

Even without much support from the financially-strapped Maryland Methodist Protestant Conference (and the later Methodist Church), the Church was represented by some clergy on the board of trustees for 100 years. The college severed all ties with the Methodist Church in 1975.

The “wild idea” of a college in Westminster had been brought to fruition, and the College has been changing lives since 1867 as it follows its motto, *e tenebris in lucem voco*: “I call you from darkness into light.”

Western Maryland College, renamed McDaniel College in 2002 for William Roberts McDaniel, celebrated 150 years of its existence during 2017-2018.

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An interesting story was told by Hering of Smith at a board meeting where the forms of the new diploma and college seal were discussed. Some trustees thought that the new college should make a departure from the old custom of a Latin inscription in the seal and put it in plain English. And so there was a warm discussion about it. Those who knew John Smith knew him to be a man of strong intellect but basic education, a man of ponderous voice and positive convictions, who could express himself with great force. Finally, he said, “I have listened with interest to this discussion and have my views about the subject. I don’t know much about English and nothing at all about Latin,” and then, raising his ponderous fist, he brought it down on the table with a bang. “But I do think there ought to be a little Latin in the Seal.” And that settled the matter. The Board voted to stick to the Latin, and the seal is written in Latin to this day.

About the Author: James Lightner taught mathematics at Western Maryland (McDaniel) College for 36 years, retiring in 1998 as Professor Emeritus. He has degrees from McDaniel, Northwestern, and Ohio State. He is a member of the College Board of Trustees. In 2017, the college awarded him an honorary Doctor of Letters. He has served on the Board of the Carroll Arts Council and is a past Senator of the Phi Beta Kappa Society. He served for three years as Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Historical Society and continues to serve on several Society committees.

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Carroll History Journal

The Historical Society of Carroll County, Maryland, Inc.

FOUR MEN AND A “WILD IDEA”: THE FOUNDERS OF WESTERN MARYLAND/MCDANIEL COLLEGE

BY JAMES E. LIGHTNER

There was not a real college man in the board . . . and we, therefore, had no conception of what was ahead of us in the way of work and difficulties. . . . If we had known in advance all the difficulties to be met and overcome, and all the dark places through which we were to pass, I doubt very much whether we would have had the courage and faith to undertake the work at all.

This comment was made by Dr. Joshua Hering, one of the significant founders of the College, in his undated *Recollections of My Life*. It suggests the shaky beginnings of Western Maryland College. But, of course, these people *did* have the courage and faith to proceed into uncharted waters, and in this sesquicentennial (150th) celebration of the founding of the “College on the Hill,” it is appropriate to remember the people, incidents, and challenges that brought it into existence.

The year was 1866. The American Civil War was finally over. The local citizens were now going about their daily lives, and some of them were thinking about their children’s education and future. Schools, perhaps even a college, could be a sign of hope after the trauma many Westminster citizens had experienced so close at hand.

Western Maryland College evolved because of the visions and strong commitment of four well-known Westminster citizens and, to a lesser degree, the Methodist Protestant Church. These four—a visionary, a realist, a financier, and a respected and far-seeing public servant—succeeded in founding the college, despite many challenges:

♦ **Fayette R. Buell**, an educator who had established an academy (high school) in Westminster, optimistically envisioned expanding it into a college.

- ♦ **James Thomas Ward**, a Methodist Protestant minister who had retired to Westminster, realistically envisioned establishing a college as a positive move for the town and the church.
- ♦ **John Smith of Wakefield**, a local businessman who had recently moved to Westminster, became interested, through Ward, in partially financing Buell’s enterprise.
- ♦ **Dr. Joshua W. Hering**, local physician and banker, who was elected a charter trustee, served on the college board for 45 years, and was its first treasurer.

All four men knew each other and were members of the Methodist Protestant Church (founded in Baltimore in 1830). The Church envisioned this new local institution as fulfilling its goal of collegiate training of clergy, but it had been experiencing difficulty in establishing colleges in various areas of the country and unfortunately could not offer significant financial assistance.

Who were these Founders?

