



Proceedings of the Rockbridge Historical Society

Volume XI 1990-1994



Proceedings

of the Rockbridge Historical Society

Volume XI
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A Sixtieth Anniversary Publication

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Volume XI
1990-1994



Larry I. Bland, Editor
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Lexington, Virginia
2000

For Charles W. Turner
Trustee, President, Historian, Editor

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Preface

If it is true that, as the saying goes, all politics are local, then all history must also be local, for history and politics are intertwined. They tie together and explain human events. Both spring from the grass roots of our land and include heroic individuals who made a difference beyond themselves. Both history and politics deal with our struggles to improve daily life.

Unlike politics, where it is said that the devil is in the details, the details of our glorious struggles are contained in local history. Local heroes, however, are often unsung because their daily lives are generally little recorded. As the index in this issue of *Proceedings* attests, few people have their stories published. The countless others left out simply performed their daily work and left us with a better today. Read between the lines and you will discover those anonymous local heroes.

This publication focuses on the local history of just one of over three thousand counties in the United States: Rockbridge County, Virginia. Since the topics here could not appear in the proceedings of any other county historical society perhaps we should call our nation the “United Counties of America.” Just as we know that each of the fifty states is different, we should also recognize that Rockbridge County differs from the other ninety-nine counties in Virginia. Uniqueness is a source of pride.

Yet by focusing on local pride, we do not take away from the greatness of this nation. The United States will always be a nation greater than the sum of its parts. To understand how this greatness came about, however, we must first examine America and its people at the local level. This was the belief of the late Dr. Charles W. Turner, a past president and devoted supporter of the Rockbridge Historical Society for more than fifty years. Dr. Turner was convinced that American history cannot be fully understood if viewed only from the top—from the perspective of dominating personalities or major centers like Washington or Richmond. Everything in these proceedings supports this view.

In our local-level view of American history, we need to keep in mind that what we are examining is constantly moving. The reason is simple: we are examining an ongoing experiment—the great American experiment. However, sufficient time has passed since the events described herein

that this moving experiment has come into sufficient focus to give us historical perspective.

Earlier we mentioned local pride. Why Rockbridge pride? While cities and urban life are now the socially dominant part of the American fabric, they sprang up from the type of small towns and rural areas still found in Rockbridge County. Thus the weaving of America's rich and diverse tapestry started in its towns and villages such as found here and then spread elsewhere. We know this if only from the growing number of requests the Society receives for genealogical information. People wish to discover their roots. Many have found them here.

The Rockbridge Historical Society is one of three dozen local historical societies in Virginia focusing on about a third of the Commonwealth. Ten years ago, on our fiftieth anniversary, we published Volume 10 of *Proceedings* that covered the presentations made between 1980 and 1989. Now we mark our sixtieth anniversary with Volume 11 covering the years 1990 to 1994.

I would like to thank the authors of the essays, many of whom expended considerable effort to help us get the volume ready for publication. Winifred Hadsel, a Society Trustee and former president, was especially helpful on numerous aspects of manuscript preparation. Jim Dedrick of the News Gazette Print Shop in Lexington was invaluable, as always, in getting this book printed.


Like the dots in a pointilist portrait, each of the fourteen topics presented here adds a speck of historical paint to a picture of one American community. Only if we step back and see all the specks does a picture of American history begin to emerge—a picture based on local details. Yes, all history is local.

March 2000

David F. Reynolds
President,
Rockbridge Historical Society

Ugly and Ordinary or Popular and Successful? The History of Lexington's Early Artificial Stone Buildings*

Pamela H. Simpson

 SEVERAL years ago, when I was on sabbatical leave and attempting to work on a book on Rockbridge County's architecture, I began to notice a number of buildings all done in the same strange, rock-like material. In fact, the more I looked, the more I saw. It was a little like warts. Once you notice them, they seem to be everywhere. I saw them in downtown Lexington, in Buena Vista, in the county, and elsewhere. I saw them in other parts of Virginia, in Maryland, Alabama, Maine, and Delaware. I saw them in books. I even saw them in paintings.

* An earlier version of this article was published under the title "Quick, Cheap and Easy: The Early History of Concrete Block" in Bernard Herman and Thomas Carter, eds., *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, vol. 3 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989). This article represents a substantial revision of the earlier piece with additional information on Lexington's buildings. Parts of the article also appear in Chapter 1 of Simpson's *Cheap, Quick and Easy: Imitative Architectural Materials, 1870-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999).

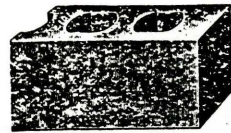
Pamela H. Simpson received her Ph.D. in Art History at the University of Delaware. Since 1973 she has been in the Art Division of Washington and Lee University's Fine Arts Department, rising to the rank of Professor and also becoming head of the department. She coauthored (with Royster Lyle) *The Architecture of Historic Lexington* (1977) and has published many catalogues for W&L's exhibitions. She addressed the Rockbridge Historical Society on January 22, 1990, in Evans Dining Hall, W&L, Lexington.

What were they? They were all buildings done in the late 1910s, '20s, and '30s, and they were all made of rock-faced hollow concrete block, a material that was usually called "artificial stone" in its heyday. As I continued to investigate it and its history, it became evident to me that at one time it was an enormously popular building material, but that today it was ignored, dismissed as ugly, and largely taken for granted. My investigations, however, turned up a fascinating story of a new technology and popular culture. In 1909, William Radford wrote in the preface to *Cement Houses and How To Build Them*:

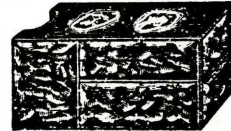
The history of the human race represents no parallel to that of the marvelous development during the present generation of the use of concrete hollow blocks. Home builders the world over are hungry for information about cement houses. The demand for such information is unprecedented. "Tell us how to build a home of cement" is a cry heard throughout the land.¹

Radford may have exaggerated the extent of the cry for information on cement houses, but he was accurate in stating that in a very brief period a new building material had been introduced which had an "unprecedented demand." Radford was writing in 1909, yet the modern origins of the concrete block industry had only begun a few years earlier with the 1900 U.S. patent of Harmon S. Palmer's hollow concrete block building machine.

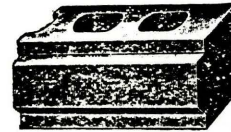
The history of concrete is, of course, much older than 1900. The Romans frequently used it, the Pantheon being the most famous example. There were experiments with it in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the modern use of cast, hollow concrete blocks comes only with Palmer's invention of this machine. Even with Palmer's invention, however, it is doubtful that modern mass production would have started if it were not for the parallel invention of new techniques for the grinding and firing of Portland cement. Portland cement had been invented in 1824 by an English bricklayer and named for the Portland stone it resembled. Basically, it is lime and clay mixed and fired at a high temperature and then pulverized. It becomes a binder when water, sand, and aggregates are mixed with it to form concrete. Portland cement had been around for a long time, but it was only the technological improvements in its production in 1903 that meant that it was the practical, standard, reliable material



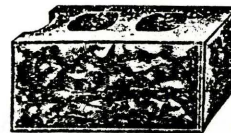
Standard Plain Face.



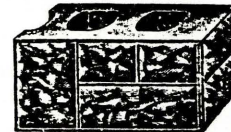
Broken Ashler Face, Style A.



Water Table Face.



Standard Rock Face.

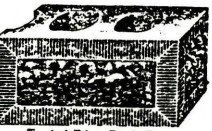


Broken Ashler Face, Style B.

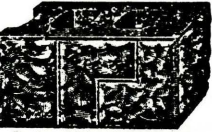


Cobblestone Face.

1. William A Radford, *Cement Houses and How To Build Them* (Chicago: Radford Architectural Co., 1909), p. 3.



that made concrete such a dependable material. Both of these inventions were necessary to spell the beginning of the concrete boom in the early twentieth century. And “boom” they did.



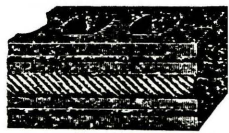
Both concrete block and Portland cement experienced a phenomenal growth between 1900 and 1910. Palmer had a plant making about four hundred machines a year in 1902, but by 1907, there were nearly a hundred companies competing with him and concrete block machines were flooding the market. Most of these duplicated his design and he spent years in court trying to prevent patent infringements. The popular appeal of concrete block was immediate, and a tremendous number of producers came into the market in the early 1900s. In Omaha, Nebraska, a quarryman named Nels Petersen saw the new concrete block and said to himself, “Why should I hew these stones when I could make them in a mold?”² He took his savings, bought a block machine, and started the Ideal Cement Stone Company. Petersen was not alone. By 1905, there were some fifteen hundred companies in the United States making concrete block.



Concrete block was quick, easy, and cheap. A block machine could cost less than \$100 and the manufacturers promised that experience was really unnecessary and “anyone can do this work.” A 1917 Sears catalogue recommended that the machine would be “profitable whether you manufacture [blocks] for your own use or for sale. If for your own use, you can make them during your spare time, or on rainy days.”³



The fact that people did buy the machines for their own use is attested by the ads the manufacturers used to promote their machines. H. W. Mallery of Moscow, Idaho, bragged that



his house had been “built by amateurs, as my sons and I had never before worked with cement in any way. We made our blocks and also laid them up.” He also commented that they had not built the steps yet because “we are farmers and have other work to do.”⁴

There are other instances of people making their own block. In Delaware, a woman named Wilhemina Vogl bought a Sears machine in 1915, designed her own house, and built it with the help of her husband

2. Joseph Bell, *From Carriage Age to the Space Age: The Birth and Growth of the Concrete Masonry Industry* (N.p.: National Concrete Masonry Association, 1969), p. 5.

3. *Concrete Machinery*, Specialty Catalogue (Chicago: Sears, Roebuck and Company, 1917), p. 2.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

and eight children. The result was a spectacular piece of folk art. More commonly, however, the machines were used to build more traditional or popular house designs. One fascinating footnote to this story of owner built houses is the fact that Georgia O'Keeffe's father bought a machine and built his family house in Williamsburg in 1901. I don't know that this had any subsequent effect on her painting career, but it adds to our story.

Even the Sears Home Catalogues had designs for concrete houses. For most of the Sears designs, you could get all the precut house parts delivered to you. For the concrete ones, they sent everything except the concrete blocks since, as the catalogue noted, "most of our customers make their own."⁵

Why were concrete blocks so popular? Part of the answer is that they were cheap, quick, and easy. The early 1900s saw an increase in the cost of both wood and brick. By contrast, cement prices declined between 1900 and 1906. A cement block could cost about thirteen cents to make and it cost less than brick to lay. There was also a falling supply of lumber. No wonder concrete block seemed a cheap and efficient substitute. Advertisers were also at pains to point out that concrete block was fireproof, required no paint and little repair, and would last "practically forever." The new material was particularly popular for garages since the automobile seemed a fairly combustible machine to many of its new owners.

But there was clearly another element in its popularity as well—it was ornamental. You could mold it to imitate almost anything, as the Sears Specialty Catalogue page opposite shows. But by far the most frequently used ornamental face was the rockface—the form that imitated quarried stone. This imitation was apparent from the first. Nels Petersen had asked, "Why hew it when I can mold it?" and most early manufacturers called it "artificial stone." It was cheap, easy, and looked like something more expensive. This imitative quality was one thing that rallied the architectural elite against it. A 1907 editorial in the *American Architect and Building News* referred to "imitations of rockfaced masonry which were 'so frequently seen' and were so 'depressing and distasteful.'"⁶

Oswald Herring, an architect who published a book called *Concrete and Stucco Houses* in 1912, echoed these sentiments when he wrote, "The sight or mention of the concrete block in its present crude form . . . of imitation in rockfaced stone, has been sufficient to band the architectural


5. Katherine Cole Stevenson and H. Ward Jandl, *Houses by Mail* (Washington: Preservation Press, 1986), p. 241, "The Canton" published in catalogues 1911, 1913, 1916, 1917, and 1918.

6. *American Architect and Building News*, December 28, 1907, p. 214.

"Ugly and Ordinary or Popular and Successful?"

TRIUMPH[®]


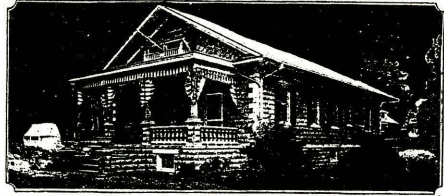

Porch Column Outfits



For beauty, service and permanence, build your porch of concrete. Unlike other materials, it is not subject to weather conditions having absolutely no effect on its effects are possible with the aid of our TRIUMPH Porch Column Outfits.

Nothing adds so much to the appearance of a home, or creates such good impression, as an attractive concrete porch. Our TRIUMPH Porch Column Outfits meet modern demands in porch architecture. The large illustration at the left hand side of the page gives an idea of the beauty of porches that can be made with our molds. This design was made with

our Ionic Capital Mold, Fluted Column Mold, Rock Face Pier Body and Egg, and Dart Pier Cap and Rail. Illustration at right is another type made with our molds, using the Capital Mold, Plain Column, Panel, Pier Body and Plain Pier Cap and Rail. The size of each mold that is listed in the column below is made to match the other molds in the outfit.






	Price if Bought Separately		6385830 Porch Outfit, nine molds, complete for 10- inch columns. Shpg. wt., 62 1/2 lbs. \$68.45
	10-inch Size	12-inch Size	
One Combination Plain and Fluted Column Mold.....	\$18.85	\$18.25	6385831 Porch Outfit, nine molds, complete for 12- inch columns. Shpg. wt., 700 lbs. \$79.90
One Baluster Pallet.....	7.70	3.70	
One Ornamental Capital Mold.....	11.80	15.85	So save in construction design where necessary.
One Ornamental Base Mold.....	9.25	10.30	
One Pier Body Mold.....	6.85	8.30	
One Pier Cap Mold.....	7.40	8.80	
One Top Rail Mold.....	5.90	5.90	
One Bottom Rail Mold.....	6.60	6.60	
One Water-tight Block Mold for One Core for forming recess for top rail in pier cap.....	.40	.40	
One Core for recess in wall for baluster ends.....	.40	.40	
Total cost if bought separately.....	\$76.15	\$88.90	
Price for outfit complete.....	\$68.45	\$79.90	
Saving if bought together.....	\$ 7.70	\$ 9.00	

Coping Molds

Finish Your Walls With
Ornamental Coping

These molds make a coping stone that can be used to good advantage on any concrete wall. Each mold will make stones 2 feet long, 8 inches thick, 10 inches wide at bottom and 11 1/4 inches wide at top. Both 24-inch side plates of these molds are alike, so stones with ornamental front and back can be made, which is a very desirable feature when cap stone for a concrete block fence is desired. If stone is to be used as coping on a flat roof building, so only one ornamental face is required, the long filler plate is inserted against the back plate. To turn corners the dividing plate is placed diagonally across one corner, making a stone with mitered ends. Miter plates are furnished to make miter ends on stones where one or both sides are ornamental. To make one end and both sides with design as would be required in porch rail and fence work, the special end plate is needed.



Plain Design Coping Mold

6385768
Plain Design Coping Mold, complete with filler and dividing plates. Shipping weight, 65 lbs. \$8.45


6385769
Plain End Plate. Shpg. wt., 12 lbs. \$2.60

Egg and Dart Design Coping Mold

Makes a perfectly molded coping stone that is very attractive. Mold is easy to operate and releases the stone readily and without damage.

6385767—Egg and Dart Coping Mold, complete with filler and dividing plates. Shipping weight, 65 pounds. \$8.45

6385766—Egg and Dart End Plates. Shipping weight, 12 pounds. 2.60



28
52
SEARS, ROEBUCK AND CO.—WLS—World's Largest Store

A page from the 1928 Sears, Roebuck & Co. catalog.

profession together . . . in protest and condemnation. . . A cheap and vulgar imitation of stone, it will never be acceptable in any work of worth." Herring, the American Institute of Architects, and the editors of the professional press all agreed: concrete was a new and exciting material, but if it was to be used in block form, then it should be stuccoed

7. Oswald C. Herring, *Concrete and Stucco Houses* (New York: Robert M. McBride and Co., 1912), p. 52.

CONCRETE BUILDING BLOCK MACHINES

OUR CONCRETE BLOCK MACHINES ARE THE BEST IN THE WORLD. THEY WILL MAKE MORE BLOCKS PER DAY THAN ANY OTHER MACHINES. THEY WILL MAKE BETTER PROPORTIONED AND BETTER FINISHED BLOCKS THAN ANY OTHER MACHINES AND THEY WILL MAKE MORE MONEY FOR YOU. OUR PRICES ARE LESS THAN ONE-HALF THE PRICES ASKED FOR OTHER MACHINES NOT HALF SO GOOD AS OUR MACHINES.

