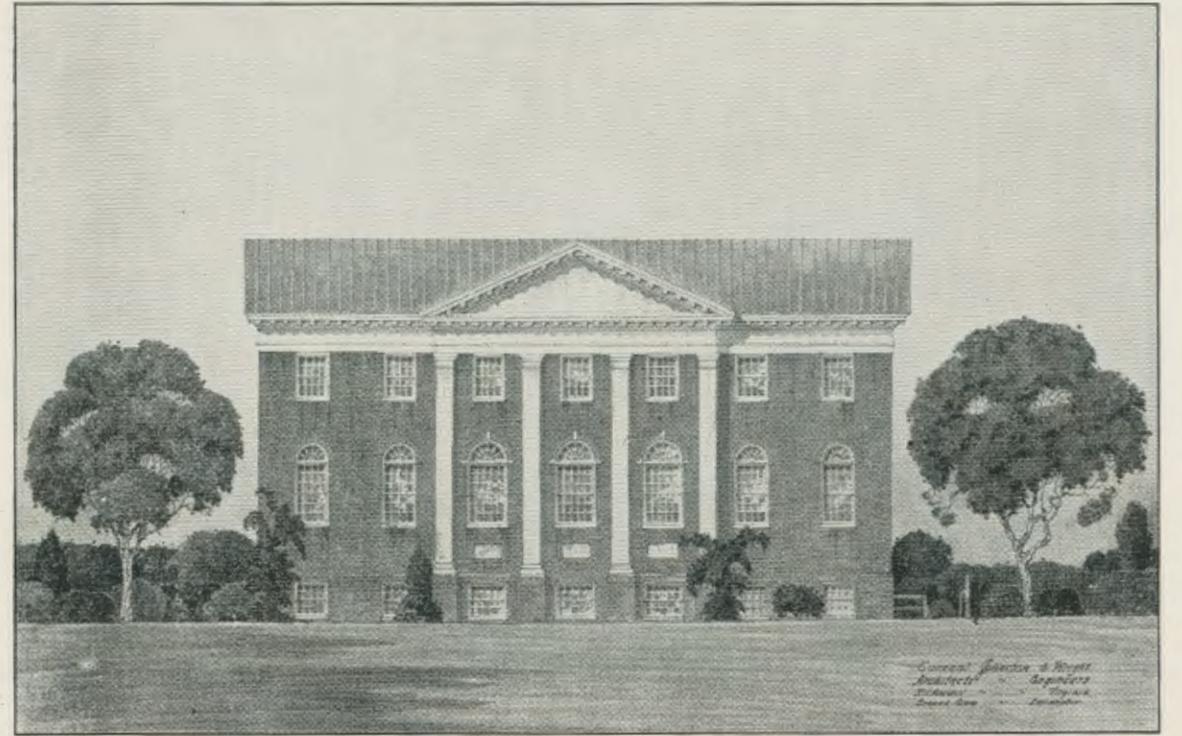
Those first on the ground are convinced that the fire was the work of an incendiary, though no possible motive can be assigned for such an act, and no clue has been discovered as to the perpetrator. The insurance on Tucker Hall itself was \$20,000 and on the library, \$10,000.

## II. TEMPORARY PLANS FOR INSTRUCTION

As soon as the tension of fear for the other buildings was relieved, the college authorities began at once to make plans for carrying on the work of the law school. A meeting of its professors and students was called for Monday morning at nine o'clock in Lee Chapel. By this time Dean Moreland was prepared with announcements for action. As only three days remained before the Christmas recess, the law students were dismissed for the holidays, with the assurance that adequate provision was already being made for them to continue their studies when they returned January 4. Meanwhile reference books and others of immediate necessity were ordered, and carpenters were set to work making bookshelves and other library equipment to be placed in the old Y. M. C. A. room on the first floor of Reid Hall. Classroom accommodations were provided in the lecture rooms of the various buildings on the campus. So with cheerful enthusiasm on the part of both professors and students the work of the law school is going forward without interruption.

## III. THE PERMANENT PLAN

The Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees was called into session a few days after the fire. After discussing the problem confronting the institution, they decided to ask that a meeting of the entire Board be held on December 28. At this meeting all but two members were present. The Board authorized the erection of a new building to be ready for occupancy next September.



Architect's Sketch of the Rear of the Proposed New Law Building

Two committees were appointed to carry out the plans. A committee on finance is composed of Herbert Fitzpatrick, Cleveland, Ohio, chairman; John W. Davis, New York City; Newton D. Baker, Cleveland, Ohio; Governor George C. Peery, Richmond, Virginia; William McChesney Martin, St. Louis, Mo.; Dr. George Bolling Lee, New York City; Fowler McCormick, Chicago, Ill., members of the board; and Walter McDonald, Cincinnati, Ohio, alumni representative.

The committee on the building is composed of James R. Caskie, member of the Board, Lynchburg, Va., chairman; John Randolph Tucker, Richmond, Va., representative of the alumni; W. H. Moreland, dean of the law school; Frank J. Gilliam, dean of students; R. W. Dickey, professor of engineering. President F. P. Gaines and Rector George W. St. Clair are ex officio members of both committees.

The building committee has engaged the firm of Carneal, Johnston, and Wright, of Richmond, Virginia, who will supervise the construction of the building. In order that it may be harmonious with the architectural style of the other college buildings, a firm of national reputation for a special acquaintance with the Georgian architecture of the Colonial Virginia type will be selected to act as consultants.

The new building will be set back in line with Washington Hall, and its facade will be a replica of that of Newcomb Hall, thus completing the symmetry of the entire group of buildings in the famous colonnade. In accordance with the motto on the Washington and Lee coat of arms, *non incautus futuri* (not unmindful of the future), the new Tucker Hall is planned to be larger and more commodious than its predecessor.

The new law building will be built with funds to be raised by a finance committee of trustees and a representative of the alumni whose plan is to present this opportunity to the sons of Washington and Lee immediately. The response to this appeal, in a crisis, will empower both finance committee and building committee, to proceed with plans already made, as soon as the accumulation of gifts and pledges warrants them to do so.



Architect's Sketch of the Colonnade with the Proposed New Law Building Balancing Newcomb Hall