The visionary: **Fayette Rufus Buell** (1833–1913), was born in Lebanon, New York, and was educated at the Cazenovia Seminary (now part of Cornell University) and at a school in Hamilton, New York. He came to Maryland in 1854 to open a school on the property of Abner Baile, near New Windsor; married Baile’s daughter Ellen (1837–1932) in 1856; and fathered nine children, three of whom died in infancy. Soon after their marriage, the Buells moved to a farm near Peoria, Illinois, but in the summer of 1858, some citizens from Westminster prevailed upon them to return to form another school. Buell subsequently opened his Westminster Male and Female School on April 16, 1860, in his rented home at 203 Pennsylvania Avenue, operating year-round.

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Two years later, he changed the name of the school to Westminster Seminary.* In 1865, perhaps because the school's enrollment had dropped off (or perhaps because he saw that the recently-established public schools were improving and private academies might be less attractive), Buell's friend James Reese recalled: "The wild idea of founding a college took possession of him. He had no money, he knew nothing about colleges, but he was full of energy, fired with zeal, and he had made influential friends."



Left: Fayette R. Buell. Right: Buell's home on Pennsylvania Ave. All images courtesy of McDaniel College.



ways, acquiring and reading books, and devoting himself to preparing to preach the Gospel, after which he was ordained and received into the Maryland Annual Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church in 1841. He led the life of a busy pastor, becoming well known for his preaching and

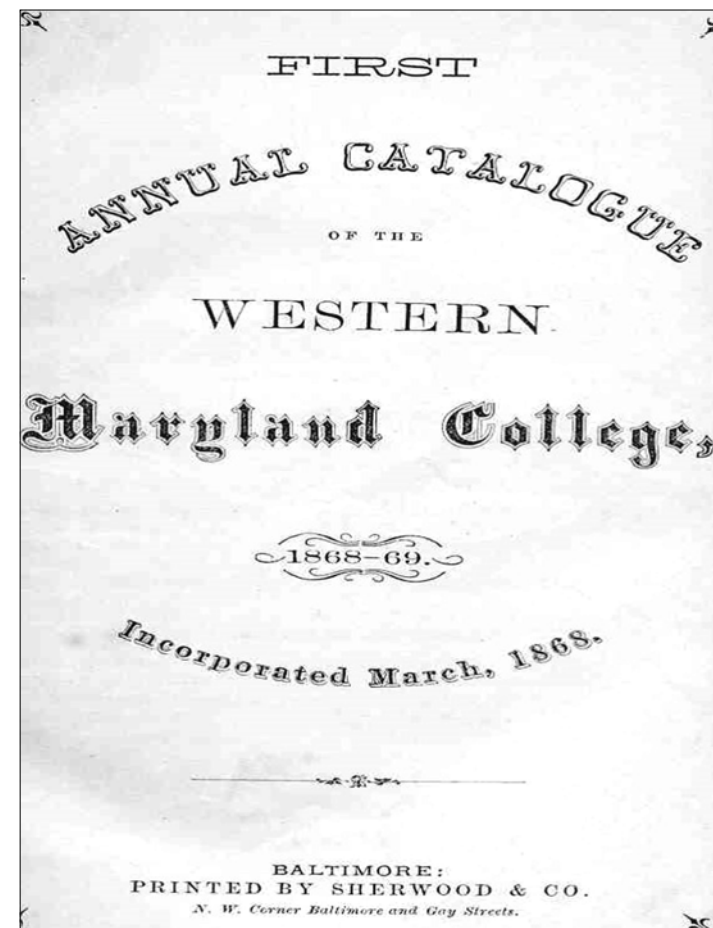


James Thomas Ward

As a member of the local Immanuel Methodist Protestant Church, Buell enthusiastically called together a number of church members and friends in February 1866 to consider his proposition. The group heartily approved of his vision but felt they could assume no financial obligation. However, with their help and influence, Buell took his proposal to the Maryland Annual Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church in March 1866. That body declined to become financially responsible in any way but adopted resolutions heartily commending Mr. Buell and his proposed institution to the patronage and consideration of the church and its members.

The realist: **James Thomas Ward** (1820–1897), was born in Georgetown, D. C., the son of a Methodist Protestant preacher. He was educated by tutors in Washington; then at the Columbian Academy (1835–1836); and then for two years at the Brookeville Classical Academy near Olney, graduating in 1838 with the classical prize. Even though his formal education ended at 18, he continued his studious

*This was a 19th century term for a private high school, not to be confused with a religious seminary.



Western Maryland College's first published catalog.

