WASHINGTON COLLEGE ACADEMY

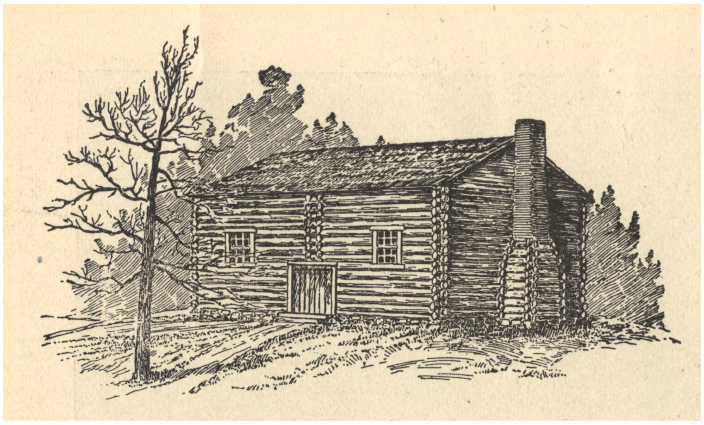
was founded in 1780 by Rev. Samuel Doak. Born on August 1, 1749 in Augusta County, Va. Samuel remained at home until the age of 16. Samuel had decided to pursue higher learning but his father was opposed to it and wanted him to farm the family land. Samuel was so intent, his father eventually agreed to relinquish Samuel's share of his inheritance to his brothers in order for him to continue his education. He attended West Nottingham Academy at Colora, Maryland, a school founded by Dr. Samuel Finley for young men going into the ministry; Samuel Doak was one of the early graduates of this school.

In 1773, he entered the College of New Jersey, which later became known as Princeton University. He graduated in 1775 during the presidency of Reverend John Witherspoon, who was the only member of the clergy to sign the Declaration of Independence. That year he was married to Esther H. Montgomery. Doak then secured a position as assistant teacher in the school of Robert Smith of Piqua, Pennsylvania, and began the study of theology under him. Later he accepted the office of tutor in Hampden Sidney College, where he remained two years before continuing his studies at Timber Ridge, Virginia.

On October 31, 1777, Samuel Doak was ordained to the ministry by the Hanover Presbytery. Having preached for a short time in Washington County, Virginia, he moved to the Holston settlement near the junction of the Holston and Watauga Rivers in Sullivan County, Tennessee. He remained there more than a year while searching for a wider and more fertile field in which to continue his work.

In 1780, Samuel Doak came from Virginia to help settle the untamed wilderness of Upper East Tennessee. While following an old Indian trail through the wilderness of Washington County near Little Limestone Creek, Doak came upon a group of settlers cutting trees to build a settlement. According to the recollections of backwoodsman, GW Telford, when the settlers discovered that Doak was a Presbyterian minister, "They requested him to preach to so many as could be assembled immediately. He complied, using his horse for a pulpit and the shady grove for a sanctuary. They were pleased with the sermon, and entreated the preacher to tarry longer with them. He yielded to their entreaty, and this led to his permanent settlement among them."

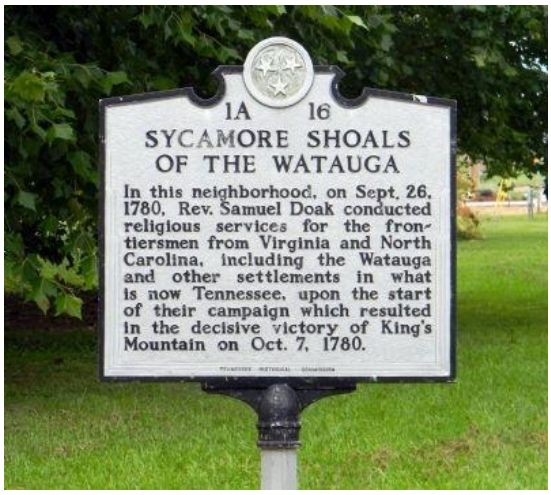
Being well prepared to teach and to preach, Doak immediately began constructing a log building, 24' x 48' in size. He soon gathered the pioneers under his ministry and their children into this small building, thus furnishing the wilderness with both church and school.



Students learned and recited lessons from books which Doak acquired during his travels to the more settled Northern

states. Books which he managed to carry over the mountains in his saddlebags. Classroom instruction would find Doak seated listening to students recite their lessons. He was so versed in the classics he could catch students' mistakes without looking at the textbook. This school became the first institution for higher learning west of the Allegheny Mountains and was known as "The Light in the Wilderness".