THERE IS BIG PROFIT IN MAKING CONCRETE BUILDING BLOCKS.

over and hidden away. Never should it be rockfaced, for one material should not imitate another. That may have been the elite view, but the masses loved the rockfaced surface and happily went on exploiting it.

The heyday of ornamental concrete block was from about 1905 to about 1930. By 1905, people were talking of seeing the material “everywhere,” and organizations like the Concrete Block Machine Manufacturers Association and the National Association of Cement Users were being formed. But there were problems with the block. There were so many machines on the market and the “advantages claimed for each had attracted men to the industry” who had “poor knowledge of how to make [concrete] block.”⁸ They had been told by the salesmen that anyone could do it. There were no standards of reliability and as one manufacturer confessed, sometimes all that was necessary was that the block held together long enough to get to the site.⁹

There were other problems, too. The Bricklayers Union was reluctant to take on block laying. One block equalled 28 bricks, so there was less time and thus less pay in laying it. But the real problem was weight. A 12 x 9 x 2-inch block could weigh 180 pounds. Some early builders had to use hand-cranked derricks to lay the block. This problem was solved to some extent in 1906 when the three-core unit was developed, making it lighter; but it was always a problem as long as the block was concrete. It was not until 1917 that F. J. Straub received a patent on cinderblock; and while there were many experiments with lightweight aggregates in the late 1910s and 1920s, it was only in the late 1920s and 1930s that cinderblock began to widely replace the earlier concrete block. By that time, changes in technology had taken the industry out of the hand-tamped, down-faced machine era and on to an automated phase.

When that happened, the rockface block gave way to the modern plain face of cinderblock. By 1930, the industry had been consolidated, standards had been accepted, and new technology had spelled an end to the rockface block.

8. Radford, *Cement Houses*, p. 12.

9. Bell, *From Carriage Age to the Space Age*, p. 6.

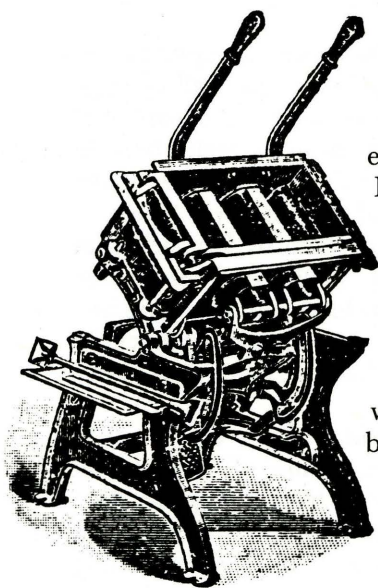
The period from 1905 to 1930, however, produced thousands of rockfaced concrete block buildings. Why were they so popular and accepted so quickly? The answer to that lies in the intersection of a new technology with popular culture. The beginning of the century brought many new technologies that received wide popular favor—the typewriter, telephone, Linotype, photo-engraving, and so on. Expanding industrial production was fed by a nationalization of markets brought by mass advertising. The Sears catalogues are examples of this. People in small towns everywhere could read about block machines in ads that promoted the block as cheap, durable, fireproof, and needing little care.

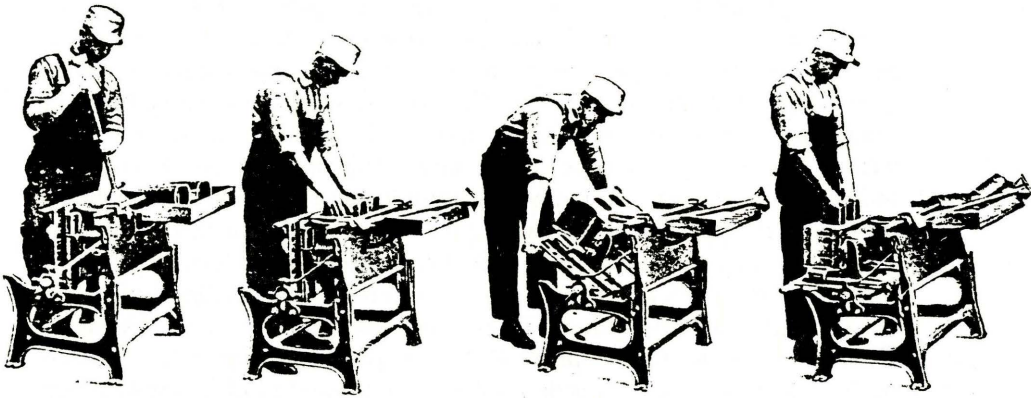
Groups like the Cement Producers Association and the Portland Cement Association also promoted their products nationally through trade magazines, books addressed to the home-building public, and national campaigns such as the Better Homes Movement. The “Home Sweet Home” House built on the White House lawn in 1922 was constructed of concrete block.

National marketing like this was a phenomenon of the nationalized communication system. It changed local building industries into ones accepting new ideas and new technologies. The concrete block was still made locally; it was only the technology that could come by mail order, but all it took was one machine to get a whole industry going in a community.

In Lexington, it appears that H. A. Donald was the first one to introduce rockface concrete block when he did a building for his friend Frank Brown in 1915 on Randolph Street. Brown, a local blacksmith, had decided to expand his business to accommodate automobiles, and he contracted with Donald to build a more fire-resistant structure. Frank Brown’s son, Manly, said that a portable machine was used to make the blocks on the site and it may have been a Palmer machine. Donald was also responsible for building a structure in 1923 at the northeast corner of Nelson and Randolph Streets in Lexington that has been the home of many businesses. It was originally built as an automobile showroom, and the noncombustibility of concrete may have been part of its appeal.

Other buildings that went up in the 1920s in Lexington include the Odd Fellows Lodge on Nelson Street, 1926, and the Knights of Pythias building on North Main Street in 1927. The latter building served an important function as a social hall and community center for





Lexington's black residents for many years. The large hall upstairs was used for dances, basketball games, and social gatherings, as well as lodge meetings. Sometimes the rockfaced block was used for ornamental touches. Out in the county, the Rockbridge Bank in Fairfield, built in 1922 for only \$2,900, serves as an example. In Lexington, other 1920s houses included one on Morningside Drive and one on Lewis Street.

Oral history tells us that most of these were done by Donald, or at least the block was supplied by his company. Again, oral informants claim that he early on used a hand-tamped machine, but later switched to a slush method that depended on molds set on railroad cars that could be rolled into curing sheds to dry. This machine survives at Barger's Quarry today.

In 1942, Bill Williams started the Rockbridge Block Company in East Lexington. He had a partnership with a man named Christian who worked for the Atlas Cement Company in Pennsylvania. Together they produced both rockface concrete block and cinderblock, but they were using a hydraulic press. In general, the newer hydraulic, oscillating machines spelled the end to rockface block, but a few people like Williams went right on producing it well into the 1950s and 1960s.

A group of houses on Route 60 West was built in the early 1950s, using Williams's block. The man who built one of the houses told me of seeing the block at Williams's plant, liking it, and deciding to use it. "Why?" I asked him. "Because it looked good," he replied.

Matt Beebe also told me that Donald's machines were still used at Barger's Quarry well into the 1960s. When trucks came in with left-over ready-mix, they poured it into the old machines "just for the fun of it" and they kept a supply of rockface block for ornamental work. Their own office at the quarry was made of it. A house on Walker Street has a

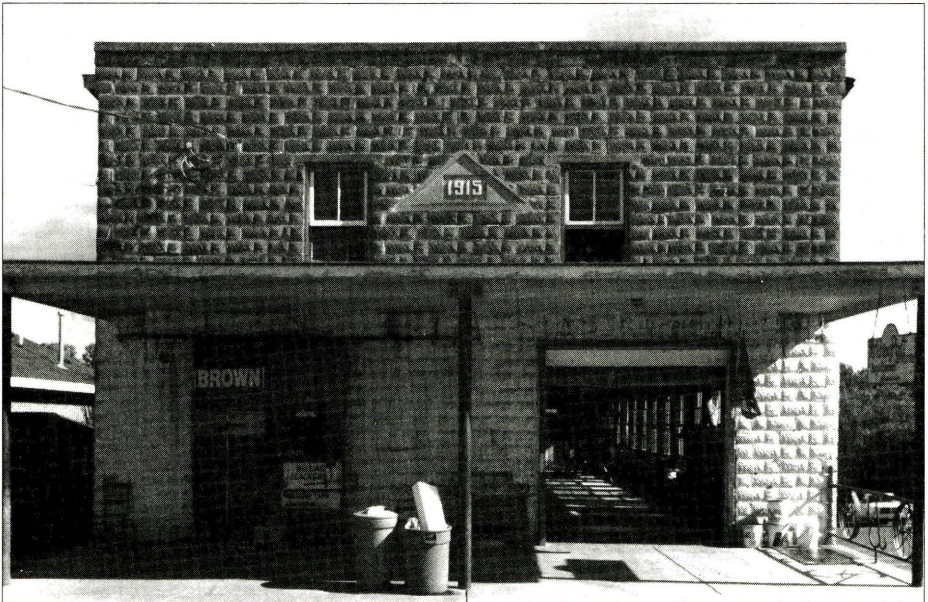
chimney made of it. Another house has a basement of it.

The examples of Donald, Williams, and Barger in Lexington are proof of the ready adoption of new technology at a popular level. It was available because of mass production and mass advertising. Once available, it became a “local material,” but it was a phenomenon repeated all across the country.

To cite one other example: in Artesia, New Mexico, in 1904, John Hodges opened the Hollow Stone Manufacturing Company only a year after the town had been laid out.

The local newspaper, the *Artesian Advocate*, commented: “When a factory was established in Artesia a few months ago for the making of hollow concrete building blocks, no one realized the importance of the move, nor how much it meant to the town. This substantial and beautiful substitute for stone has revolutionized building in the West.”¹⁰ The paper then went on to enumerate the buildings that Hodges’s company

10. *Artesian Advocate*, October 1, 1904.



Lexington's first rockface block building: Brown's blacksmith shop on Randolph Street.



The 1922 Fairfield bank.

had put up. He was so successful, he eventually opened two plants, and Artesia, New Mexico, is today on the National Register with the largest rockface concrete block historic district in the nation. Hodges practically built the town.

There is even evidence to suggest that America's fascination with concrete block was exported abroad. Two years ago I spent a summer in Oxford, England, doing research on this subject, and found that in 1906, a journal called *Concrete and Constructional Engineering* was founded in London. Its pages were full of ads for concrete block machines, articles about concrete block manufacture, and pictures of concrete block buildings, including one built in Cairo, Egypt.

I hope what I have done so far is to convince you that concrete block was an extremely popular material in the early twentieth century. Changes in mass culture had served to popularize it. Changes in technology and production had made it available. But what of our original question, "Ugly and Ordinary or Popular and Successful?"



Above: 1920s rockface block house on Lewis Street, Lexington.

Below: Rockface block chimney on a Walker Street home, Lexington



The elite would certainly hold with the first half of this equation. Architects condemned it because of its imitative qualities; yet, the masses seemed to love it exactly for those imitative qualities. Architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable once wrote about concrete in general that its popularity was “fueled by the primary American desire to find ways of doing things that were ‘cheap, quick and easy.’” This was a “characteristic mixture of the immediate, imaginative American recognition of unprecedented technological possibilities and the willingness to do what had never been done before with the tastelessness of a new middle class society that accepted substitute gimcrackery for traditional materials and ideas.”¹¹

Huxtable’s reference to the “tastelessness of a new middle class that accepted substitute gimcrackery” is a reflection of her own elitist view. Yet she seems to be right about the different values of the middle class that embraced what was new—especially if it was cheap, practical, and looked like something more expensive. It is the same practicalness that supported pressed metal, or would later support aluminum siding. When the Rockbridge County resident told me he liked the way rockface concrete block looked, when the *Artesian Advocate* claimed its new buildings were “so attractive and so substantial,” they were not apologizing for imitating more expensive materials. They were actually claiming that block was better than stone—because it was cheap, easy, and looked expensive. It was not a matter of failed imitation, it was a case of successful allusion. Ugly and ordinary? Not to them. Perhaps if we can cast off some of our own elitist prejudice, we can also see that it was indeed popular and successful.

The heyday of rockface concrete block use was from 1905 to 1930. However, there were survivals well beyond this date. One of the amazing things about this story is how quickly the block was accepted and how widespread was its popularity. It may have been denounced by the elite as tasteless, but to ordinary people everywhere it was cheap, practical, and ornamental—a very satisfying material indeed.

11. Ada Louise Huxtable, “Concrete Technology in USA: A Historical Survey,” *Progressive Architecture*, October 1966, pp. 144–49.

Lexington and Rockbridge County in the Civil War

Robert J. Driver, Jr.



ROCKBRIDGE County's population in 1860 was about seven-teen thousand people, excluding slaves. The majority of the white population was native-born, involved in farming, and of Scotch-Irish and German descent. The Virginia Central Railroad, which passed through the northern tip of the county at Goshen, and the James River and Kanawha Canal provided ready access to market for the farm products produced in the region. Every crossroads seemed to have a blacksmith, and the villages on the stage routes—e.g., Brownsburg, Fairfield, Fancy Hill, and Steele's Tavern—had wheelwrights and wagon-makers to support the stage lines. The Monmouth cloth factory made materials for the whole community. Mills abounded in the county. Hays Creek reportedly had a mill per mile along its length to grind the wheat and other grains produced locally. Iron furnaces and forges kept the farmers supplied with plough points, horseshoes, and other necessary iron implements. While not totally self-sufficient, Rockbridge County was rich in raw materials.

The inhabitants were strong believers in the value of education. The rolls of Washington College, the Virginia Military Institute, and the Uni-

Robert J. Driver, Jr., is a native of Staunton who was educated in North Carolina, served as a U.S. Marine Corps officer for twenty years, and lives with his family in Brownsburg. He is president of the local Civil War Roundtable and the author of several volumes in the Virginia Regimental History Series. Shortly before he delivered this paper, he had published *Lexington and Rockbridge County in the Civil War* (Lynchburg: H. E. Howard, 1989). He addressed the Rockbridge Historical Society on April 23, 1990, in Northen Auditorium, Washington and Lee University, Lexington.

versity of Virginia demonstrate this. Farmers' sons became physicians, lawyers, teachers, and Presbyterian ministers, among other occupations.

John Brown's raid on the U.S. government arsenal at Harpers Ferry in 1859 had alarmed people all over the region, but only the cadets from the Virginia Military Institute had been called out. This event sparked a renewal of interest in militia drilling throughout the county, and at least one new company was formed.

Politically, the people of Rockbridge were as devoted to the Union as any county in the state. John Letcher, a Lexington native, could not carry Rockbridge County in his bid for governor. His sin was that when he was in Congress, he had voted with the other Southern representatives on the issues of the day. "Honest John" won anyway. His pre-election announcement that he would resist any movement of Federal troops across Virginia to enforce "unjust, iniquitous, and unconstitutional laws, either in Virginia or any other state" helped his career.

The national election of 1860 was a bitterly fought contest in which Republican Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, championed by abolitionist elements, was elected president over three conservative candidates. Although he received nearly one million fewer popular votes than the conservatives, the conservative vote was split three ways, allowing Lincoln to capture the presidency. Rockbridge County voters cast most of their ballots for John Bell of Tennessee, who ran on the platform of "the Constitution, the Union, and the enforcement of the laws." John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky ran a close second, and Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois a distant third. Lincoln received one vote in the county.

The election of Lincoln was viewed by many as an utter disregard of the Constitution and the judgments of the Supreme Court and thus of the vested rights of Southerners. The majority of Virginians remained loyal to the Union, but secession sentiments surfaced, particularly in eastern counties. Former Governor Henry A. Wise led a small but vocal minority who desired secession. Despite Letcher's efforts to defuse the situation, an extra session of the General Assembly was called on January 7, 1861. The legislature authorized the election of delegates to a State Convention, the system used by the Southern states to consider secession.

On February 4, the same day the Confederate States of America took form in Montgomery, Alabama, Samuel McDowell Moore and James B. Dorman, both strong Unionists, were elected as delegates from Rockbridge over John W. Brockenbrough and Cornelius C. Baldwin, who both leaned toward secession.

The convention met in Richmond beginning on February 13, with a majority of the delegates pro-Union. Events in Charleston, South Carolina, harbor and Lincoln's inaugural address on March 4 did nothing to ease Virginians' fears. Lobbyists from the seceded states urged Letcher

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to seize Harpers Ferry, Fortress Monroe, and the Gosport Navy Yard at Norfolk, but Letcher steadfastly refused to be coerced into action against the federal government.