Following the chartering of the college and the protracted discussions regarding its purchase to relieve his bankruptcy, **Fayette Buell** no longer played a role in the daily life of the college and withdrew his daughters after the first year; but he continued to be a trustee until 1872. After moving his family out of the college building, he opened another academy in his new residence at the corner of Main and Bond Streets and taught for a time in another school as well. Because of his musical talent, which was shared by his large family, he and his daughters toured the country, entertaining as the Buell Family Concert to make money to pay off his debts. He moved to Philadelphia in 1881 but continued occasionally to try to "set the record straight" about what had happened, because he felt quite wronged. However, he seems to have retained an affection for Westminster, and he, his wife, and four of his children are buried in the Westminster Cemetery. On the tombstone is recorded: "Fayette R. Buell, Born April 1833, Died January 1913, Founder of The Western Maryland College."

Joshua Hering served as the treasurer of the college until 1885 and was an occasional lecturer in anatomy and physiology. When his wife Margaret died in 1883, he remained a widower for five years, until his marriage to Catharine E. Armacost. He succeeded Ward as president of the board of trustees (1897-1913). He was the last living charter trustee, having served for almost 30 years on the Local Committee. On the occasion of the unveiling of his portrait in 1908 in honor of the "last of that glorious company of 33 worthy men," Hering noted: "Only I have survived. . . Soon I will join them, and only this portrait will remain. If that portrait could speak, I would have it through all the years say to you that as God has been with us, may He ever abide, and may the watchword of the college continue to be 'Onward and upward.'"

Hering's reputation as a banker led to his election as president of the Maryland Banker's Association in 1898. He also served four years as Carroll County senator in the Maryland Legislature, and, because of his financial acumen, he served as Maryland comptroller for three terms (1899–1901, 1901–4, 1907–10) and was appointed to the newly created Maryland Public Service Commission in 1910.

James Ward was the college principal and professor of Biblical Literature and Moral Science. In 1873, his title was changed to president, soon after he received the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Adrian College, the sister Methodist Protestant institution in Michigan. Showing some humor at now being addressed as Doctor Ward, he noted in his diary: "If I could not take this lesson from the incident, I should consider myself entitled to the D.D. only as meaning *Decidedly Dull*." He remained president for 19 years, until January 1886 when, after presenting to the trustees the state of the college (including enrollment and financial deficits and a continuing debt), he asked to be released, something he had done at least once before without success. His health had not been good, he was getting tired, and he felt his retirement was "for the good of the college." This time the board agreed. That same day the board of governors of the Westminster Theological Seminary (next door) elected Ward as its second president. He remained on the college's board of trustees and succeeded John Smith as president of the board in 1892. He died at his home at age 76 on March 4, 1897.

The first curriculum for the male students.

Languages (German and French grammar). The courses were taught by a faculty of seven, only one of whom held a college degree. Men students pursued a four-year degree, while women enrolled in a three-year program (with a slightly reduced curriculum in languages) until 1885 when everyone took a four-year degree program. Tuition was \$15-\$50 per term depending on the program (with extra fees for art and music), while board and room fees were \$90 per term. Annual faculty salaries ranged from \$150 to \$450, with an average of about \$200.

When the advisory board met on February 26, 1868, Buell made a full and candid statement of the financial status of the college, especially the large debt he had undertaken. All the borrowed money had been spent, none of the interest on the loans had been paid, the workmen who had finished enough of the building in time to open the school in September had filed liens against the property for \$6,471, and a sheriff’s sale was not far off. Buell again asked for advice, but most of the gentlemen seemed to be in shock at what he reported. Ward noted that they finally seemed to understand that Buell had “gone into the enterprise without properly counting the cost” and had deceived them “as to his financial abilities as well as in other aspects.” New management was immediately needed, and they requested the Maryland Annual Methodist Protestant Conference to appoint 30 men who would agree to temporarily cover the liens, form a board of trustees to hold the property, and seek a charter from the Maryland legislature.