Later in the year 1780, General John Sevier invited Dr. Doak to go to Sycamore Shoals and preach to the soldiers before they started across the mountains to fight the British under Ferguson and his soldiers in the battle of King's Mountain. Ferguson had threatened to come over the mountains and burn all the homes of the settlers, understandably igniting the settlers desire to protect themselves. Dr. Doak used as his text "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon."As he preached to them and prayed for them, it is told that the tears ran down his face. According to the chronicler the sermon and prayer gave the soldiers great spiritual inspirations and new courage. The battle was bitterly contested but ended gloriously in the defeat of the enemy. The battle of King's Mountain is rated as one of the decisive battles of the Revolutionary War. Such incidents as these led Bishop E. E. Hoss to say of Samuel Doak: "He feared God so much that he feared nothing else and would have made a fit chaplain for the regiment of Cromwell's Ironsides, a man of immense influence on the early history of the state."



The small school founded by Doak, continued to grow and prosper. In 1783 the school was chartered Martin's Academy in honor of Governor Martin of North Carolina. By virtue of this charter, Martin Academy became the first literary institution South of the Ohio River/West of the Allegheny Mountains, in the territory then belonging to North Carolina. The State of Franklin chartered it in 1785.

Dr. Doak formed several congregations in the area, one of which was Salem Church, established in 1780. This was Reverend Doak's first church (that also housed the school), a log building near the spot with the oak tree where he preached his first sermon. Salem Church today is surrounded by the Washington College Academy campus. The current building was erected in 1842 and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1795 under the direction of John Sevier and with the permission of President George Washington, Martin Academy was renamed Washington College. It is said to be the first honor given to an institution of learning. Washington College is one year older than the State of Tennessee, as it was admitted to statehood in 1796. 1795 is also the date of the oldest marked burial in Old Salem Cemetery. The tombstone with the earliest legible death date belongs to Alex. McEwen. The cemetery has approximately 500 marked graves, and includes four marked graves of Revolutionary War soldiers and two from the War of 1812.

Means of survival were scarce in the backwoods. Once while Reverend Doak was gone some thirty miles to get supplies, Mrs. Doak was warned of the approach of the hostile Cherokee Indians by the barking of dogs and stole out to a hiding place with her sleeping infant in her arms. From her hiding place she saw the Indians enter the house, carry out some of the furniture and set fire to the house and retreat with their plunder. She saw her own house go up in flames. Mrs. Doak thought it remarkable that the baby did not wake, for if it had, it would have betrayed their hiding place and both would have been killed.

Many times the pioneers went armed to church to hear Reverend Doak preach. Once when he was preaching, a messenger rode up yelling “Indians, Indians, Ragsdales family are murdered”. Doak stopped preaching, offered a short prayer, took his rifle and went with his congregation to fight the enemy.

Reverend Doak was described as “physically above average in stature and had a large, muscular frame. His appearance was grave and commanding, his eyes deep blue, was of strong intellect and manly good sense”.

On July 23, 1795 trustees were appointed to the school. They met, took their oath of office, and proceeded to the business of organization. According to the Journal of the Proceedings of the Board of Trustees, at the second meeting of the board, Alexander Mathes donated a valuable tract of fifty acres of land adjoining that of Dr. Doak, and the necessary repairs to the school building were authorized, amounting to fifty dollars. Three years later it was necessary to replace the old crib chimney with a modern stone chimney at a cost of forty dollars. In 1806 the board felt that there must be a new building if the college was to grow and prosper. Plans were made for the new building and by 1808 enough money had been raised to start the new building. According to the Journal of Proceedings, the building was to be:

> *Of frame construction, forty feet long by twenty four feet wide, two full stories high, to be covered with joint shingles, and weatherboarded with sound yellow poplar plank, with two doors and eight windows of eighteen lights ten by twelve inches in the upper story, to be underpinned with stone two feet high, one stone or brick chimney to be built with one fireplace in each story.*

When completed, the building was to cost $1,110.00. It was a modest building, but when compared to the original log building, it must have seemed like a wonderful structure. The original log school was used until 1808.

The honor of being the first graduates of the new college belongs to John W. Doak, son of the President, and James Witherspoon, a relative of Dr. John Witherspoon of Princeton. Many students had received an education at the principal seat of classical learning in the western country. This includes those who did not graduate; because they could not afford even the small tuition that was charged.