Meanwhile, things remained relatively calm in Rockbridge. A Washington College student from South Carolina returned from the Christmas holidays wearing a secession badge—a blue cockade—which quickly caught on among the college and VMI students. When the young men met with the young ladies of the community, they often sang "Dixie" and "The Bonnie Blue Flag." Washington College students wanted to form a military company, to be drilled by the cadets from the Institute. The faculty initially disapproved, but later relented.

It is now hard to imagine college students eagerly awaiting the stage from Goshen and staying up late into the night in order to pore over the latest news of policy debates in Congress, the secession convention, and elsewhere. Events were occurring at such a rapid pace that it was difficult for anyone to keep abreast of them. Not only were these events debated by members of the Franklin Society in Lexington, but speeches, both for and against secession, were given by the two sides at the County Courthouse. Dr. George Junkin, president of Washington College, would not allow the subject of secession to be broached at the weekly student declamations.

The State Convention put the question to a vote on April 4: secession was defeated by a margin of almost two to one. A delegation from Virginia visited President Lincoln, who insisted that he would use force against the seceded states. The firing on Fort Sumter on April 12 brought the crisis to a head. Despite pressure from inside and outside the state, Governor Letcher refused to budge on the issue.

When the news of Fort Sumter reached Lexington, those favoring secession raised a flag on the lawn of the courthouse. Speeches and a bonfire followed. Later the same day, the Unionists attempted to raise a flagpole near the same location. However, the pole collapsed into several pieces; it had been sawed nearly in half in several places. Unionists were irate, blaming VMI cadets for destroying their flag pole.

That afternoon a group of Unionists attacked cadets in a store and a fight broke out. The outnumbered cadets held their own until some of the Unionists drew pistols. One of the cadets ran to the Barracks and sounded the alarm. The corps armed themselves with muskets and bayonets and started for town. Superintendent Francis H. Smith and other faculty members headed them off at the tavern at the foot of Main Street. Colonel Smith persuaded the cadets to return to Barracks. It was a close call, but the first battle of Lexington was averted, as more Unionists had armed themselves and were awaiting the cadets. No one ever claimed

responsibility for the flagpole cutting, but I strongly suspect Washington College students rather than cadets.

As much to fret Dr. Junkin as to express their enthusiasm for the new Confederacy, the students raised the "Bonnie Blue Flag with a Single Star" over George Washington's statue on the campus. While the first flag was taken down by Willie Preston, at the insistence of Junkin, from then on, each morning a new flag would appear, and Junkin would order the janitors to take it down and burn it. Finally, on April 17, the students petitioned the faculty to let the flag remain, and the faculty approved. Junkin resigned in a huff and returned to Pennsylvania.

Lincoln's call for seventy-five thousand troops to crush the rebellion was the final blow to Unionist sentiment in Virginia. Governor Letcher denied the request for three regiments from the state with the retort:

The militia of Virginia will not be furnished to the powers at Washington for any such purpose as they have in view. Your object is to subjugate the Southern states, and the requisition made upon me for such an object—an object in my judgment not within the purview of the Constitution or the Act of 1795—will not be complied with. You have chosen to inaugurate civil war, and having done so we will meet you, in a spirit as determined, as the administration has exhibited toward the South.

Despite Letcher's strongly worded refusal to supply troops, he still refused to seize the federal installations in the state until the Convention voted for secession.

Dr. William S. White, minister of the Lexington Presbyterian Church, aptly described the changes in Rockbridge. On April 15, he made a speech to the Union men advocating their views. The next day Lincoln's proclamation arrived. White considered it a declaration of war and he stated: "Thus forced to fight, I claimed the poor right of choosing whom to fight. Necessity was laid upon me to rebel against him [i.e., Lincoln], or my native state. I chose the former and became a rebel, but never a secessionist." The same day, James D. Davidson, a prominent lawyer in Lexington, gathered thirty of the strongest Union men in his office. They all agreed and sent word to Representative Dorman in Richmond to "vote an ordinance of revolution at once! And now our secessionist friends say they are the true conservatives and that we are the fire eaters."

Rockbridge became aroused overnight. The factions who were ready to fight each other only a week before, united as one and responded to the Governor's request for volunteers with alacrity. Within hours of being notified, companies were organized, armed and equipped, and on the way to Harpers Ferry.

The "Rockbridge Rifles," from Lexington and vicinity, under Captain Samuel Houston Letcher, were the first to depart. The "First Rock-

bridge Dragoons," Captain Matthew X. White, Jr., commanding, from the Fancy Hill area, and the "Second Rockbridge Dragoons," from Brownsburg, under Captain John Rice McNutt, departed the same day. Other companies were rapidly organized and equipped. Everyone was caught up in the enthusiasm of preparing the volunteers for war. The women of Lexington, Brownsburg, and throughout the county sewed uniforms, caps, packs, tents, canteen covers, and whatever was needed for the men. The armory at the Virginia Military Institute was kept busy issuing arms and accoutrements. As soon as they were ready, the companies marched off to the seat of war.

The "First Rockbridge Artillery," under Reverend Captain William Nelson Pendleton, was raised in Lexington and surrounding area. The "Fairfield McDowell Guards," later the "Second Rockbridge Artillery," led by the Reverend Captain William Miller, came from Fairfield and the South River district. Captain James G. Updike's "Rockbridge Grays" came from the Buffalo Forge area. The "Liberty Hall Volunteers" was composed of students and alumni of Washington College, led by professor James J. White. "The Valley Regulators" was raised by Captain Albert A. Yeatman from the Natural Bridge and Springfield areas. Captain David P. Curry led another Brownsburg company, the "Rockbridge Guards." Captain Thomas H. Watkins's company came from the Colliers Creek, Buffalo Creek, and Broad Creek areas. The "Kerr's Creek Confederates" was formed in that area by Captain James D. Morrison. Captain Lewis C. Davidson's "Rockbridge Rangers" came from throughout the county. The VMI cadets marched off to Richmond and Harpers Ferry to become drill instructors for the new regiments. Over 5,200 men from the county are known to have served at some time in the Confederate Army.

Home Guards units were formed of old men and young boys in every community in the county. As one resident described Rockbridge: "The county is a[n armed] camp." The Board of Supervisors appropriated funds to support and sustain all of the soldiers in the field as well as their families.

A surprising source of support came from the community's free black population. James Humbles rode off to war with the "First Rockbridge Dragoons" as the bugler, serving until the company was sworn into Confederate service, at which time he was discharged. Humbles ran the water works for the town of Lexington. In 1864, when free blacks were being sent to Richmond and elsewhere to work, the Lexington Town Council petitioned to have him remain. The town was dependent on his knowledge and skill to keep the water works operating. Other free blacks volunteered to work on the defenses at Harpers Ferry and elsewhere. When Rockbridge received its first scare of a raid by federal

troops, both black and white employees of the iron furnaces were armed and marched to the defense of Lexington, where they were told that the rumor was false.

The efforts of the women of Rockbridge were beyond compare in clothing and supplying the Confederate soldiers in the field. With thousands of men from throughout the South concentrated in Virginia, the demand for hospital supplies became great. Coming from isolated areas, thousands of men sickened and hundreds died from such childhood diseases as measles, mumps, and chicken pox, to which they had not previously been exposed. Few had been vaccinated for small pox. Staunton and Charlottesville became major hospital centers, and the people of Rockbridge supplied these hospitals with food, clothing, medicine, and money to purchase needed supplies. This support lasted throughout the war.

Closer to home, the Rockbridge Alum Springs resort was used as a Confederate hospital. At one time, over six hundred patients were hospitalized there, and many are buried in the Confederate cemetery nearby. Needless to say, the people supplied these patients too. Later, Washington College became a temporary hospital. It was soon moved to the Fairgrounds at the edge of town. People not only supported this facility, but the women nursed the sick and wounded. The Soldiers and Ladies Aid Societies supported the men in the field and the hospitals. The county sent doctors and others to care for the wounded after major battles.

When Lieutenant Robert McChesney of Brownsburg was killed in western Virginia in June 1861, he became the first of many battle casualties in the war. In July, the "Rockbridge Guards" lost three killed and four wounded at Rich Mountain. The Battle of Bull Run, on July 21, cost the county twelve killed and thirty-five wounded. These actions would be remembered as mere skirmishes compared to what was to come at places like Gaines's Mill, Sharpsburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, Spotsylvania Court House, and Appomattox Court House.

While women toiled to clothe the soldiers, Elizabeth Randolph Preston, a girl of thirteen, recalled that "Christmas of 1861 was spent sewing and knitting for the soldiers and packing boxes with good things to eat to send to the army." The old men, boys, and slaves worked the fields to feed the forces. Rockbridge farmers grew an abundance of wheat, corn, and other foods.

Buena Vista, Glenwood, California, and Vesuvius furnaces produced large amounts of pig iron for the Confederacy. Iron forges at Vesuvius, Buffalo Forge, and Rockbridge Baths, made horse shoes, and other iron products needed for the war effort. The employees of the

arsenal at the Virginia Military Institute were making ten thousand cartridges a day. By the end of 1861, forty men and women were employed in the manufacture of ammunition.

“Stonewall” Jackson’s only defeat came in 1862 at Kernstown, on March 23. The Rockbridge Militia was called out and marched to Rude’s Hill, where Jackson conscripted the able-bodied men and sent the rest home. Most of the militia were assigned to the Stonewall Brigade, particularly the 27th Virginia Infantry. The VMI cadets were called out in May 1862 to participate in the McDowell campaign. Theirs was the inglorious task of burying the dead. The deaths of Generals Frank Paxton and “Stonewall” Jackson in 1863 brought special sorrows to the county. Mourners came from all over the state to attend Jackson’s funeral in Lexington.

Shortages of clothing and food were severe and increased as the war progressed. Inflation rose rapidly. The Board of Supervisors authorized the Bank of Rockbridge to print currency in small denominations because of the shortage of coins. Citizens were called upon to donate scrap iron, lead, brass, and copper to the war effort. Bells were sent to Richmond to be melted into cannon. The soil under smokehouses was removed and sent to Collierstown, where the salt petre—a key component of gunpower—was extracted. New industries arose in the county. The Lexington Manufacturing Company began making ink. At Buffalo Mills, the Stone-wall Manufacturing Company erected a tannery. The skins of dogs and other small animals were used to make the upper portions of shoes and other leather items. By 1864, shoes were being made with wooden soles and canvas uppers. Carpets were sent to the army to be used as blankets.

Rockbridge County became a haven for refugees driven from their homes in northern and western Virginia. As the war progressed, the county became a rest and recuperation center for cavalymen and their mounts. The troopers brought their half-starved horses to Rockbridge to winter on the abundance of grain and fodder available.

The Home Guards and cadets continued to be called out to defend the county during federal raids. The tightening of the Conscription Act took more and more of the available white manpower from the county. To relieve white workers for the military, free blacks and slaves were drafted to work in the nitre caves in Bath and Highland counties. Slaves were also sent to Richmond to build fortifications for the capital’s defense.

Following the cadets’ day of glory at New Market, on May 15, 1864, General Lee ordered all of the infantry, including the cadets, to Richmond and his army. When General David O. Hunter, the new Union commander in the Valley, started towards Staunton with twelve thou-

sand men, he faced General John D. Imboden, who had about two regiments of cavalry. Imboden called out the reserves of Rockbridge, Augusta, and Rockingham Counties. The reserves had been organized out of the Home Guard units during the spring of 1864. General Lee sent General William E. "Grumble" Jones with a small force from southwest Virginia to Imboden's aid. The Rockbridge reserves fought in the battle of Piedmont, near Staunton, on June 5. Jones was killed and the Confederates were driven from the field. Hunter marched into Staunton unopposed.

Meanwhile, General John McCausland, with his brigade of cavalry and that of General William E. "Mudwall" Jackson, were all that faced two federal columns under Generals George Crook and William W. Averell, advancing from western Virginia toward Rockbridge. Since McCausland captured a copy of General Crook's orders, he knew that the Union plan was for Crook and Averell to unite with Hunter at Staunton. The combined force was then to march on either Charlottesville or Lynchburg. "John Tiger," as his men called McCausland, resorted to delaying tactics, fighting and falling back, throughout the campaign to Lynchburg. McCausland attempted to slow the Union forces at Panther Gap, west of Goshen, but the badly outnumbered Confederates were flanked out of the position. "John Tiger" fell back through Goshen and down the railroad toward Staunton. When he reached Buffalo Gap the next day, he learned of Jones's death and the Confederate defeat. McCausland moved his troops to the Middlebrook Road and fell back to Brownsburg.

On June 10, 1864, Hunter left Staunton with a combined force of eighteen thousand men. Crook and Averell came up the Brownsburg Road and were engaged by McCausland's troopers at Arbor Hill, Middlebrook, Newport, and Brownsburg. Averell turned off at Newport and came down Walkers Creek to Hays Creek, and attempted to cut off McCausland's men at Brownsburg, but he was unsuccessful. The Confederates fell back to Cameron's Farm, about two miles from Lexington, and camped. Hunter, with his main force, had advanced through Greenville and camped near Fairfield for the night. During the evening, McCausland met with General Francis H. Smith, the VMI Superintendent. He explained that he could only delay Hunter's overwhelming numbers and that the cadets should evacuate Lexington. Smith had the cadets prepare the bridge over the North (now Maury) River for burning.

Early the following morning, the federals advanced and forced McCausland's rear guard back across the bridge. While the bridge burned, McCausland's three small artillery pieces and sharpshooters scattered along the cliffs overlooking the river held the enemy back. The artillery duel that followed brought the VMI Barracks under fire. This

forced the cadets to retire to the ravine along the main road into Lexington. Lexington itself came under fire as the Confederates pulled back. Many of the houses were hit, but fortunately there were no civilian casualties.

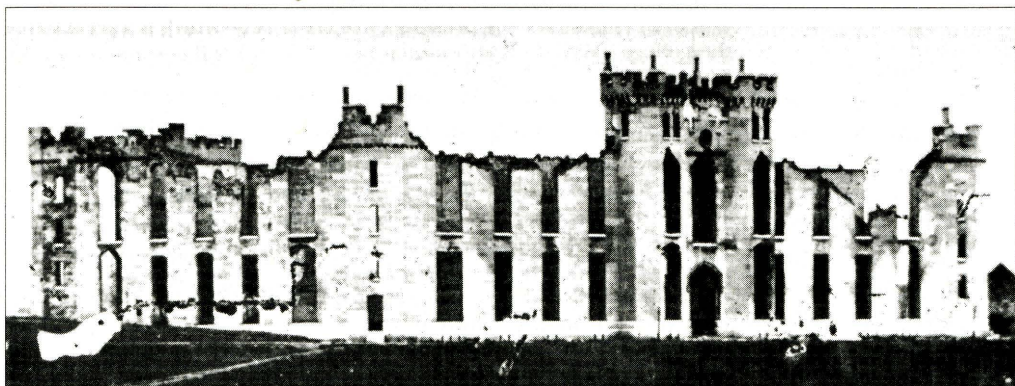
Averell's cavalry succeeded in crossing the river at Rockbridge Baths and approached Lexington from the west. McCausland's scouts spotted this move and warned him of the danger. He pulled his troops back and retreated toward Fancy Hill. Hunter's men were immediately across the river and looted the Institute, Washington College, and the town.

On Sunday, June 12, the depredations continued. The Barracks was burned and the arsenal blown up. General Hunter enjoyed the arson, according to his men. He next directed that the houses of Major Gilham and Colonel Williamson be burned. Later, “Black Dave,” as his troops called him, was shown a proclamation of Governor Letcher's calling for the people to rise up against the Yankee invaders. Hunter then ordered Letcher's house to be burned. Letcher's proclamation must have been an old one, since he had not been the Governor since January. Mrs. Letcher was given five minutes to move her family out of the house.

While Washington College was not burned, the interiors of the buildings were destroyed. All of the windows were knocked out, and the furniture and books that were not carried off were piled up to be set on fire. Some of the federal officers talked Hunter out of burning the school.

The mill and storehouses at Jordan's Point went up in flames. The canal boats, shops, and the equipment that supported them also received the torch. The looting of the houses and stores in Lexington continued until the federals departed on June 14. Rich and poor, black and white,

The Virginia Military Institute Barracks after Hunter's raid.



no one was spared. Anderson, the black baker for the Institute, lost everything he owned. When asked if he had told the Union soldiers that he was the property of the state, he replied: "No, indeed. If I had told the Yankees that, they would have burnt me up with the other state property." Another amusing incident occurred when Lizzie Pendleton was leading a federal officer, who was searching her house, up the stairs. A string under her hoop skirt broke and a shower of spoons fell out. The officer broke into laughter and helped her pick them up.

McCausland skirmished with the federal advance towards Lynchburg at Fancy Hill. Later, he fell back to Buchanan and burned the bridge before the Yankees could cross. This ended the fighting in Rockbridge County during the war.

