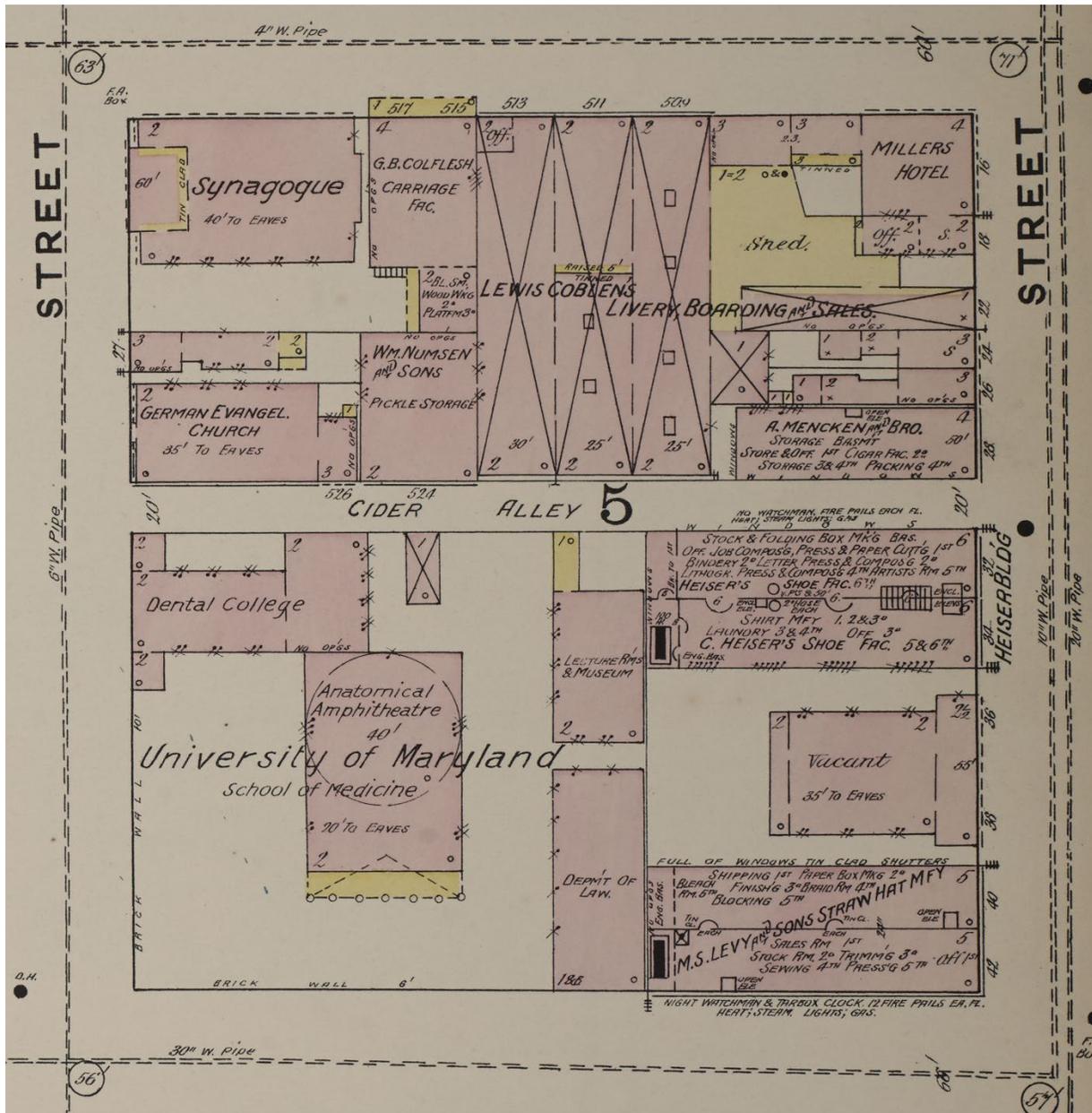


The 1893 Fire: 125 Years later

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On Saturday, December 2, 1893, a devastating fire broke out in Baltimore. Burning across the block surrounded by Paca, German, Greene, and Lombard Streets, the fire destroyed a newly constructed Laboratory and Chemical Building on the University of Maryland's campus.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Baltimore, Baltimore County, Maryland. Sanborn Map Company; Vol. 1, 1890. Map.

The fire started when hot cinders in the basement of the Heiser Building, located on the Corner of Paca Street and Cider Alley, ignited a pile of trash. Spreading from the basement up an elevator shaft of the six-story warehouse and to surrounding buildings, the fire caused \$360,000 in damage. Flames could be seen from as far as Bel Air and Ellicott City, Maryland and embers were carried as far as Lexington Market and Westminster Presbyterian Church burning the grass around these buildings.

The fire destroyed the University's Laboratory Building, which was completed and opened during the summer of 1893. The building was located to the back of the Heiser Building, where the fire began. It housed instruction rooms for Histology, Pathology, Chemistry and Anatomy as well as a reading room and bathroom. The fire also caused damage to the main University building (now called Davidge Hall) and water seeped through Anatomical Hall and the ceiling of Chemical Hall, both part of the main building. Students were able to save materials and apparatus from the main building as well as the library and furniture from the law building by carrying the items out of the buildings.

Following the fire the faculty claimed \$8000 in insurance money to repair the building, which was restored by Fall 1894. While the building was under construction classes were held in the University Hospital's Amphitheater as well as the dissecting room; laboratory work was completed in the dental building. Faculty from the other Baltimore medical, dental, and pharmacy schools offered the use of their space while construction was completed; however, the Medical School faculty deemed it unnecessary to inconvenience their colleagues.

Sources:

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