The school was considered a blessing to the poor of all denominations, because the expenses were kept low and the teachers sacrificed so much to aid struggling boys and girls in securing an education. Washington College was a blessing to the region, as well as to the South and West. Senator Zeb Vance (37th and 43rd Governor of NC) said in an annual address at Washington College that while he was in Congress, at one time, there were 22 men in the US Congress who had been in school at Washington College. Few institutions have such records.

Commencement days under Dr. Doak were gala events. All the pomp and circumstance they could muster were on display and people gathered from all around due to the novelty of such entertainment in the wilderness. Dr. Doak was easily distinguished by his peculiar dress as he moved among the people. He wore antique shoes with broad shining buckles, his long stockings and short breeches also ornamented with buckles at the knees. It has been said that Dr. Doak hated to sit for portraits or pictures and wore that outfit in humorous defiance when he could not avoid it.

After Doak became 68 years old, he retired as president of Washington College Academy. He had served for 35 years. His eldest son, Rev. John Whitefield Doak succeeded him.
Doak may have retired but that didn't stop him from helping his other son, Samuel W. Doak start a classical school a few miles from Greeneville called Tusculum. He spent the last 12 years of his life at Tusculum teaching.

Doak died when he was 81 years old on December 12, 1830. His remains were buried in the Salem church yard on the current WCA campus.

The mid 1800's represented a period of growth and prosperity for the school. During that time the campus was expanded. Construction of the President's House and the building now known as Harris Hall started. Harris Hall was the first building of its kind in the region and was large enough to accommodate many resident students and some teachers as well as classrooms and administrative offices. Through many years, and periods of growth and decline, Washington College has stood for Christian Education in this part of the country, surviving through the trials of the Revolutionary War, and of the Civil War, which nearly ruined it. During the Civil War, few classes were held. Harris Hall was nearly destroyed by both Union and Confederate soldiers. A large library and valuable apparatus were destroyed. Horses were stabled on the first floor while soldiers made their home on the upper floors. There was scarcely a whole window or door in the college buildings remaining. Eventually the federal government reimbursed the school for the extensive damage suffered and is said to have been around $4,000.00. It is interesting to note that in the 1980's, while repairing some of the brickwork, civil war era bullets were found lodged between the bricks.

Many of the school's instructors and students left the school for the war effort. In 1866, a few rooms were repaired in Harris Hall and the Misses A.E. and G.A. Telford were invited to open a school. They continued for two years as a female school. During this time five young ladies graduated.

In the early 1900's, Washington College had arranged with the Washington County Board of Education to educate some high school students in exchange for public school funds to support those pupils, changing most of its curriculum from that of a college to a high school. Plans were made to include courses in Scientific Agriculture and Home Economics for those who would not be able to attend institutions of higher learning. These vocational programs were improved constantly, and by 1916 were very important to the curriculum. The Washington College catalog for 1916 painted a very alluring picture of the school:

The campus consists of sixteen acres, is well shaded and adorned by magnificent native trees, such as oak, beech, poplar and chestnut. Adjacent to the campus are located the baseball and football grounds. These grounds have lately been put in excellent order. Carnegie building, the gift of Andrew Carnegie, serves as the recitation hall and library. Here also, is an auditorium, where chapel exercises are held every morning. The auditorium also serves as a gathering place for entertainments, plays, lectures, and other public functions.

The Young ladies' dormitory, which was rebuilt less than five years ago, is one of the finest buildings of its kind in the state. It contains thirty-five commodious well-furnished rooms, besides assembly rooms for the literary societies, and the Young Women's Christian Association. There is a large, spacious reception room, which is used for social gatherings, a dining room with a seating capacity of over two hundred, a kitchen with every modern appointment, rooms for servants, etc. The young men's dormitory, erected in 1895 will accommodate over fifty students. During the present summer, the boy's building is being renovated and painted. The rooms are steam heated and lighted with electricity, as are all the buildings on the campus. Shower and tub baths with hot and cold water are provided in the dormitories.

Salem Church, founded in 1780, and for many years under the same roof with the college, has always been identified with the work, and its house of worship has been at the

same time the college chapel. The building is one of massive architecture, with a seating capacity of six hundred and fifty, and is admirably fitted to the uses for which it is designed.

The college owns a farm of three hundred and forty acres, having on it the electric light plant, a flour mill, a good dwelling house, and other buildings. Due to these resources which are supplied materials for the college boarding club, it is possible to provide excellent board at a minimum price.