The furnaces at Buena Vista and Glenwood were destroyed. Mills, wagons, farm equipment, anything of use to the Confederate cause was burned or carried off. The losses in Rockbridge were estimated at \$2,000,000 to \$3,000,000. Colonel J. T. L. Preston believed that his losses were \$30,000. The Union army subsisted off of the people. Three to five hundred slaves were taken. About one thousand horses, large numbers of cattle, sheep, and hogs were eaten or carried off. Although some of the grain crops were ruined, the wheat crop proved to be the best in years. The loss of the bridges at Lexington and Buchanan and the destruction of the North River Navigation locks and the railroad at Goshen made the movement of goods and supplies difficult.

The people bounced back from Hunter's raid. They somehow found a way to feed, clothe, and warm their families that last year of the war; yet, they sent more than they could spare to feed Lee's army. Despite their own poverty, the Ladies Aid Society of Natural Bridge, learning that the remnants of the Stonewall Brigade were nearly barefoot, ragged, and without blankets, collected \$4,000 worth of apparel for their heroes. The congregation of New Providence Presbyterian Church raised \$3,000 to purchase artificial limbs for disabled soldiers.

The survivors of Lee's army straggled home after the surrender at Appomattox Court House. Many brought information on the last casualties of the war—the heroic defense of Fort Virginia at Petersburg by the Second Rockbridge Artillery, the charge of the 52d and 58th Virginia Regiments and the 2d Rockbridge Dragoons that broke the federal lines for the last time at Appomattox Court House. Color bearer James A. Willson and Private Samuel A. Walker were both mortally wounded and were the last battle casualties from Rockbridge County. Others escaped, and some attempted to join General Joseph E. Johnston's army in North Carolina, but they soon turned back to their homes.

Lawlessness broke out in the county. Arson, armed robbery, rustling of horses, cattle, and sheep took place. A county police force was orga-

nized, which included many Confederate veterans. The criminals were quickly brought to justice or driven from the county. After the war, Lexington was occupied by federal troops for about six months. The troops seemed to have cooperated with local officials and maintained law and order.

Most of the soldiers made the change to civilian life rapidly. Those with skills returned to their trades. Those without, of necessity, became farmers. Many moved west to Texas, Missouri, California, and all points in between.

The schools reopened in the fall of 1865. Edward Moore, of the Rockbridge Artillery, sold the horse he rode home from Appomattox to get money to reenter college. In September, Robert E. Lee rode into Lexington to become president of Washington College. His arrival signaled the rebuilding of that institution.

Rockbridge rebounded quickly from the war, but never forgot its fallen heroes. General Lee led the masses who paid homage to “Stonewall” Jackson on the third anniversary of his death. Lee stood with uncovered head on his visit to the grave of the man who had been his strong right arm. The reporter for the *Gazette* wrote of that day in May 1866: “It certainly was an impressive and beautiful sight, to look upon the large congregation of persons there assembled, of every rank and condition in life, of every age, who, in thus honoring the dead, honored themselves.”

I believe we do so today.

The following is a talk on Brownsburg in the Civil War given by Mr. Driver as part of a panel on that town’s history at the Society’s July 28, 1980, meeting at Brownsburg Middle School. It was inadvertently omitted from volume 10 of Proceedings.

At the advent of the War Between the States, two companies were raised around Brownsburg. The “Rockbridge Guards,” seventy-five strong, left Brownsburg on April 30, 1861, under the command of Captain David P. Curry. In a little over a week, the ladies of the village and vicinity had made coats, trousers, knapsacks, haversacks, cloth caps, canteen covers, ten tents, and 140 shirts of grey cloth. The men were also provided with shoes and socks. This unit became Company H, 25th Virginia Infantry, and served under “Stonewall” Jackson. They began service in

western Virginia in 1861 at Rich Mountain, where many were captured, and were with Jackson in the Valley Campaign in 1862, the Wilderness, and Spotsylvania in 1864, losing forty-six officers and men captured. Twelve of these died of disease while prisoners of war. The remnants fought with Jubal Early in the Valley and at Petersburg. One man remained to surrender at Appomattox. One member of the company was wounded six times.

The other company raised at Brownsburg was the "Rockbridge Cavalry" or the "Second Rockbridge Dragoons," organized on April 20, 1861, by Captain John R. McNutt, with four officers and sixty men initially. First Lieutenant Robert McChesney of this unit was killed near St. George, Tucker County, Virginia (now West Virginia) in June 1861. He was the first soldier from Rockbridge County to be killed in the war. This command became Company H, 14th Virginia Cavalry, and saw much hard fighting throughout the war. Eight men surrendered at Appomattox. On the same day, before the surrender, Privates Samuel Wilson and Samuel A. Walker were killed. They are supposed to be the last two Virginians killed on Virginia soil during the war. I have found evidence to dispute that, but they may be the last two with Lee's army to be killed, at any rate.

Brownsburg was out of the mainstream of the war, but it is recorded that General Imboden's cavalry camped here for a short time during the winter of 1863-64. The Cobb Legion Cavalry of Georgia camped on the farm of Zachariah Johnston during April and May 1864. General McCausland's cavalry skirmished with General Hunter's army here on June 11, 1864, and the Union troops camped here that night. Unfortunately, there is no source that I have found that gives the location of the skirmish or the camp. Averell's Union cavalry camped at "Belleview" on Hays Creek after marching down Walkers Creek from Staunton. During their stay, they hanged a Mr. Creigh from Union in Monroe County (now West Virginia). Mr. Creigh had killed a Union soldier who was molesting his wife there in 1863. A "drum-head" court-martial was held and Creigh was sentenced to hang—over the protest of some of Averell's officers. The hanging tree no longer stands, but my late aunt, Mrs. Ross Money maker, who owned the farm, pointed out the spot to me prior to her death.

Stonewall's Church: The First Two Centuries

Robert Hunter



IN March 1990, Presbyterians heard a talk by the author on the subject, "Our Church Building: Tent to Temple." The focus of that talk was on the succession of meeting places: a tent in Davidson Park alternating with the Court House in the early years, followed by a brick church in the cemetery in 1799, the move to the corner of Main and Nelson in 1845, and the structural changes made in the years since then. In this presentation, I intend to say very little about church buildings, focusing instead on the ministers and some of the members of their congregations.

New Monmouth Presbyterian Church is the "mother" church of Lexington Presbyterian, and its history has been told well by Taylor Sanders in his *Now Let the Gospel Trumpet Blow*, published in 1986. Earlier, George Brooke published *General Lee's Church*, the story of the Robert E. Lee Episcopal Church. The work that I am preparing, with the help of too many persons to name, will be published with the title *Lexington Presbyterian Church, 1789-1989*. It will be published in mid-1991, in time for the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the erection of the statue of Stonewall Jackson in the cemetery.

Robert F. Hunter, emeritus professor of history at VMI, spoke to the Society in the Lexington Presbyterian Church Auditorium on July 23, 1990. His remarks summarized the results of his research on his *Lexington Presbyterian Church, 1789-1989* (Lexington, Va.: Lexington Presbyterian Church, 1991). He had previously published, with co-author Edwin L. Dooley, Jr., *Claudius Crozet: French Engineer in America, 1790-1864* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989).

In the spring of 1789, Presbyterians in Lexington had been attending Hall's Meeting House, also called "Old Monmouth," then located at Whistle Creek. In that year, Hall's moved westward and adopted the name New Monmouth. On April 15, Lexington Presbytery authorized the Lexington Presbyterians to organize their own separate church; however, for the first thirty years of its existence (until 1819), Lexington Presbyterian and New Monmouth shared the same minister and the same session (ruling elders).¹ That minister in 1789 was William Graham, whose legacy as a godly man is valued by both this church and Washington and Lee University.

A native of Pennsylvania, Graham graduated from Princeton in the renowned class of 1773, and the next year came to head Augusta Academy and to pastor Timber Ridge church and Hall's Meeting House. The school was renamed Liberty Hall in 1776 and moved from Timber Ridge to Graham's farm west of Lexington in 1779. After the war with England was over in 1783, religious freedom became the subject of heated debate in Virginia. The more conciliatory leaders of the established Episcopal church supported an assessment bill by which members of all of the churches would pay the state government a tax to support their own church. This would mean in effect the establishment of all recognized churches, and not all churches would be recognized. Some Presbyterian leaders supported the assessment bill, but not William Graham. Graham urged the complete separation of church and state, as did James Madison and Thomas Jefferson. The end result was that in 1786, Jefferson's Statute of Religious Liberty was passed by the Virginia legislature, which was inundated by petitions for it. An overwhelming number of these petitions had come from Presbyterians in the Valley, and had been solicited and collected by William Graham. Graham could be an inspiring preacher also. One notable sermon he preached was vividly remembered sixty years later by a surviving few who heard it.²

Graham's life ended sadly. In 1796, he resigned from his two pastorates and Liberty Hall, and attempted to promote settlements in the

1. Sessional Records of Lexington Presbyterian Church, manuscript bound volumes in vault, Lexington, Virginia, Vol. 1 (1780-1845), p. 1; see also Howard McKnight Wilson, *The Lexington Presbyterian Heritage* (Verona, Va.: McClure Press, 1986), pp. 334-43; I. Taylor Sanders, *Now Let the Gospel Trumpet Blow: A History of New Monmouth Presbyterian Church, 1746-1980* (Lexington, Va.: New Monmouth Presbyterian Church, 1986), pp. 9-18.

2. William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia: Historical and Biographical (First Series)* (1856; reprint, Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1966); see also William Graham Papers, Special Collections, Leyburn Library, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va.

Kanawha Valley. He died on a trip to Richmond in 1799 in an effort to clarify land titles. In 1911 his remains were moved from Richmond and reburied on the north side of Lee Chapel, on the Washington and Lee University campus.

Meanwhile, the church called supply preachers until the arrival of George A. Baxter in 1799. Baxter’s great-great-grandson is Professor Sidney Baxter Coulling of Washington and Lee, who has added the Baxter Family Papers to the University archives. George Baxter was born in Rockingham County to Scotch-Irish parents. He graduated from Liberty Hall in 1796, was licensed to preach by Lexington Presbytery, and in 1799 returned to Liberty Hall, now renamed Washington Academy, as rector. His daughter, Louisa, recorded, “It was considered necessary for the church to have as pastor the principal of the Academy,” and he received a call from both New Monmouth and Lexington Presbyterian.³ Baxter served as pastor of New Monmouth until 1822, as rector of Washington College (renamed again in 1813) until 1829, and as pastor of the Lexington Presbyterian Church until 1832, when he left Lexington to teach at Union Theological Seminary, then located at Hampden-Sydney College.

George Baxter was a spiritual leader of great influence in Lexington. He experienced four revivals during his long pastorate—in 1801, 1811, 1822, and 1831. The first one continued about three years, until 1804, and “degenerated” into strange manifestations of conversion called “the Jerks.” Baxter had serious doubts about the sincerity of many who fell down and lay prostrate at revival meetings. The revival of 1811 also lasted three years, and brought large crowds to Lexington. On one occasion, after every livery stable had been filled, someone counted 1,100 horses tied out of doors during the service, many in the yards of private homes. Thus began Lexington’s continuing parking problem.⁴

In 1819, New Monmouth and Lexington Presbyterian separated, each with its own session; yet for the next three years, Baxter conducted services at both churches. After the revival of 1822, Baxter believed New Monmouth was strong enough to support its own pastor, so he reluctantly gave it up and devoted his full pastoral time to the Lexington church. He was still rector of Washington College, a job he was ready to give up also, but not until the school should become financially sound.

3. Baxter Family Papers, Box 1, FF 6, Special Collections, W&L. A handwritten biographical sketch of George A. Baxter is in this file folder, written by his daughter Louisa.

4. Session Records, 1: 7; Baxter to Mr. Davis, 4 Sept. 1803, George A. Baxter Papers, Special Collections, W&L. These papers are a separate collection from the Baxter Family Papers.

This was made possible in 1829 with the legacy of “Jockey” John Robinson, and Baxter then gave his full time to pastoring the Lexington church. When he received an invitation to succeed Dr. John Holt Rice, professor at Union Theological Seminary, he hesitated to accept because of the low spiritual state of the congregation. It had been nine years since a revival, and Baxter believed one was needed. One Sunday in June 1831, Baxter rose at the close of the service, and speaking to the unconverted, said, “the church had done all they could do for them, there remained but one other means, and if there were any in that house who desired the prayers of God’s people they were requested to come forward and take their seats in the aisle.” To everyone’s surprise, thirteen came forward. From that moment, interest deepened and spread, and a revival was under way. The front pew was reserved for the penitent, the first use of the “anxious seat” in this area. This may explain why Presbyterians always fill the back pews first. Over a hundred new members were added in the summer of 1831, and the way was cleared for Baxter to accept the chair of theology at Union Theological Seminary.⁵

Now the Lexington church faced the task of calling a full-time pastor for the first time. The congregation decided that the privilege of voting should be given only to those “who are church members in good standing, and those who have been regular supporters of the gospel, in this church.”⁶ About half of the members appeared to pass this test according to the record of the number who voted, and we can only imagine the reaction of the other half. The leading candidate for the call, the Reverend Jesse Armistead of Buckingham Court House, wrote to Baxter at Hampden-Sydney that he would be pleased to receive the call. However, he added, “I should be unwilling to settle among a divided people.”⁷ Armistead received a large majority of the votes and the call, and he turned it down. James W. Douglass of Ohio accepted the call and began his ministry here in January 1833.

Douglass was here less than two years, but made some important changes. He changed the style of administering communion, eliminating the older practice of setting up tables in the aisle and admitting only those who had received communion tokens from the elders. Instead, he distributed the elements himself to the entire congregation present, without tables and tokens. Even more innovative was his stress upon Christian education. He initiated the beginning of the Sunday School in the

5. George A. Baxter Papers, Box 1, FF 6, 34; FF 28.

6. Session Records, 1: 53–54.

7. J. S. Armistead to George A. Baxter, 5 Apr. 1832, George A. Baxter Papers.

Lexington church, organizing classes of fifteen or twenty adults or children to adopt the “verse a day” plan and study the *Shorter Catechism*.⁸

In July 1834, Douglass notified the session that he would probably be leaving in the fall, and their response was to ask him to recommend his successor. William H. Cunningham of Tennessee accepted an invitation to supply for six months and was called to the permanent pastorate after that. On a Sunday morning in March 1840, Cunningham announced from the pulpit that this was his last sermon and left that week.

The Lexington Presbyterian Church was now a half century old. The Graham and Baxter pastorates had filled all but nine years of that time, and had contributed to spiritual growth as well as physical expansion of membership and property. There were reasons, however, for some uneasiness after 1832. Armistead refused the call because the congregation was divided, Douglass did not get on well with the Session, and Cunningham had left abruptly. The more perceptive members surely saw these things as straws in the wind.

Actually, the wind rose to gale force during the pastorate of the next minister, John Skinner. A Scottish Presbyterian, Skinner was descended on his mother’s side from a sixteenth-century forbear, John Erskine, friend of John Knox and Moderator of the Scottish General Assembly. Skinner was minister of a church near Glasgow (Scotland) for twelve years when suddenly and for reasons unknown, he decided at the age of forty-nine to emigrate to the United States. While visiting in Alexandria, he heard of the vacancy in Lexington and applied for it. He was stated supply for a year, then ordained as the permanent minister. In the spring of 1842, another spontaneous revival added over a hundred new members, and in 1843 it was decided to build a new church, which was completed in 1845, at the corner of Main and Nelson Streets. A more auspicious beginning than that experienced by Skinner during his first five or six years is hard to imagine. It is equally hard to imagine a more frustrating and distressing experience than the one that soon afflicted both John Skinner and his congregation.

It is not appropriate in this article to trace the development of the so-called “Skinner War.” Let it be sufficient to say that a number of members, including a few elders, expressed dissatisfaction with Skinner’s ministry early in 1847. In August, eight of them signed a letter to Skinner stating that a majority of the congregation desired a change of pastor.⁹

8. Session Records, 1: 64–66.

9. Rev. John Skinner, D.D., *Case of the Rev. John Skinner, D.D., and the Presbyterian Church of Lexington; Before the Presbytery of Lexington* (Lexington, Va.: n.p., 1847), pp. 3–4. For more on the pastorate of John Skinner, see Chapter 3, *Lexington Presbyterian Church*, pp. 39–59.