The board of trustees was established as an autonomous, self-perpetuating board, replacements to be elected by the board itself as needed. John Smith was elected president, Ward secretary, and Hering treasurer. They also asked the conference to appoint an agent to raise funds from the churches and congregations for the purchase of the college from Buell so he could pay the debts he had contracted. A charter (which included no direct relation to the Methodist Protestant Church) was submitted to the Maryland Legislature, approved, and signed by the governor on March 30, 1868. After the contributions from the board were collected, they drew up a purchase agreement with Buell for \$20,000; Buell thought it should have been \$23,000 to meet all of his debts, but the trustees held firm,

14	WESTERN MARYLAND COLLEGE.
III. COLLEGIATE DEPARTMENT.	
FOR MALE STUDENTS.	
Candidates for this department must be thoroughly prepared on such English studies as are indicated in the Preparatory Course; and be able to read Cæsar and work in Algebra as far as Quadratics.	
FRESHMAN YEAR.	
ENGLISH: Composition; Elocution. HISTORY: England; Our Government. SCIENCE: Zoology. MATHEMATICS: Algebra (concluded); Plane and Solid Geometry. LATIN: Cæsar; Sallust; Ovid; Composition. GREEK: Grammar and Composition; Anabasis; Lucian. FREE HAND DRAWING.	
SOPHOMORE YEAR.	
ENGLISH: Rhetoric; Elocution. HISTORY: General Outlines. SCIENCE: Physiology; Physics. MATHEMATICS: Trigonometry; Surveying; Analytical Geometry. LATIN: Cicero; Virgil. GREEK: Memorabilia; Herodotus.	
JUNIOR YEAR.	
PHILOSOPHY: Mental and Moral Science. ENGLISH: Literature. HISTORY: Themes. SCIENCE: Chemistry; Analysis; Botany. MATHEMATICS: Determinates; Differential and Integral Calculus. LATIN: Livy; Cicero de Natura Deorum; Horace. GREEK: Iliad; Odyssey; Demosthenes or Lysias. GERMAN: Studien und Plaudereien.	
SENIOR YEAR.	
PHILOSOPHY: Logic; Metaphysics; Christian Evidences. ENGLISH: Shakespeare; Orations. HISTORY: Political Economy. SCIENCE: Geology; Biology. MATHEMATICS: Astronomy. LATIN: Tacitus; Terence; Plautus; Juvenal. GREEK: Plato; Sophocles; Aristophanes. GERMAN: Eine deutsche Novelle; Don Carlos; Hermann und Dorothea.	

and Buell finally accepted. All was ultimately accomplished for the second-year opening on September 14, 1868, of the now-chartered college under the direct management of the board of trustees. Hering was faced with the continuing struggle of managing the debt (about \$25,000 over each of the next 20 years).

Beyond 1868

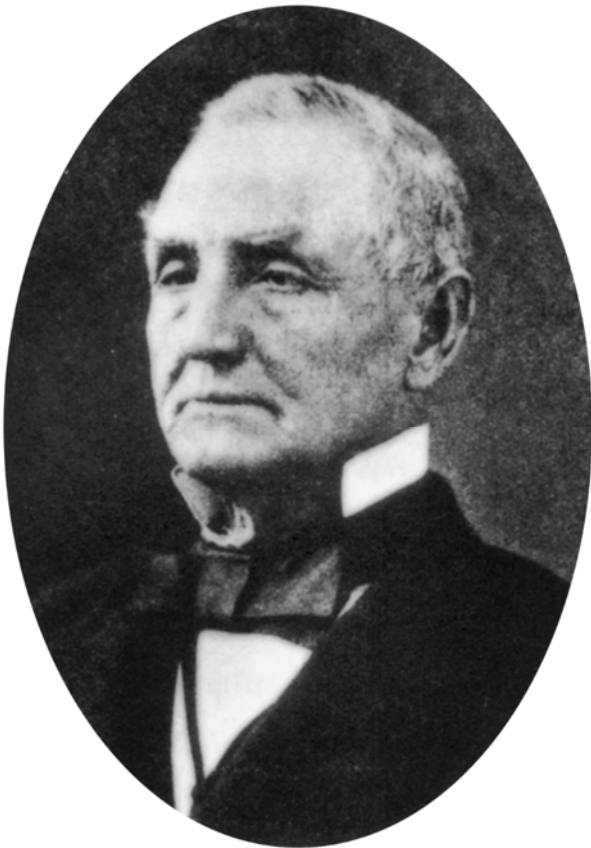
Once the College was established, however precariously, the four founders continued their involvement in a variety of roles, especially as charter trustees.