Expenses to students had been increasing due to the general price increase all over the country but despite this the graduation class in 1916 was the largest in the history of the school from its beginnings to that time.

The period before and during the depression were somewhat favorable for Washington College. Although Washington College was operating as a private school, by 1920 it had arranged with the Washington County Board of Educators to educate some high school students in exchange for public school funds to support those pupils. There was a 1925-25 contract in existence with Washington County providing "that the Washington College High School shall be a Smith-Hughes Vocational School for both boys and girls. That agreement probably entitled Washington College to Federal Smith-Hughes Act assistance.

Around 1923 a student Self-Help program was established which enabled students to get a quality education without placing a heavy financial burden on their families. Every effort was being made to strengthen the Vocational High School and the idea of the return to college work was slipping away. Debt was the major problem. In 1914 there was no debt but by 1923 there was a debt of $20,000.00 and little coming in as donations or endowments. In this period the school closed the college department altogether. It then operated as a standard four year preparatory and vocational academy or high school, with a great number of the students on the self-help program. There was no competition as Washington College was the only school in the territory offering that.

The sesqui-centennial year opened in September of 1929 in commemoration of the founding of the school one hundred and fifty years before. That special year included many formal addresses, the celebration of the battle of King's Mountain, Founders Day in honor of Samuel Doak with 12 of his descendents as guests of honor, and the soon-to-be-famous historical pageant depicting the history of the school. The pageant was so well written, and so well presented that, by popular demand, it was repeated in 1931 and again in 1932. The school year 1929-1930 was one that was long remembered around the territory served by Washington College.

Even before Washington College started formal vocational education, the Washington College farm provided students with practical farming and homemaking skills. Male students milked cows to provide milk and butter for school use, while female students preserved vegetables they raised on the premises. The College held annual fairs that provided an opportunity for students to exhibit their products as well as to compete with, and socialize with their neighbors. The

October 1920 bulletin for their fifth and final fair lists many categories included potatoes, peppers, sunflower, wheat, rye, corn, watermelon, squash, beans, tobacco, orchard products, clothing, baked goods, canned fruits and vegetables, embroidery, tatting, as well as livestock and riding contests.

Sports also became an integral part of the school during the early 1900s. Girl's basketball was established by 1922, following a nationwide trend toward offering physical education and competitive sports to both sexes.

Occasionally Washington College received philanthropic gifts upon the benefactor's death. Mrs. Nettie McCormick's will provided a bequest; however, due to a previous attempted merger with Tusculum College, Washington College had to petition the Illinois courts in 1923 for their share ($50,000.00) of her will. Another key benefactor was Mrs. Mary Copley Thaw. She donated forty-five shares of Standard Oil stock in June 1922 to the endowment fund and provided the $2500 first year salary for the incoming president. Her will, probated in 1930, included a percentage share, primarily of stocks, estimated at $100,000 for Washington College.

In memory of Washington College graduate Judge Oliver Perry Temple, his daughter Mary Boyce Temple donated money in 1926 to expand Carnegie Hall, and Washington College renamed the building Carnegie-Temple Hall. Philanthropy was as crucial to the success of the college farm operation as it was to the academic program. Various contributions led to the establishment of an orchard and poultry houses, as well as a large dairy barn. The barn's style and construction details are nearly identical to barns pictured in animal science textbooks over two decades later, indicating that Washington College was in the forefront of agricultural practices. In 1929 another contribution built a separate, small frame "model" barn that was used to show local farmers an ideal hay and equipment storage barn with a central hallway.

Building with philanthropic funds ceased for several years due to the effects of the nationwide economic depression following the 1929 stock market crash.

However, farm production appeared productive. In 1933 the orchard covered eighteen acres and included 100 peach, 600 apple, fifty pear, and two plum trees, and the farm had 500 chickens supplying eggs and mea for school use. The orchard was located near the present Harris Jablonski gym and no trees remain. At that time, the College had 238 of its 340 acres in production.

During the 1930's, students participated in agricultural organizations as they were formed and students attended the annual Tennessee Valley Agricultural and Industrial Fair in Knoxville to keep abreast of the latest developments in their fields. In 1930, Washington College Senior, Lawrence Miller was Tennessee's first Future Farmers of America State Farmer.