Skinner did not confer with the signers, nor with the Session, but instead took great personal offense at this criticism. He doubted that a majority of either the Session or the congregation wished him to resign, and at the outset he may have been right. Nevertheless, by his own words and actions he created a majority in opposition to him. The end result was a trial before Presbytery in the Lexington church, in which multiple charges against him of unchristian conduct were upheld, the pastoral relationship dissolved, and his license to preach revoked. Skinner appealed his case to Synod, which upheld the Presbytery. He next appealed to the Presbyterian General Assembly, meeting in Baltimore in May 1848, which upheld the dissolution of the pastoral relationship with the Lexington church, but reversed the revocation of his license to preach. Skinner later pastored two churches in Ontario, where he died in 1864, highly regarded by his congregations there. It was gratifying to know that he learned from his experience in Lexington, and did not repeat it.¹⁰

Skinner's successor, William Spottswood White, was surprised to find the church not as divided over the controversy as he expected it to be. When the General Assembly in Baltimore gave its final decision in the Skinner case, the Lexington congregation "dropped him and his cause at once." White was also apprehensive about the character of the Lexington congregation. His church at Charlottesville had grown to 140 members, only ten of whom were there when he began. The Lexington church had over 250 members, including five other resident Presbyterian ministers, but he soon found them "indulgent, forbearing and affectionate in a remarkable degree." On the other hand, the elders soon learned that William White would not hesitate to speak his mind. Robert L. Dabney told of meeting White after he had been in Lexington a year, and asking him how he liked the "Cohees," a western Virginia colloquialism for the Scotch-Irish. Dabney noted that White "found the Lexington session and people deficient in aggressive boldness for Christ; the community was in name almost all Presbyterian; all nominally on the side of order and righteousness; yet flagrant vice abounded." White watched and waited, then called for a special meeting of the session. "So they all assembled," said White, "and wished to know what the business was. I made them a talk, and I began about thus: 'Well, brethren, you have a noble church here, etc. But I must say that, with all its excellence,

10. Samuel McDowell Reid to White, 11 Nov. 1847, Reid Papers, Rockbridge Historical Society Collection, Special Collections, W&L. This is a separate collection from the Reid Family Papers. See also *Lexington Gazette*, November 11, 1847, p. 3; *Franklin Society & Library Testimony Taken in Case of Rev. John Skinner, D.D.* (Lexington, Va., 1847), p. 67; William G. Bean, "The Skinner Case," *Rockbridge County News*, November 29, 1945, p. 7.

your community is in one respect the queerest I have ever lived in. God’s people have the reins in their own hands, yet they let the devil do the driving.’ Didn’t that wake up the elders?”¹¹

White pressed the elders into more active service in ministering to the congregation, but their zeal was short-lived. White thought this “may have been due in part to the fact that there was one member of the session who was himself a host . . . John B. Lyle.” Lyle, bachelor owner of a local bookstore that served as a town forum, was a self-appointed home missionary who was of immense help to White in his first ten years in Lexington. Lyle died in the summer of 1858 after suffering a stroke during worship service.¹² Lyle’s successor for Pastor White was Deacon Jackson.

Thomas Jonathan Jackson arrived in Lexington in August 1851 to teach at VMI, and he joined the Lexington Presbyterian Church three months later. Two particular friends seem to have influenced Jackson to favor the Presbyterian church, Daniel Harvey Hill and John B. Lyle. Hill graduated from West Point ahead of Jackson, was a fellow officer in the Mexican War, and left the army before Jackson to teach at Washington College. It was Hill who brought Jackson’s name to the attention of VMI Superintendent Francis H. Smith during his search for a new physics professor. Hill introduced Jackson to the *Shorter Catechism* and the Westminster *Confession of Faith*. Jackson was somewhat disturbed by the doctrines of predestination and infant baptism, and said that “a friend,” probably Lyle, suggested he might be more comfortable as a Methodist. Jackson thereupon conferred with Dr. White, who assured him that in spite of his doctrinal doubts, in his daily Christian life he was “so good a Presbyterian” that he could “safely remain” where he was.¹³

In the fall of 1855, Jackson established a Sunday school for blacks which enjoyed instant success and lasted for twenty-five years. He also taught a Sunday school class of Washington College students and VMI

11. Rev. H[enry] M. White, ed., *Rev. William S. White, D.D., and His Times (1800-1873): An Autobiography* (Richmond, Va.: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1891), p. 284.

12. White, *White*, pp. 139-40; see also Royster Lyle, Jr., “John Blair Lyle of Lexington and His ‘Automatic Bookstore,’” *Virginia Cavalcade* 21 (Autumn 1971): 20-27.

13. See Mary Anna Jackson, *Life and Letters of General Thomas J. Jackson* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1891); Roy Bird Cook, *The Family and Early Life of Stonewall Jackson*, 4th ed. (Charleston, W.Va.: Charleston Printing Co., 1963); Thomas Jackson Arnold, *Early Life and Letters of Gen. Thomas J. Jackson* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1916); Lenoir Chambers, *Stonewall Jackson and the Virginia Military Institute: The Lexington Years*, ed. Royster Lyle, Jr., and Barbara L. Crawford (1959; reprinted, Lexington, Va.: Historic Lexington Foundation, 1982).

cadets, which was “a stiff course in Calvinist theology.” In 1857, the General Assembly and the Synod called upon churches in which the office of deacon had fallen into disuse to restore it. Accordingly, the Lexington church elected three deacons: John W. Barclay, Thomas J. Jackson, and Alexander L. Nelson. Their duties involved looking after the needs of the poor, handling the financial affairs and maintaining the properties of the church, and arranging accommodations for “strangers and others” at all church meetings. Jackson was chairman, Nelson secretary, and Barclay treasurer of the deacons. Pastor White placed infinite value on the work done by Jackson, and called his friendship “a privilege I shall prize as one of the richest of my life.” Jackson held White in the same high regard.¹⁴

It appeared to White that the effect of the war upon church members was either to drive them away or bring them closer to the faith, and he feared that all too often their faith diminished. Two events made many aware of their dependence upon the Lord: first, the death of Stonewall Jackson in May 1863; and second, the occupation of Lexington by General David Hunter in June 1864.

On 5 May 1863, news of the battle of Chancellorsville and the wounding of Jackson arrived in Lexington. On the eighth, further news came that his left arm had been amputated and that he was also wounded in the right hand. On the tenth, the day Jackson died, the mail arrived in Lexington just as Dr. White was beginning the worship service. As Margaret Preston recalled, “So great was the excitement and so intense the desire for news, that he was obliged to dismiss the congregation.” On the twelfth, Margaret wrote a letter to Jackson offering him a place in her home during his recovery. “I went down stairs,” she wrote, “with the letter in my hand, and was met by the overwhelming news that Jackson was *dead!* . . . How fearful is the loss to the Confederacy! The people made an idol of him, and God has rebuked them.”¹⁵

A year later, when General David Hunter invaded and occupied Lexington for three days, Dr. White took advantage of his opportunity to move freely among the northern troops and talk to as many as he could. “It was very obvious that there were several distinct parties in their army,” he observed, “differing widely in their principles, and much embittered toward each other in spirit.” He was chagrined to find that

14. Chambers, *Lexington Years*, pp. 268–69; Jackson to Mrs. Alfred Neale, May 12, 1856, Stonewall Jackson Papers, Virginia Military Institute Library, Lexington, Va.; White, *White*, p. 157.

15. Elizabeth Preston Allan, *The Life and Letters of Margaret Junkin Preston* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1903), pp. 162–64. See also Mary Price Coulling, *Margaret Junkin Preston* (Winston-Salem, N.C.: John F. Blair, 1993).

no chaplain accompanied them. When he asked a major about this, his reply was, “Oh yes, we have a great many; almost one to every regiment.” White answered, “I am astonished then that you have no worship today.” The major replied, “Our chaplains are not of much account. They seldom or never preach. I have not heard a sermon, or even a prayer, for many months.”¹⁶ White had worked with Jackson to recruit chaplains for Confederate regiments, and continued with much success and generous support from churches in the Valley after Jackson’s death.

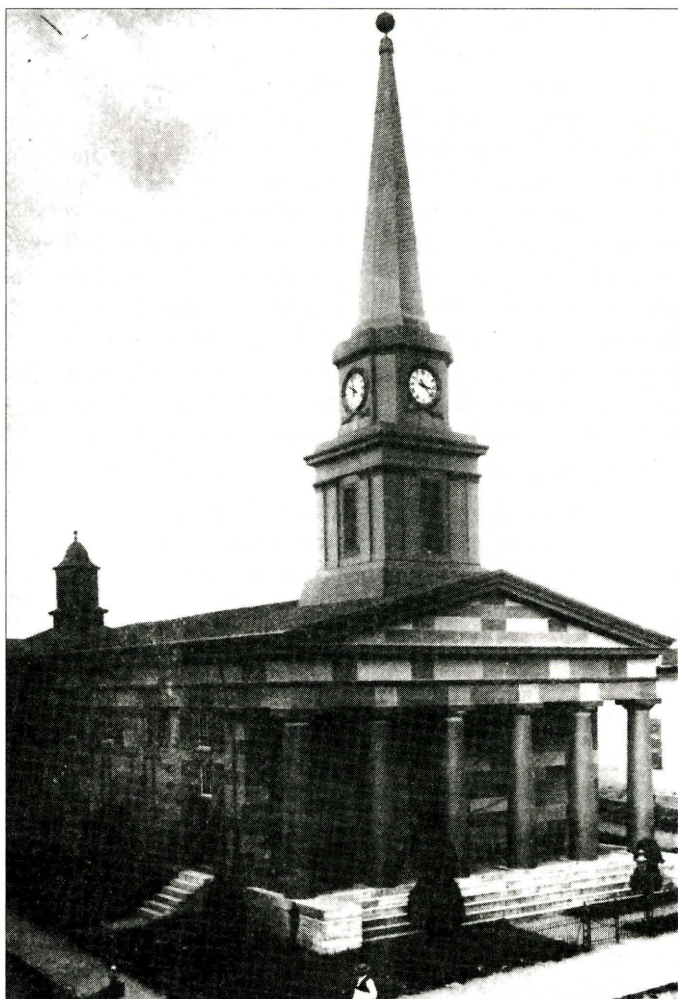
White resigned in March 1867 because of his failing health. During his last years he and Mrs. White lived with their daughter, Harriet White McCrum, and he died in 1873. White’s pastorate would be remembered for the famous Stonewall Jackson having been a member of his church, but White was a godly man much beloved by his congregation in his own right. Margaret Preston wrote a poem upon his death entitled “Harvested.” The closing stanzas read:

When the golden ears were fruited,
And the grain was sweet to the core,
Then the Master, who saw it needed
To stand in the field no more—

For the cold and the mould of winter
To shrivel and shrink its leaf —
Said, *Put in thy sickle, Reaper,
And garner my full-ripe sheaf!*

Washington and Lee could usually be counted on to provide a supply minister while a search committee was doing its work between pastorates. Professor James L. Kirkpatrick filled this role ably after White resigned. He was a graduate of Union Theological Seminary (1837), pastor of Presbyterian churches in Alabama and South Carolina, and president of Davidson College before he came to Lexington. In his later years, he served as moderator of the General Assembly of the southern Presbyterian Church (PCUS). In November 1868, after having served a year and a half, Kirkpatrick was relieved by the installation of the new pastor, John W. Pratt of Alabama. Pratt became known for his brilliant sermons, and during his six-year pastorate, the black Sunday school class begun by Jackson flourished under the leadership of J. T. L. Preston and J. J. White (Pastor White’s oldest son, a professor at Washington and Lee). In addition, an outpost chapel was built at Beechenbrook, to serve the working class community who lived along the river. The canal boat was still the main line of transportation for Lexington in the 1870s. In the

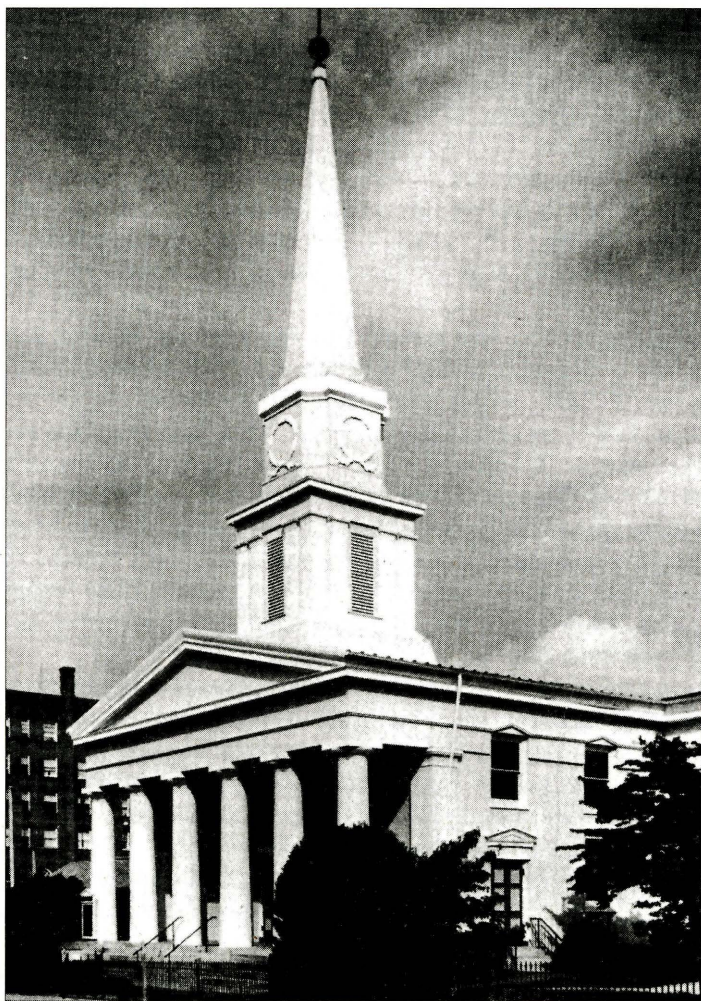
16. White, *White*, pp. 188–89.



Lexington Presbyterian Church, built 1843–45. Photo taken in the 1880s.

spring of 1874, just as Beechenbrook was opened, Pratt resigned due to poor health, and Kirkpatrick took over again as stated supply. This time it was nearly three years between permanent ministers. Francis P. Mullally accepted the call and began on January 1, 1877.

During Mullally's pastorate of nearly six years, Margaret Preston proposed and organized the Women's Foreign Missionary Society. "We merely pledge ourselves for a certain sum every month," she wrote her



Lexington Presbyterian Church. Photograph taken in the 1970s.

stepdaughter Elizabeth. “I hope it will accomplish something.”¹⁷ The society organized by Margaret Preston was the forerunner of later organizations of women in the church, known successively as the Woman’s Auxiliary (1912), the Women of the Church (1948), and since 1987 in the reunified PCUSA, Presbyterian Women.

17. Allan, *Life and Letters of Margaret Preston*, pp. 290–92.

Mullally's pastorate was by no means smooth. His practice of preaching lengthy sermons inspired a self-appointed committee to set forward the hands of the clock one Sunday, which offended Mullally so much that he announced from the pulpit his intention to resign, although he gave as his reason his declining health.¹⁸ He left in September 1882 to pastor another church and preside over a college in South Carolina, his health having improved remarkably. The new pastor who came the following year was the oldest son of J. T. L. Preston, Thomas L. Preston, who was born in Lexington in 1835 and grew up in this church.

The congregation was devoted to the younger Preston during his twelve-year pastorate. During his time the church marked its hundredth anniversary in 1889, which was celebrated by the involvement of Preston and several members of the Lexington church in founding the Buena Vista Presbyterian Church in 1890. J. T. L. Preston, the pastor's father, was not one of those involved only because of his failing health. The elder Preston died in July 1890, having served as an elder for forty-seven years. Having continued Jackson's work with the black Sunday school so successfully for so many years, Preston would have been happy to see the Jackson statue erected in the cemetery, which occurred just a year after Preston's death.¹⁹

During the winter of 1890, Thomas L. Preston suffered an attack of influenza from which he never completely recovered. He returned to his work as pastor, but steadily became weaker. Bright's disease afflicted him, and he died in May 1895. The service at the church seemed to be "a coronation rather than a funeral," and reminded many of the funeral of William S. White over twenty years earlier.

Professor Kirkpatrick's successor as interim supply was Professor James A. Quarles, who served for ten months in 1895-96 and made an incredible eight hundred pastoral visits. In March 1896, the church called Dr. Thornton C. Whaling, a professor at Southwestern Presbyterian University in Tennessee. Whaling was a native of the Valley of Virginia, and was educated at Davidson, Roanoke College, and Union Theological Seminary in New York. He was a respected and well-liked minister whose reputation extended far afield. The First Presbyterian Church of Dallas called him in 1902, and persisted each year until he

18. Records of the Presbytery of Lexington, copied and annotated by Delmo L. Beard, 1937-40. Typescript copy in W&L Library, 3: 86. The clock story was told by Stuart Moore in *Sabbath School News* (LPC) 2 (June 1924): 3.