John Smith, the conscientious board president, died on March 13, 1892, at age 85. He had been most generous to the college, often anonymously when funds were needed to keep the institution afloat. His wise counsel as a member of the Local Committee that regularly advised Ward was greatly missed.

revivals. He served the Pipe Creek circuit in Carroll County for a year; this was followed by seven circuit assignments of one or two years, plus one in Philadelphia for ten years. Ward’s diaries suggest that by 1866 his health was failing (it had never been good), and he could no longer carry out the duties of a full-time pastor. They also imply that he may have had difficulty obtaining a pastoral appointment because he had supported the Union during the Civil War.

At age 46, Ward retired from active ministry and in 1866 decided to settle in Westminster on Littlestown Pike (now 188 Pennsylvania Avenue). He noted in his diary on February 17: “I thank God for affording me a prospect of deliverance in putting into the heart of my dear father to purchase for me the little place in Westminster. There I hope to find improved health and gain for myself and family a livelihood.” He was appointed as a “supernumerary assistant” (without remuneration) to Rev. R. Scott Norris of the Pipe Creek circuit, and on April 3, Ward, with his wife Catherine and daughter Mary, moved into the farmhouse on the ten acres of his “little place.” From the moment of his retirement, he had no steady income. He often expressed worry over his debts and concern over whether he would be able to make a living from occasional preaching, weddings, and funerals. Rev. Norris soon brought Ward and Buell together, and they often talked about the proposed college. Meanwhile, Buell needed a teacher in his seminary, and Ward needed some gainful employment, so an agreement between them was soon reached.

The financier: **John Smith of Wakefield** (1806-1892), was born on the family farm in the Wakefield valley, located in the part of Frederick County that became Carroll County in 1837. (He always styled himself “John Smith of Wakefield” to distinguished himself from the other local John Smiths.) He received a good basic education and as a young man taught school for some time. For a few years he was employed as a store clerk in Baltimore but then returned to the farm and trained to be a surveyor and auctioneer while occupying himself as a farmer. He took over the farm after the death of his father, Joshua Smith, in 1841. He was married in 1848 to Caroline Cookson, and they had 11 children, nine of whom lived to maturity. At a revival in 1859 led by Rev. J. T. Ward, he and his wife were converted to Methodist Protestantism.



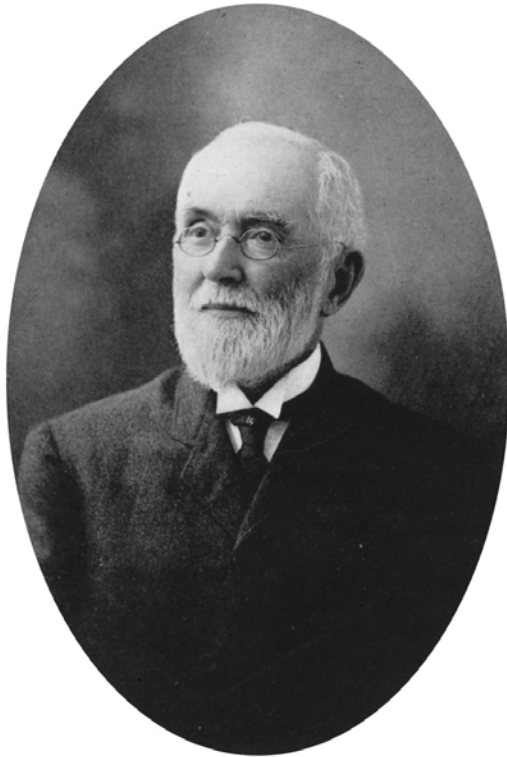
John Smith of Wakefield

In 1852, Smith became especially interested in the formation of the Carroll and Frederick Rail Road Company (renamed the Western Maryland Railroad Company in 1853) and was one of its first commissioners and stockholders. He helped survey part of the route that was extended to Westminster in July 1861 and to New Windsor and Union Bridge in 1862, was a prominent purchaser of company stock, and served on the board of directors for ten years. In 1862, at the urging of friends, he accepted the presidency of the company. In 1866, he and his family moved to Westminster to a large brick home at 79 West Main Street (now called Rosser’s Choice) and became interested in Buell’s enterprise.

The public servant: **Joshua Webster Hering** (1833-1913), was born in Frederick County, Maryland. After receiving a limited educational foundation in the local schools, he served as an apprentice in a country store until age 18, when he came to Westminster to train in the mercantile establishment of Jacob Reese and Sons. In 1853 he studied for the medical profession under William A. Mathias, a Westminster physician, and in 1855 he was awarded the doctor of medicine degree from the University of Maryland. That year also saw his marriage to

Margaret Henrietta Trumbo, a union that produced four children.

