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General Lee's College

“Obviously a number of the writers knew but one thing about Washington College—that General Lee was its head. Some simply addressed their letters to “General Lee’s College,” and were not even certain of its location” (Crenshaw 174).

“As the news of General Lee’s college presidency penetrated into the back country of the South, ex-Confederates and younger boys and their parents poured inquiries into Washington College. It can almost be said that the whole South wrote to General Lee in his final serene years, not only about education but on a variety of topics; and some northern correspondents wrote in” (Crenshaw 173).

Crenshaw, Ollinger. *General Lee’s College*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2017.

W&L alumnus (‘25) and chair of the history department, Ollinger Crenshaw (1904-1970), completed the first comprehensive history of the school in 1969. *General Lee’s College* starts with the limited records of Augusta Academy in 1749 and continues through the 1930s, stopping only because Crenshaw did not wish to write about living colleagues. The university sold over 2 copies a minute at the alumni reception the day of its publication. In 2017, the book was reprinted in coordination with the release of alumnus (‘65) Blaine Brownell’s *Washington and Lee University, 1930-2000*. These two works reinvigorated the interest into Washington and Lee University’s fascinating past.

Brownell, just as everyone who studies W&L history, owes a great homage to Professor Crenshaw’s decades of research. The hats recently produced by The Generals Redoubt allude to both Crenshaw’s legacy—the foundation of W&L’s institutional history—and to the legacy of Robert E. Lee’s presidency at Washington College, or as so many called it—General Lee’s College.