19. Records of the Presbytery of Lexington, 3: 293; see also Wilson, *Lexington Presbytery Heritage*, pp. 363-65.

accepted in 1905. His successor, Thompson B. Southall, came *from* Texas. He impressed the congregation with his preaching, but his pastoral patience was limited. J. J. Murray later recalled, “Someone said of him that he was like a jerky cow that would give a bucket of rich milk and then kick it over.”²⁰ In 1907, after less than two years, Southall accepted a call to a Presbyterian church in the state of Washington, and left Lexington even further behind than Texas.

When Stonewall Jackson was in Winchester in the months just before his Valley campaign, he and his wife Mary Anna were guests in the Presbyterian manse of the Reverend James R. Graham. The pastor’s three-year-old son, Alfred, rode down the stairs each morning on Jackson’s shoulder. In 1907, this same Alfred T. Graham became minister of the Lexington Presbyterian Church, and served it well until his death in 1917. “He was a friend of everybody, black and white,” the Presbytery memorial declared, “and wherever he went his warm heart, tactful sympathy and genial manners made him a universal favorite.”²¹

In 1918, the congregation called Dr. Thomas K. Young, then pastor of the Presbyterian church in Covington. In 1919, Young refused to preach the Victory Loan as he was requested to do. The Session approved of Young’s stand and said, “He was called by this church to preach the Gospel to us, and not to make our pulpit a platform for the discussion of political and governmental matters, even though these may be fully endorsed and supported by Christian patriotism.”²² The issue seemed to threaten Presbyterian traditions, and the Session added, “We deplore the increasing tendency to introduce secular affairs into the public worship.” In 1923, Young accepted a call to the First Presbyterian Church of Roanoke. His successor, Dr. Joseph James Murray, began in 1924 what became the longest pastorate in the history of this church, over thirty-three years between 1924 and 1957.

Murray was the oldest son of a Presbyterian minister in South Carolina, a calling that he and two of his brothers also followed. He was educated at Davidson, Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, and the University of Glasgow in Scotland. He was a single man when he began here in June 1924, and in November 1925, married Jane Dickson Vardell of Red Springs, North Carolina. Early in his ministry, Mary

20. Joseph James Murray, “History of the Lexington Presbyterian Church,” sermon delivered in 1969, mimeograph copy, LPC archives.

21. Records of the Presbytery of Lexington, 22: 56–57; 24: 910–11; Session Records, 5: 265; 6: 171–73, 194, 200, 242, 256, 258, 268–72; Deacons Records, 2: 279.

22. Session Records, 7: 15, 49–50, 61.

Monroe Penick began her forty-seven years of distinguished service as organist and choir director of this church.

Foreign missions, particularly in the Far East, were a major concern of this church during the Murray years. The Southern Presbyterian Church began its work in China in 1867. In 1890, Philip Frank Price of Rockbridge County arrived in China to begin his sixty-five years of representing this church in that country. In 1892, he married Esther Eckard Wilson, who had arrived in China as a missionary two years before he did, and of their five sons, two followed them as missionaries to China: Frank Wilson Price and Dr. Philip Barbour Price. Other China missionaries who had connections with this church included James Robert Graham (brother of A. T. Graham), Brown Craig Patterson, James E. Bear, Hugh W. White, William F. Junkin, Nettie DuBose Junkin, Fannie Bland Graham (m. H. Kerr Taylor), James N. Montgomery (m. Aurie Lancaster), Craig Houston Patterson (m. Frances Glasgow), John William Moore (m. Anna Preston), and George R. Womeldorf. All of these were at work in China during the Murray years.²³

With the coming of the Second World War, about four thousand Christian missionaries in foreign countries were cut off from home support. One of them, a son of this church, Harry W. Myers, was arrested in Japan, confined in a solitary cell for six months, beaten repeatedly, but at length returned to the United States aboard the SS *Gripsholm*. In February 1943, Harry Myers told his story from the pulpit of this church, and he "would only bless those who persecuted him."²⁴

Murray was for many years a leader in education policy making in the church. Elected to the PCUS Board of Christian Education in 1931, he became chairman in 1949, and retired from the Board in 1955 with high praise for his work. In May 1957, the new education building of this church was appropriately named Murray Hall, and he retired from his pastorate at the end of the same year.

The Murrays left Lexington temporarily for Louisville, where he was visiting professor at the theological seminary. It was Murray himself who recommended Douglas C. Chase to the search committee. A graduate of the Louisville seminary, Chase was assistant minister at Second

23. See P. Frank Price, comp. and ed., *Our China Investment: Sixty Years of the Southern Presbyterian Church in China with Biographies, Autobiographies, and Sketches of All Missionaries Since the Opening of the Work in 1867* (Nashville, Tenn.: n.p., 1927); see also Rupert N. Latture, "W & L's Missionaries," *Alumni Magazine of Washington and Lee* 54 (July 1979): 14-15.

24. See Henry W. Sweets, *He Laid Hold on Life: The Story of Harry White Myers* (Louisville, Ky.: n.p., n.d.)

Presbyterian Church for five years. The decade of the sixties presented an unusual challenge to ministers of the Gospel throughout the country, Lexington being no exception. All things considered, Doug Chase adapted his ministry to the times successfully, and he knew from whence his strength came. His interests and concerns ranged over many causes in the community, from mental health to race relations, but his pastoral work will be remembered in particular for the home mission project known as RAPH—the Rockbridge Area Presbyterian Home. Chase resigned in the middle of his sixteenth year to accept a call to the Fredericksburg church. On October 31, 1976, as he was leading the congregation in the Lord’s Prayer, his last words were “Thy will be done.” when he was felled by a massive stroke. He died four days later in a Richmond hospital.²⁵

Dr. James Sprunt of Staunton, who had retired from Bethel Presbyterian Church in Augusta County, served with distinction as interim supply for a year and a month until the congregation was ready to call a new minister. On Easter Sunday, 1975, Langston Randolph Harrison began his pastorate which continued until his retirement in 1994. He is a native Virginian (Norfolk), graduate of Hampden-Sydney and Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, served as minister of the Harrisonburg church, and prior to coming to Lexington, twelve years as missionary to Brazil. Randy Harrison’s pastoral work was outstanding during his nineteen years in Lexington, and there are many who can say of him, “The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.” (James 5:16b) The bicentennial of this church was celebrated during his pastorate, which bridges the transition into the third century.

In conclusion, what may be said of the Lexington Presbyterian Church after two centuries?

First, the basic Presbyterian tradition, the preaching of the Word of God by an educated clergy, implies the awareness of the need for continuous reform and change, an idea expressed in the motto of the reunited PCUSA (1983). This particular church was organized during the social and political turmoil of the era of the American Revolution, and its first minister played a role in the separating of church and state. In its subsequent history it was a leader, or certainly no laggard, in furthering other causes as they emerged, such as the establishment of a Sunday church school, the religious education of blacks, the support of foreign missions, or the expanded role of women in the church.

25. See Edward Alvey, Jr., *History of the Presbyterian Church of Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1808–1976* (Fredericksburg, Va., 1976.)

Second, the church did not experience “success without a single failure,” as J. T. L. Preston said of Professor Kirkpatrick. It had the “test of patience under affliction,” as he did. It endured dry spells of diminishing faith and departing members, relieved by spirit-led revival, renewal, and growth. It endured schism and friction over both substantive issues and personalities, and rejoiced in the spiritual healing that followed. It suffered the trauma of war and invasion by enemy forces, and the pain of slow recovery. The congregation during Jackson’s time understandably idolized him, and as Margaret Preston said, the Lord rebuked them.

In the years that followed, the memorializing of Jackson that was done was appropriate. The congregation initiated the plaques in the church and provided ground for the statue in the cemetery. Others more recently restored the house he and Mary Anna lived in, when the church and the town and VMI became home to him. Jackson’s Christian faith grew during those years to make of him the exemplary Christian soldier, whose example the succeeding members in all generations should not allow to depart from memory.

“Poetess of the South”: Margaret Junkin Preston

Mary P. Coulling

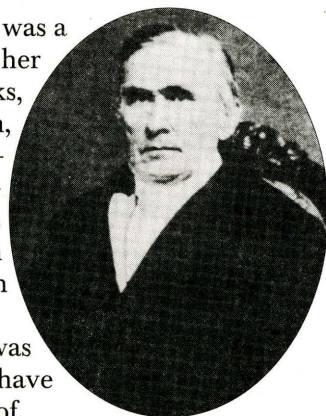
A hundred years ago, the name of Margaret Junkin Preston was a familiar one through the Southland. Her hymns were sung by Sunday School pupils in Virginia, her poems were anthologized for school children in Georgia, her long war poem *Beechenbrook* sat on the book-shelves of thousands of Confederate veterans, and literary readers throughout the country read her warm, affectionate essays on Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee which appeared in *Century Magazine*.

Today, however, few people, North or South, have ever heard of her. Indeed, one reason I became interested in Maggie Preston was this very contrast between her fame a century ago and her relative obscurity today. I quickly discovered that there are many other interesting facets of this remarkable woman. Despite her impeccable Confederate credentials—sister-in-law of Stonewall Jackson and wife of Jackson’s teaching colleague and wartime adjutant—Margaret Junkin was actually born in Pennsylvania, spent her first twenty-seven years north of the Mason-Dixon Line, and suffered the personal grief of a divided family, with her father and two of her brothers vehemently pro-Union.

I also discovered that during her professional years she had published seven books, reviewed hundreds of volumes for national periodicals, and kept up an enormous correspondence, in spite of severe eye

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and heart problems. And, finally, I found she was a thoroughly “modern” woman, writing under her own name, unashamedly promoting her works, and perfectly willing to enjoy her reputation, even though she had been reared in a traditional family and was married to a conservative gentleman whose notions of a woman’s place scarcely fit her widespread acclaim. In short, Margaret Junkin Preston is a woman worth getting to know well.



George Junkin

It seems appropriate that this poet, who was to fight against blindness all her life, should have been born in the small Pennsylvania town of Milton, a riverside village not far from Harrisburg, named for England’s John Milton. Her mother, Julia Rush Miller Junkin, was from Philadelphia, where her father had been a successful craftsman and ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church. Reared in luxury and well-educated, Julia Miller fell in love with a charming, tense, scholarly young preacher named George Junkin from western Pennsylvania and, in marrying him in 1819, she gave up her fine stone city house for a tiny rented cottage not yet completed when the couple moved from Philadelphia to Milton two days after their marriage.

George Junkin was the grandson of Scots-Irish immigrants, whose father had fought in the Revolutionary War. He received his education first in a log cabin schoolhouse and later at Jefferson College, and from there went on to theological training in New York City. The two tiny churches in Milton were his first pastorate.

The day after Maggie was born, Rev. Junkin announced her birth in a letter to his sister-in-law. “Our dear little Margaret was ushered into the world yesterday afternoon 20 minutes before two o’clock,” he wrote on May 20, 1820. “I feel myself relieved from every burden almost, but the burden of gratitude.”¹ But burdens of all sorts were to follow George and Julia Junkin throughout the thirty-five years of their marriage: a large family to support, many changes of residence occasioned by Mr. Junkin’s unwillingness to compromise with associates, the deaths of two of their children, and an ever-present concern about money. The churches in Milton, the couple found almost as soon as they arrived,

1. George Junkin to Jane Dickey, May 20, 1820, from the papers of Miss Janet Preston in the Chester County Historical Society, Chester County, Pennsylvania; copies in the Special Collections, Washington and Lee University Library, Lexington, Virginia.

paid more in produce than in cash, and the Presbyterian parson, in his eagerness to further causes he believed in, frequently spent not only his money, but also portions of his wife’s dowry.

Since she was the first of nine children, it is not surprising that diminutive, red-haired Maggie quickly became her mother’s helper, supervising the play of her siblings and assisting her mother with cooking, washing, and sewing. She evidently showed keen intellectual ability at an early age, however, for when she was six years old, her father began teaching her the Greek alphabet, the beginning of what became an unusually broad classical education for a girl.

She also had started memorizing the Westminster Confession of Faith at the age of four, before she could read. Her mature letters and poems reflect not only her familiarity with the Bible, but also her absorption of metrical rhythms learned through singing psalms at Milton’s Shiloh and Peniel churches where her father preached his carefully crafted, cerebral sermons.

With so many young children in the family (six born during the eleven years the Junkins were in Milton), there was often illness and danger of accident. In July 1830, Maggie came down with a severe case of measles, whose complications may well have been the start of eye weakness and strain which plagued her the rest of her life. A few months earlier, Maggie’s younger sister Eleanor had lost the tips of two fingers of her right hand when she and a younger brother had been playing with a straw cutter in the barn. The child was distraught, but her father wrote philosophically, “We have reason for much gratitude. The wounds will be healed over in a few days, & she will never know much inconvenience. And as for the looks—this is a small matter.”² His prophecy was correct, for Ellie Junkin became a popular, vivacious young woman who, twenty-three years later, attracted the attention of a young professor named Thomas Jonathan Jackson.

In the fall of 1830, the Junkins returned east to Germantown, Pennsylvania, when Mr. Junkin became the principal of a school that combined vocational education and ministerial training. In 1832, the family moved to Easton, Pennsylvania, when Mr. Junkin became president of newly founded Lafayette College. Here they remained for the next seventeen years, with a three-year hiatus while he served as president of Miami College in Ohio.

A collegiate atmosphere was perfect for the academically oriented Maggie. She grew up knowing hundreds of young men, faculty, and students, who were eager to teach and discuss ideas with this unusual vibrant, quick-thinking girl. A young woman so well-versed in the clas-

2. George Junkin to Ebenezer Dickey, April 5, 1830, Janet Preston papers.

sics, who was unafraid to hold her own with male students, was a rarity in the 1830s and '40s.

When the family first reached Easton, Maggie and Ellie attended small girls' schools, but quickly Maggie's abilities exceeded the limited curriculum. Instead, she continued to study Greek, Latin, and math with her father. Inside the back cover of one of her notebooks is written in George Junkin's handwriting the "course of reading in history and philosophy for M. J., 1839," when she was nineteen—books on the historical church, ancient history, Greece, the Roman Republic, geography, astronomy, natural philosophy, and physics, as well as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Hume's *England*, and Washington Irving's four-volume *Christopher Columbus*.³ She herself longed to attend boarding school, the Lawrenceville Female Seminary in New Jersey, but "the expense," she explained, "prevents my being sent to school somewhere."⁴

Along with her studies, housekeeping, and service as surrogate mother to her siblings (two more children had been born since the family came to Easton), Maggie Junkin somehow found time to begin writing poetry. Many of her early poems referred to death, which seems to our modern sensibilities a curious topic for a sixteen-year-old until we realize that consumption was a constant killer. Young friends and relatives often died suddenly; the Junkins themselves had lost a baby boy, David, who died in 1834, and family letters of the period mention serious epidemics of smallpox and cholera.

During these years in Easton, Maggie and Ellie grew very close, studying together, dressing alike, and each drawing support and self-confidence from the other. Ellie, five years younger than her sister, proudly wrote in a letter to her cousin about Maggie's poetry, and Maggie, in turn, characterized Ellie at the age of fourteen as "a lively romp . . . hazel eyes and sunny hair" who introduced "mischief" into family gatherings as she "nips the nose, or oftener pulls the hair, or draws away the expected chair—

Or when our lips just touch the brink,
Tilts up the draught we meant to drink!⁵

In 1841, Mr. Junkin accepted the presidency of Miami College of Ohio, and the whole family moved to Oxford with him. The new position seemed to be a heaven-sent reason for leaving problems at

3. George Junkin's handwritten note inside the back cover of Margaret Junkin's Notebook 1840–50, Special Collections, W&L.

4. Margaret Junkin to Jane Dickey, June 5, 1837, Janet Preston papers.

5. Margaret Junkin's Notebook 1837–40, Special Collections, W&L.

Lafayette. Difficulties there had centered around Mr. Junkin's spending money the college did not have on a variety of new educational schemes, as well as his quarrel with the chairman of the board of trustees over student discipline. But for the whole family, moving so far west seemed like moving to the end of the world. There are few letters or poems of Maggie's written during that period, perhaps because she was in the midst of an unhappy love affair about which we know little, except that her parents broke up the relationship.

George Junkin's tenure at Miami College turned sour when he came into conflict with ardent abolitionists in Ohio (he himself believed in the institution of slavery because it was condoned, he felt, in the Bible). So, when Lafayette asked him to return as president in 1844, he accepted gladly and the whole family took up residence again in Easton. The following year Maggie contracted a nearly fatal case of acute rheumatoid arthritis with accompanying ciliary neuritis, which is characterized by blinding headaches and intense pains in the eyeballs. Prior to this illness, she had been a proficient painter, but after 1845, she could never again use her eyes for such close work without pain.