Hering’s medical practice grew rapidly; his services were much in demand during the Civil War, especially following the Gettysburg battle, when he assisted in treating the wounded who were brought to the Union Meeting House and other churches which served as hospitals. (He was even temporarily under arrest during the Southern occupation of the town in 1862.) These activities apparently made such demands on his strength and health that he retired in 1867 and moved to Virginia. After a short stay, he returned to Westminster and assumed the position of “cashier” (president) of the Union National Bank. His services as a consulting physician were still in demand, although he no longer practiced medicine regularly.



Joshua Webster Hering

The Vision Evolves

After Ward met Buell and started to discuss the proposed college, he commented that he might be of service to the project, at least by sharing his valuable 1,200-volume library and perhaps by some teaching of classical languages. On April 9, 1866, Ward described the meeting in his diary:

Had a long interview with Br. Buell concerning the College Enterprize. He is sanguine of success and puts wonderful confidence in my advice and influence. He has bought a most eligible site for the College buildings and spent in all more than two thousand dollars already. I urge him to ‘make haste slowly,’ and cautiously, and by doing so I think he may succeed.

With his customary zeal and buoyed by recent encouragement, Buell quickly gathered a group of local gentlemen on April 17 to present his financial and educational plans for the fledgling college to accommodate 150 students. A prospectus was authorized. Ward again told Buell that he hoped he “would be careful not to build until he saw his way

clear to pay for the work when done. . . .The project is excellent in itself, but it cannot be carried out unless monied men will take hold of it in earnest.”

Buell purchased about eight acres of land on Parr’s Ridge on Westminster’s western edge, a spot locally called “The Old Commons.” He also advertised that subscriptions were almost sufficient to proceed to build, although this was not really true; words of encouragement had been many, but monetary responses had been few. In a surprise to everyone including Ward, John Smith and his friend Isaac Baile agreed to loan Buell \$10,000 with which to erect a suitable building. Work was begun immediately, and the board of directors planned a cornerstone-laying ceremony for September 6, 1866. In the course

of these discussions it was decided to call the institution Western Maryland College (rather than Buell College); this was probably suggested by Smith who perhaps thought that naming the college after the railroad would position it with a more established name and increase its financial viability.

While the first college building (of several Buell envisaged) was underway, Ward, though doing everything in his power to help the college succeed, privately noted far less optimism:

Buell is very sanguine of the success of the entire enterprise. . . . When I think of the enormous interest he will have to pay, and of the vast expense he will necessarily [incur] in the building, employing teachers, boarding the pupils, &, I confess that I fear a disastrous failure. . . . I have striven to make him cautious, but he has the college on his brain, and will not be content until he sees it, in some form to suit his idea, on the hill.

While Ward assumed responsibility for the day-to-day-management of Buell’s seminary, Buell spent most of his time following the construction on the hill, trying to raise funds, and fending off creditors. He created various fund-raising schemes that went



Lithograph of the original college building.

nowhere. He approached the Annual Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church for financial help, which was promised and then revoked; Ward was ashamed of the Conference for its response. At Buell’s request, the body appointed an advisory board that met and made some specific suggestions for fundraising, but he soon abandoned these and continued his unsuccessful efforts to raise money. By late summer 1867 Buell’s anxiety over finances was temporarily eased when two men were prevailed upon to lend him \$6,000 of the \$10,000 needed to complete the building—if he could raise the rest. But by the end of August they reneged. Ward could not understand the indifference of either the Conference or the community to providing Buell the aid he needed.

On September 4, 1867, the formal opening exercises of the first academic year of Western Maryland

College were held in the study room for the Female Department (the counterpart of the Male Department of the co-educational college, one of the first in the region). Buell must have been disappointed that only 30 students arrived for the first classes (segregated by gender), since he had expressed confidence that enough pupils would enroll to enable him to operate the college *and* pay his debts incurred from the construction of the building. By the end of the year 70 students were enrolled, mostly from Carroll County and some from his seminary. Those not ready for college work were enrolled in the preparatory school.

All freshmen pursued the same curriculum: English (which included grammar, composition, geography, and history), Natural Sciences (biology and chemistry), Mathematics (arithmetic and algebra), Classics (Latin and Greek grammar), and Modern