Although the exact date the dairy herd was started at Washington College is unclear, by 1933, the twenty-two cow Guernsey herd was producing forty gallons of milk per day. Milk was used by the school except in the summer when it was sold to the Pet Milk Company in Greeneville, TN. In 1933, the school also raised beef and hogs for their own use. As another example of self-sufficiency and advanced practices, they ground their own dairy feed on the second floor of the dairy barn and produced the first silage in the area. Area residents considered the farm to be in the forefront of agriculture due to innovative practices such as winter pasturage, applying lime to fields and planting pine tree windbreaks. The University of Tennessee, Knoxville provided assistance to the College with herd testing, artificial inseminations, veterinarian services, etc. Washington Colleges Guernseys were one of the first herds of that breed in East Tennessee. Students also showed cattle at agricultural fairs. Womens vocational education was also successful at least through 1933 as a financial report indicated that the home economics class made 212 garments that year.

In 1934 building resumed; however, funding was from the county rather than private benefactors. The Washington County Board of Education built a school building, the Scott Building, near the dairy barn. The 1934 graduating class was the largest at fifty-one. The large 1934 class likely resulted from the college's 1920's agreement with Washington County to educate area public high school students along with its own private students. Sports continued to flourish as the boy's basketball team won the state championship in 1934. Approximately 50% of the graduates in that and the previous four years enrolled in some institution of higher

learning to continue their education. State honors were won in athletics, oratory, and debating , serving to build a high degree of morale.

As it happened during World War I, World War II took faculty members for the armed forces. With the domestic male population greatly reduced, across the country women filled positions previously reserved for men. At Washington College, a woman served as a principal of the twelve-grade school for two years.

Richard Donoho is typical of the post-World War II student. He enrolled in 1950, coming from a middle class, Asheville NC family, on the self help program. He worked in the dairy, fired boilers in the heating plant and performed general handyman duties. Richard Donoho is still active in the school and serves on its board of directors. His cousin, Frank Little, also attended the academy, and gained fame as a tenor with the New York Metropolitan Opera. Another self-help student, William F. Martin of Cherokee descent, became a bass singer with the Chicago Lyric Opera. Two other students won state piano contests in 1946 and 1958. Their teacher, Mrs. Carrie C. Repass Warrick is listed in the International Who's Who of Musicians and the World's Who's Who of Women.

In 1953, the campus remained both a public and private facility but changed its name to Washington College Academy to eliminate confusion as it no longer offered college courses. Not until the mid 1950's did building and acquisition resume. In 1955 Mullins Hall was erected. This was to replace the boy's dorm that was destroyed by fire in 1953. In 1961, the Pence Science building was constructed. The same year, the Scott Building was remodeled. Portions of Harris Hall were remodeled in 1963 and 1965. In 1966, funds for a new gymnasium were acquired and construction was completed in 1972.

The 1960's and 70's brought about significant changes to the school. In 1971 the county's new Davy Crockett High School ended the school's contract to educate public school students. The Academy returned to private operation as an accredited, co-educational, College preparatory day and boarding school for grades 7-12. In 1972 formal Presbyterian support ended after it was determined that the church could not obtain government financing for school capital improvements. The school declined rapidly without support. By the late 1970's due to the farm's unprofitability, the school discontinued its agricultural operation.

For the next two decades, Washington College Academy struggled to stay afloat. Aging buildings, diminishing student enrollment and lack of a plan for increasing endowments, took their toll. The last graduating high school class was in 2000. The school then offered GED classes as part of a program sponsored by the State of Tennessee. Attempts at vocational opportunities for area students failed to come to fruition.

In 2008, the Washington College Academy School of Arts & Crafts was started to bring art and art instruction to area residents at low-to-no-cost. Funds from the classes, donations and events allow the school to continue its educational history. Emphasis on the history of the school has taken center stage as the schools 242 year history has come to be recognized for its tremendous historic importance. A concerted effort is being made to bring this history to light and to protect it for future generations.

Washington College is an historic district, and it, along with several of its buildings is on the National Register of Historic Places.

It only takes a generation for information and artifacts to be lost forever. If you have read through this brief history of this beloved institution, you have an appreciation of those who have come before us and of the contributions they have made.

It is impossible to put 242 years of rich history into a few pages. If you would like to learn more about the history of the school, please visit the WCA History Museum in the Carnegie-Temple building on the WCA campus. We are constantly adding to it as we discover new and fascinating information about this magnificent piece of American history.

Thank you for your interest and we hope that you will become a part of the movement to save Washington College Academy!