Though he had returned to his beloved Lafayette with enthusiasm, George Junkin quickly became embroiled in controversy again. He quarrelled with trustees over money he believed was owed him, and he undertook the organization of a new Presbyterian Church in defiance of old friends in the original church. When an offer came from the South, asking him to consider becoming President of Washington College in Lexington, Virginia, it seemed like a good “out,” and besides, the family wished to find a warmer climate for the second son, Joseph, aged twenty-five, who was suffering from “signs of pulmonary trouble”—tuberculosis.

However, leaving Lafayette after all those years was difficult. On the day of his last commencement in 1848, Junkin silently shook hands with each student. According to a contemporary account, “The young men wept, the President wept, [and] the audience was in tears, while no sound was heard except the quiet tread of those noble young men as they advanced to the dais, pressed their President's hand, and retired.”⁶ How different Dr. Junkin's departure from Lexington would be thirteen years later!

The family left Pennsylvania in November 1848. Mr. and Mrs. Junkin, Maggie, Eleanor, young Julia, son Will, and the sick Joseph, traveled by steamboat from Baltimore to Fredericksburg, Virginia, from

6. David Xavier Junkin, *The Reverend George Junkin: A Historical Biography* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1871), p. 486.

there by train to Gordonsville, and finally by stagecoach to Lexington through a blinding snowstorm. Within a few days, John Junkin, a fledgling physician, was summoned from Pennsylvania to take his tubercular brother still further south to Florida, where the family hoped the much warmer climate would arrest the disease. But Joe, described by Maggie as “fairest of all his father’s sons [with] hazel eye, rosy cheek, auburn hair, mild sweet face [and] graceful mien,”⁷ died on April 3, 1849, at the age of twenty-six, mourned by them all and eulogized by Maggie in a five-stanza poem, entitled “The Hallowed Name.”

Though none of the family had ever before lived in the South, they quickly found the Valley of Virginia to be a congenial setting. With their Scots-Irish Presbyterian background, they adjusted easily to the many families of Moores, McCorkles, and Dunlaps, and at once joined the Lexington Presbyterian Church, only a few blocks from their “rent-free” president’s house on the campus. Washington College itself, with half a dozen faculty and less than one hundred students (some of whom had migrated with the Junkins from Lafayette), seemed not unlike the colleges they had lived and worked in before, and the town of Lexington, with its six streets and its population of perhaps one thousand persons, was only slightly smaller than Easton.

Julia Junkin, who was thirteen when they moved, wrote to a friend that “we soon began to feel at home and to fall into the Lexington ways of living.”⁸ Maggie, twenty-eight, was pleased to find contemporary magazines available in the town, and she enjoyed attending open meetings of the two local debating societies, quickly finding herself busy, as Julia put it, with “delightful conversations with some of the most cultivated men connected with the literary institutions.”⁹

For their part, both men and women in the community were awed and intrigued by Dr. Junkin’s eldest daughter, whose poems began to appear regularly in the *Southern Literary Magazine*, Neal’s *Saturday Gazette*, *Sartain’s*, and the *Eclectic*, while Lexington children enjoyed seeing the tiny young woman on her small horse, dressed in a dark riding habit, “a little black velvet cap showing off her fairness, the long curls blowing about her face.”¹⁰

Before leaving Pennsylvania, Maggie had branched out from poetry and begun writing prose stories for Northern magazines. In Lexington

7. Margaret Junkin, Notebook 1837–40, Special Collections, W&L.

8. Elizabeth Preston Allan, *Life and Letters of Margaret Junkin Preston* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1903), p. 39.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

she continued to write stories, serialized tales that seem wooden and dated by today’s standards, but which were effective enough to bring in a little income. For one such tale, she received \$65 from the *Baltimore Weekly Sun*, money she used to buy earrings for Julia’s newly pierced ears.

With three interesting young women in the college president’s house, it is no wonder that young bachelor faculty members from Washington College and nearby Virginia Military Institute frequently came to call, including Daniel Hill who taught mathematics, Junius Fishburn, professor of Latin, and a tall angular young teacher of natural and experimental philosophy named Thomas Jackson. At first, Major Jackson discussed theology with Dr. Junkin, but it soon became apparent that he was really coming to see Eleanor. It was an odd romance, the intense, sober young teacher with his military bearing, and the pretty, vivacious, sometimes irreverent Ellie.

Dr. and Mrs. Junkin were amused and tolerant of the courtship, but Maggie was adamantly opposed to the match. A cousin reported that “Elinor [*sic*] is in love with a Major Jackson, a professor at the University [*sic*] and Margaret wont let him come to the house as she is afraid Eleanor will marry him and go away.”¹¹

In spite of Maggie’s continuing opposition, Ellie finally agreed to marry Tom Jackson. “Maggie still looks with gloomy fore-boding to the future,” Mrs. Junkin acknowledged. “She cannot divest herself of the idea that Ellie cannot be to her after marriage, the same companion & confidant she has so long been. . . . When the affair is over, I think & hope she will feel better.”¹² The wedding in the summer of 1853 took place at the Junkin home, and Major and Mrs. Jackson set off almost at once on a long trip to Niagara Falls and Boston—accompanied by Maggie!

This kind of threesome seems bizarre to our modern thinking, but single sisters traveling along on a honeymoon were not uncommon in the early and mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, Mrs. Junkin’s maiden sister had, in 1819, traveled from Philadelphia to Milton with the Junkins two days after their marriage.

Tom Jackson and Ellie had a fine time in New York state and Massachusetts, but Maggie admitted afterwards that she had not enjoyed the excursion. “The trip was a disappointing affair to me in many respects,” she wrote.¹³ Upon their return, the young couple settled into a wing of

11. Eleanor Dickey to Herbert Preston, Sr., February 1, [n.d.], Janet Preston Papers.

12. Julia Rush Junkin to Helen Dickey, July 22, 1853, *ibid*.

13. Margaret Junkin to Helen Dickey, September 9, [1853], *ibid*.

the president's home; still upstairs were Dr. and Mrs. Junkin, Maggie (by now thirty-three years of age), and Julia (eighteen years old). Maggie reported in September, "I could not tell you how I have felt since Ellie's marriage—indeed I shrink from writing that word almost—and as to her changed name—it jars my ear to hear it. It took from me my only bosom companion—the only one I shall perhaps ever have—and put between us a stranger." Acknowledging that she was being selfish, she added: "But it is all done now—and I must not rebel—tho' I'm afraid I have done so too long. . . . I must be content . . . to be left like 'the last leaf' on the tree."¹⁴



Ellie Junkin Jackson

In February 1854, Mrs. Junkin died, and eight months later, Eleanor Junkin Jackson died in childbirth. Maggie was devastated. To lose Ellie to the permanence of death seemed too much. Eleven months after Ellie's death, Maggie confided to a favorite cousin that "Ellie's bosom was the repository of all my sorrows and also my joys. Shall I ever cease grieving for its loss!" She had not been able, she wrote, even to visit the "sad spot" in the cemetery where her mother and sister were buried.¹⁵

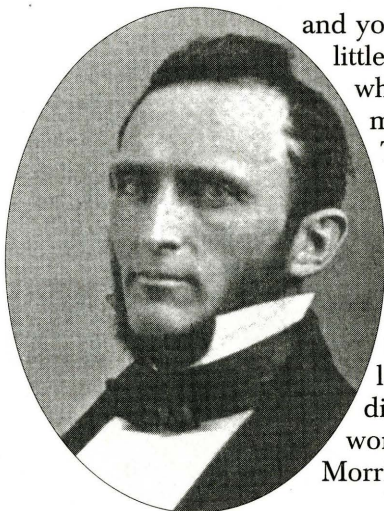
After the burial of Ellie and their stillborn son, Thomas Jackson continued to live with the Junkin family. Slowly, in the ensuing months, Maggie's antagonism toward Jackson faded as they shared their mutual grief, and she came to have a new appreciation of her brother-in-law. She wrote many years later, "It became the established custom that at nine o'clock, unless otherwise occupied, I should go to his study for an hour or two of relaxation and chat." Night after night, they talked about Ellie and about his early experiences in Mexico, and he taught her Spanish.¹⁶

When Maggie went on a visit to Philadelphia in 1855, the two exchanged long letters, always careful to refer to each other as "Sister and Brother." "My dear Sister," Jackson wrote, "your kind and affectionate letters have remained too long unanswered. . . . Though you are far from me, yet it is a pleasure to be holding converse with you. . . . To sum up all dear Maggie I want to see you again. Your kindness to me

14. *Ibid.*

15. Margaret Junkin to Helen Dickey, September 14, 1855, Janet Preston papers.

16. Allan, *Life and Letters*, p. 76



Thomas J. Jackson

and your affection for me dear Maggie has not little influence in lightening up the gloom which for months has so much enveloped me. . . . Your very affectionate brother, Thomas.”¹⁷

It certainly does sound, does it not, as if Thomas Jonathan Jackson was on the threshold of falling in love again? It comes as a real surprise to discover that two years after those warm and even tender letters, Tom asked Maggie, in a letter, to purchase a necklace as a wedding present for his fiancée, a young woman from North Carolina, Mary Anna Morrison.

What had happened? Had her lingering hostility kept them apart? Or had their new affection, born of a common grief, not been enough to bring about love? Had she realized that her educational background was far beyond his catch-as-catch-can schooling? Or did Jackson feel the need of a wife less independent and outspoken than Maggie Junkin? We will never know.

More important than these unanswered personal questions, I believe, was one overriding reason for their not considering marriage, and that was a proscription in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church which forbade a man to marry his deceased wife’s sister.¹⁸ Both Tom Jackson and Maggie were devout Presbyterians, living in the home of a minister who knew his canonical law as well as anyone in the country. It would have been simply unthinkable for the two of them to defy church, family, and community. They may well have been strongly drawn to each other, but church polity said no—and that was that! I personally think it was providential that they did not marry, for they would have been completely incompatible and Maggie would never have developed into a mature and well-known poet.

In 1856, Maggie wrote her only novel, entitled *Silverwood*, which was published anonymously. The book was not a success, either by popular or critical standards; but, like her elegiac poems about her brother and

17. Thomas Jonathan Jackson to Margaret Junkin, February 22, 1855; August 22, 1855, Preston papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

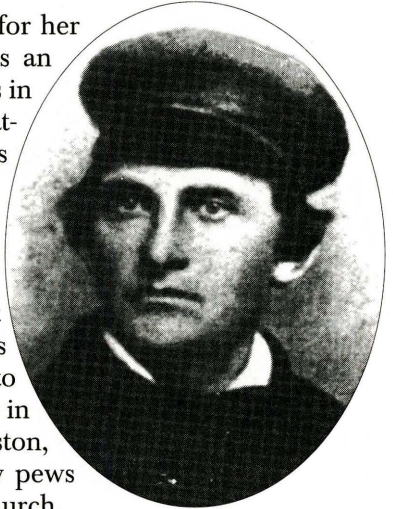
18. *Confession of Faith*, Section IV of Chapter XXIV: 4, Of Marriage and Divorce (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1853), p. 136.

mother, *Silverwood* served as a catharsis for her grief over the loss of Ellie. Writing was an emotional outlet for Maggie in each crisis in her life, and one can see her evolving maturation, even in the unsuccessful poems and novel.

The village of Lexington was so small that townsfolk all knew one another, and the Presbyterian Church, with only 320 members, was somewhat like an extended family. Maggie was as distressed as the rest of the community to learn, on a bitterly cold, snowy day early in January 1856, that her friend Sally Preston, who had sat with her family only a few pews behind the Junkins every Sunday in church, had died in childbirth. The popular wife of VMI's professor of Latin and *belle lettres*, Sally had grown up in Lexington and lived in the town all her adult life. She was one month short of forty-five years when she died during the delivery of her ninth baby, leaving seven surviving children, the eldest twenty-two, the youngest only five.

Sally is supposed to have said that, if anything happened to her, she wanted her husband to marry Maggie Junkin. For her part, Maggie had insisted that "if I ever marry a widower, and especially a widower with children, you may put me in a straitjacket."¹⁹ But during the latter months of 1856, forty-five-year-old Major Preston began to see a lot of Maggie, and she found herself powerfully drawn toward the handsome, courtly, strong-willed six-footer, whose knowledge of and interest in classical literature matched her own. Dr. Junkin believed the mature romance of his Maggie and Major Preston represented the "very finger of God."²⁰

It was not a trouble-free courtship, however. Maggie was hesitant about giving up her independence, and she wondered at the wisdom of trying to become a new mother to seven children whose memories of their natural mother were strong and affectionate. "Don't you think I am brave," she asked her cousin, Helen Dickey. "It is a fearful responsibility."²¹ She knew that Preston still felt deep grief over the loss of his first



J. T. L. Preston

19. Allan, *Life and Letters*, p. 93.

20. Margaret Junkin to Helen Dickey, n.d. [after June 15, 1857], Janet Preston papers.

21. *Ibid.*

wife, and she must have wondered if his despair as a single parent was not propelling him too quickly toward a second marriage. In a rhymed letter to him from Philadelphia, she questioned:

I doubtingly question my spirit, have I
Strength to summon the sunshine all back in his sky.²²

For his part, Major Preston struggled with ambivalent emotions regarding Sally and Maggie for years, conflicting loyalties he spoke of in a revealing diary he kept in the summer of 1861. “There was a time,” he wrote, “when I sighed, nay groaned, to go home [to heaven]. My Sally gone, I longed to go to her. But this is not so now. . . . Which is dearest, the company with whom we begin the pilgrimage or the one with whom we end it? Very dear are both.”²³

Maggie Junkin and Major Preston became engaged late in 1856, and then quarrelled over the setting of a wedding date. He wanted to be married on the anniversary of his first marriage—August 2, 1857, five months less than the traditional two years of mourning. Maggie absolutely refused, and the engagement was off. But friends, including Tom Jackson, brought them back together again, and the compromise date of August 3 was settled upon, still less than a full two years, but at least not exactly the first wedding date. Her father, Dr. Junkin, married them at the president’s house, and after a short trip away to visit relatives, the couple settled down in Preston’s large home, with the five younger children whose ages ranged from five to eighteen. Though Tom Preston, the eldest son, took a long time to accept his step-mother, the suspicions of the others gradually diminished. “Phebe, an elegant, stylish looking girl of 18 and Frank (16) have come to a better mind,” Maggie wrote to a cousin on October 10, 1857. “The four youngest [Randolph, Willy, Elizabeth, and John] treat me just as if I was their mother.”²⁴

With three of Major Preston’s nephews and a young ministerial student also living in the house, Maggie found herself fully occupied with housekeeping duties and mothering. Understandably, she found little time in the next few years for writing. In addition to the already large family, two children were born of the second marriage, George in 1858 and Herbert in 1861. Major Preston was a hospitable host, always ready to invite friends and relatives for meals or long visits. Among their frequent guests were Preston’s VMI colleague “Major Jackson and his little wife,” Maggie wrote, who now “live at the hotel.”²⁵

22. Margaret Junkin to J. T. L. Preston, in Allan, *Life and Letters*, p. 97.

23. 1861 diary of J. T. L. Preston, Library of Congress.

24. Margaret Junkin Preston to Helen Dickey, October 10 [1857], Janet Preston papers.

25. *Ibid.*

The primary reason she did not pursue her career, however, was that although her husband privately enjoyed her scholarship and her erudition, he was not happy about his wife's literary reputation. According to Preston's daughter, Elizabeth, her father "had to overcome a strong, inborn reluctance to having his wife's name in print."²⁶ "I almost quit writing after I was married," Maggie said, "because my husband did not in his heart of hearts approve of his wife's giving any part of herself to the public, even in verse."²⁷ It was a prejudice faced by most literary women of the period, from Margaret Fuller to Mary Virginia Terhune, the prolific novelist, who took the pen name of Marian Harland to avoid detection.

Margaret Junkin Preston deserted her literary endeavors for half a decade, as she struggled to bring order to a chaotic household, made dresses for her stepdaughters, managed unfamiliar servants, planned and supervised the cooking of daily meals for a dozen persons, canned, pickled, varnished, and shellacked furniture. Within her own family, she comforted her sister Julia in the loss of her husband and only son, enjoyed close fellowship with Dr. Junkin, and welcomed brother Ebenezer and his bride to a pastorate in nearby Brownsburg. She might never have published again if it had not been for the Civil War.

The winter of 1860–61 provided a foretaste of the personal conflicts which the war would bring to Maggie. Called to Harper's Ferry to supervise VMI's corps of cadets as military guard of John Brown, Major Preston was a witness to Brown's execution and he afterwards wrote to his wife, "You may be inclined to ask was all this necessary! . . . Governor Wise thought it necessary . . . and the responsibility of calling out the force rests with him."²⁸ Clearly, Preston, like the governor and many other thoughtful Virginians, was taking his stand for and with his native state.

This was too much for Dr. Junkin, an impassioned and outspoken advocate of Union. "I remember seeing him, storming up and down Mama's large chamber," young Elizabeth recalled, "fiercely denouncing Father's quiet statement, that his allegiance was due first to Virginia. . . . Poor Mother was torn between divided loyalties."²⁹

Dr. Junkin did not confine his anger only to his two sons-in-law, Preston and Jackson. During the spring of 1861, he taught a class of seniors in which he called "secession the essence of immorality." The

26. Allan, *Life and Letters*, p. 107.

27. *Ibid.*

28. J. T. L. Preston to Margaret Junkin Preston, December 2, 1859, in Allan, *Life and Letters*, p. 116.

29. Elizabeth Preston Allan, *A March Past* (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1938), p. 115.

excitable young men retaliated by calling him a “Pennsylvania abolitionist”³⁰ and by placing a Confederate flag atop the college’s main building. When the faculty supported the students, Dr. Junkin resigned, sold his property, left Lexington along with the widowed Julia, and drove non-stop to Williamsport, Maryland. Once across the Mason-Dixon Line, he got out of his rockaway and with his pocket handkerchief symbolically wiped the dust of the Confederacy from its wheels.³¹

The open breach between her father and husband was only the first of many trials Maggie was to face during the long war. Two of her brothers served with Federal forces, while another fought for the Confederacy. Her husband was often at the front and in danger. One of her stepsons, Frank, was wounded, captured, and lost an arm at the battle of Winchester. Randolph, two years younger than Frank, died of typhoid fever while he was a cadet at VMI. Willy Preston, who enlisted as soon as he was old enough, was killed at Second Manassas. Her longtime friend, Tom Jackson, died of his wounds in 1863, the fiancé of her stepdaughter Phebe was killed at Gettysburg, and the following year Lexington was occupied and sacked by Union troops under General David Hunter. Is it any wonder that Maggie wrote bitterly in her diary: “My very soul is sick of carnage. I loathe the word—*War*. It is destroying and paralyzing all before it.”³²

The Jacksons and the Prestons stayed in close touch throughout the war. For a time Colonel Preston served as adjutant to General Jackson. Jackson had written a moving letter of sympathy to the Prestons after the death of Willy, and Maggie took care of Jackson’s slave, Amy, through the old woman’s long illness, death, and burial. When she heard about his wounding, Maggie at once sat down and wrote to Stonewall, inviting him to come to her home for his convalescence. She was going downstairs to mail the letter when she learned of his death. After his funeral, Mary Anna Jackson stayed for some time at the Preston home, and she left both the family piano and one of Jackson’s swords in their safekeeping. When Hunter desecrated Lexington and her home was occupied in 1864, Maggie hid the precious sword under her voluminous skirts, a difficult task as she was too short easily to have hidden the weapon of the tall Tom Jackson.

30. Earl A. Pope, “George Junkin and His Eschatological Vision,” unpublished manuscript, Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania.

31. Prof. C. L. Nelson, “Personal Recollections of Washington College,” *Ring Tum Phi* (student newspaper) 11, no. 18 (February 11, 1899): 1.

32. Diary of Margaret Junkin Preston, April 3, 1862, quoted in Allan, *Life and Letters*, pp. 134, 135.

Colonel Preston had joined the army in the spring of 1861, hoping to see action. Instead, he was sent to Craney Island, Virginia, to help guard the entrance to Hampton Roads. It was dull work, and to relieve his boredom, he began keeping a diary. On August 10, after having received a letter from his wife, he confided to his journal: "Maggie is a genius, and she is my darling." A month later, he wrote: "Sing to me Maggie—I listen with delight and I believe that what your genius would enable you to say to another without love, your love for me prompts, and your poet nature glorifies in utterance."³³

With his newfound delight in her writing skills, it is not surprising that during the bleak winter of 1864–65, while he was in Richmond with the VMI corps, her husband sent Maggie a copy of a little book entitled *Wee Davie*, which, he wrote, "is making a great stir in Richmond." Preston characterized the story as "rather a pretty thing, but," he said "you could do something much better in the same line."³⁴ Taking his suggestion as a sort of dare, Maggie composed a long narrative poem, called *Beechenbrook*, in which she verbalized her pain and frustration at war's horror as she attempted "simply . . . to present a true picture of these war-times in which we live."³⁵

Beechenbrook opens with a pastoral setting, blue skies, singing birds, scented air, and the laughter of children and stream. But trouble hovers over the scene because Beechenbrook's owner, Douglass Dunbar, is about to leave Alice and their children to go to war in the spring of 1861. Several months later, on July 21st, the date of the battle of First Manassas, Alice and the youngsters hear cannonading, and at dusk an ambulance arrives with the wounded Douglass. The distraught wife nurses him through long days and nights of delirium, until finally, restored to health, he returns to his unit.

Walking about the sleeping camp one night, Dunbar talks with a young private named Macpherson, who shows his officer his bleeding feet, because he has been marching without shoes or socks. Dunbar writes to Alice about the lonely soldier, and for Christmas she sends him hand-knit socks and a new pair of boots. In the spring of 1862, another ambulance arrives at Beechenbrook, carrying another wounded soldier, this time "our bare-footed boy" Macpherson, whose wounds are so serious that even Alice's constant ministrations cannot save him.

Only a private—and who will care
When I may pass away

33. Diary of J. T. L. Preston, 1861, Library of Congress.

34. J. T. L. Preston to Margaret Junkin Preston, quoted in Allan, *Life and Letters*, p. 199.

35. Diary of Margaret Junkin Preston, quoted in Allan, *Life and Letters*, p. 203.

Or how, or why I perish, or where
I mix with the common clay.
They will fill my empty place again
With another as stout and brave;
And they’ll blot me out, ere the Autumn rain
Has freshened my nameless grave.³⁶

Within weeks, the enemy swoops through the valley, burning everything in its path, including Beechenbrook. Alice writes of the devastation to her husband, but he never receives her message. Douglass is wounded and dies before she can reach the field hospital. Broken by her grief, Alice nonetheless gathers courage to keep going:

By her pride in the soil that has granted her birth—
By the tenderest memories garnered on earth—
By the boon she would leave to her children, alone—
Right to live and breathe free, in a land of their own—
By his death on the battle-field, gallantly brave,
By the shadow that ever enwraps her—his grave—
By the faith she reposes, Oh! Father, in Thee,
She claims that her glorious South MUST BE Free!³⁷

With sentiments like these, one cannot be surprised that her poem was well received. Maggie was thrilled to get “a letter from my darling husband, expressing extravagant praise of my little poetical story. . . . He has put my ‘Rhyme’ into the printers’ hands, to be gotten up in the plainest manner—dark paper—dim type . . . 2000 copies, in stitched brownpaper covers.”³⁸

Only fifty copies of *Beechenbrook* had been sent out of the capital when, in April of 1865, Richmond was abandoned by the Confederates and much of the city, including the other 1,950 copies, burned. Reissued in 1866 in Baltimore, *Beechenbrook* became a runaway best-seller. Years after its first publication, men and women who had lived through the long conflict testified that they still could not read the book without weeping.

Beechenbrook had made Margaret Junkin Preston famous throughout the South, and now with her husband as her advocate, she began writing in earnest, publishing four books of poetry and a travel volume between 1870 and 1886. On the strength of her widening reputation, she exchanged letters with literary figures of the day, such as Henry

36. Margaret Junkin Preston, *Beechenbrook: A Rhyme of the War* (Richmond: J. W. Randolph, 1865), p. 40.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

38. Diary of Margaret Junkin Preston, quoted in Allan, *Life and Letters*, p. 203.

Wadsworth Longfellow and the Southern poet, Paul Hamilton Hayne, whom she never met, but with whom she carried on a lively literary correspondence for eighteen years.

In these letters and in published essays, she recorded her dismay at the low regard for literature in the postwar South. However, in a long article entitled "The Literary Profession in the South," she predicted an eventual renaissance of Southern letters. "With the . . . priceless inheritance of the richest historic associations [and] with a marvelously picturesque past . . . what is there to hinder this wide, vast South from taking its position in the world of letters, as the equal and peer of the North?"³⁹ Her prophecy was correct, but she would have had to wait half a century before William Faulkner, Robert Penn Warren, and Eudora Welty burst upon the American literary scene.

Maggie Preston did far more than merely complain about the lack of Southern literary concern. As her contribution toward improving regional taste, she reviewed hundreds of books for dozens of magazines, usually with no byline and never with pay, books on subjects as diverse as religious studies, art history, contemporary novels, and collections of essays. After reading and writing her commentaries, she then passed the books around among her friends and acquaintances, operating a sort of private lending library. In December of 1875, she jotted down her literary endeavors for that year—360 letters, 46 book notices, and 19 new poems.

Her diary entry for December 3, 1870, noted: "Received from [a Boston publisher] 13 books today; that makes 25 I have gotten this week. This is better than making puddings, and so much more agreeable." Three months earlier, she had complained that family responsibilities made her cross. "Went out and hunted a cook. Made a cake. Mended clothes . . . Mr. P. out hunting . . . I am in a tempestuous temper—O me!"⁴⁰

Housewifely woes disappeared, however, when each of her published books arrived. "The event of the day," she wrote on August 27, 1870, "is the receiving my book [*Old Song and New*], beautifully printed and bound, just according to my wish. The dream of many years is at length realized."⁴¹

Throughout her professional career, Margaret Junkin Preston consistently downplayed her abilities, describing her poems as "mere toys

39. *Library Magazine of American and Foreign Thought* 8 (1881): 60.

40. Diary of Margaret Junkin Preston, quoted in Allan, *Life and Letters*, pp. 240, 237.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 236.



Margaret Junkin Preston

of my leisure hours” and “song[s] with a slender trill.”⁴² Her self-effacement was typical of women writers of the nineteenth century, who used the device of self-depreciation because they were supposed to be primarily wives, mothers, and daughters, and by pretending to write only for recreation or to do good, they made their vocation palatable to the general public.

This professed humility, however, did not keep Maggie Preston from promoting her work, like any thoroughly professional writer. She sent copies of her books to Christina Rossetti, Whittier, and Thomas Nelson Page, and forwarded magazines with her poems in them to Mrs. Charles Kingsley and other English friends. In long letters to her friend Paul Hayne, she frankly admitted her discouragement. “I can’t get poems accepted,” she wrote in 1880. “I’m out of all literary centres, and see that I can accomplish almost nothing.”⁴³

In spite of this comment, she published a great deal, achievements all the more remarkable in that they were accomplished by a woman who had to cope, throughout her adult life, with recurring rheumatic distress, constant pain in her eyes, and deteriorating eyesight. For months at a time, she was forced to abandon reading and writing altogether, and in her later years she composed on a “blind slate”⁴⁴ or on a primitive typewriter. In 1883, she was told by a specialist in Baltimore that she had deterioration of the optic nerves. “I have so little eyesight left,” she wrote to Paul Hamilton Hayne, that “to preserve it at all, I must abstain from everything . . . even the use of the Type-writer.”⁴⁵ Even so, writing by dic-

42. Margaret Junkin Preston, *Old Song and New* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott & Co., 1870), p. 11.

43. Margaret Junkin Preston to Paul Hamilton Hayne, November 25, 1880, Hayne Collection, Manuscript Department, Duke University, Durham, N.C.

44. Margaret Junkin Preston to Paul Hamilton Hayne, March 3, 1883, *ibid.*

45. Margaret Junkin Preston to Paul Hamilton Hayne, September 12, 1883, *ibid.*

tation, she published VMI's *Semicentennial Ode* and *Chimes for Children* in 1889, and a dialect story, "Aunt Dorothy," in 1890.

That same year, Colonel Preston died after a long illness. A few months later, Maggie suffered a stroke, and in 1892 moved from Lexington to Baltimore to spend her last five years with her physician son, George. Housebound, crippled, virtually blind, and increasingly deaf, she managed to keep up her correspondence with the help of a secretary. She died on March 28, 1897, two months before her seventy-seventh birthday. She was buried in the Stonewall Jackson Cemetery, close to Ellie and her mother, with the full VMI corps and hundreds of Lexingtonians in attendance.

In an obituary in the *Outlook* a few weeks later, Sophia Gilman wrote that Margaret Junkin Preston's "gift was a many-sided one" that included "song, sonnet . . . graphic pictures and . . . sparkling letters of travel. There is a finish about her work," Mrs. Gilman continued, "like polished or carved marble, but it has also the fire of the opal, and now and then, the flash of the diamond."⁴⁶

The comment would have gratified, but not surprised, Maggie Preston, for, in general, her books had been well received during her lifetime by both Northern and Southern critics who admired her sonnets and her ballads, and suggested that she was "the best living female poet in America."⁴⁷ The *Boston Literary World* particularly admired her sonnets, "which are every one so exquisitely wrought and so full of intellectual strength." The *New York Commercial Advertiser* called her *Colonial Ballads* "spirited and moving" filled with "wholesome ethics . . . breadth of scholarship, and true culture."⁴⁸ Even the London *Saturday Review* gave her high praise, and Longfellow wrote of her *Cartoons*, published in 1875, that "they are not only full of beauty, but full of insight and thought and feeling."⁴⁹ Individual poems, like "Through the Pass," "Gone Forward," and "Under the Shade of the Trees" were widely anthologized.

One of the most appreciative comments, and certainly the one that must have touched her the most, came from Colonel Preston himself, when he summed up her work in a letter to Paul Hamilton Hayne. "The poet," Preston wrote, "is the true reflex of the *woman*. Her choice of subjects is but the explication of her nature. Yes, my little wife is as full of

46. *Outlook* 1 (April 10, 1897): 984-85.

47. Maurice Thompson to Margaret Junkin Preston, December 13, 1887, Preston Papers, UNC.

48. Reviews enclosed in letter from Margaret Junkin Preston to Col. William Preston Johnston, October 6, 1887, Filson Club, Louisville, Ky.

49. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to Margaret Junkin Preston, November 23, 1875, Preston Papers, UNC.

faith and reverence as ever was any daughter of Jerusalem; the Greek hardly excelled in love of the beautiful; she is as true and trustful as Lady Hildegarde; as simple as a ballad, and as intense as a sonnet.”⁵⁰

Today’s critics are less kind. Though he calls her “the best of the Southern poets of her sex,” Jay Hubbell suggests that had Mrs. Preston “been a great poet, like Emily Dickinson, she would have managed somehow to free herself from the handicaps [of housework and family distractions] or have written great poetry in spite of them.”⁵¹ Her poems are no longer studied or even anthologized in standard works of Southern literature. One reason for this may be that poetic taste has changed dramatically. Today’s critics and readers simply do not care much for sentimental poetry, elegiac odes, translations of Sappho, or intricately rhymed verses.

Upon her tombstone, Maggie’s children inscribed these words: “Her song cheered the hearts of the Southern people in the hour of their deepest distress.”⁵² She not only sang a new song; she was also a new kind of woman in her generation. With courage, talent, and energy, she transcended gender and locale and limited health. She was not to be remembered as the daughter of Milton, Pennsylvania, the lass from Easton, Jackson’s “dear sister,” or the pretty little wife of Colonel Preston. Through the power of her pen, Margaret Junkin Preston transformed herself into “The Poetess of the South.”


50. J. T. L. Preston to Paul Hamilton Hayne, October 8, 1870, Hayne Collection, Duke University.

51. Jay B. Hubbell, *The South in American Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1954), p. 619.

52. Tombstone of Margaret Junkin Preston, Preston plot, Stonewall Jackson Memorial Cemetery, Lexington, Virginia.

V—for Virginia: The Commonwealth at War

Charles F. Bryan, Jr.

OR each Virginian, the moment, the day, the year, forever would be permanently impressed upon their memories. O. D. Dennis was a third classman at V.M.I. and remembered riding back to Post on horseback from White's Farm. As soon as he got to the stables, excited cadets came running up to him, yelling, "The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor." When he walked up to Barracks, he found the whole place abuzz with cadets assembling in rooms with radios to catch the latest reports. Many a young man was ready to sign up and take on the entire Japanese army and navy.

Two hours later, the entire Corps of Cadets was assembled in Jackson Memorial Hall. Lieutenant General Charles Kilbourne, Superintendent at V.M.I., addressed the young men about the momentous event some five thousand miles away. Much to the disappointment of some of the cadets, General Kilbourne informed them that their first duty was to complete their education. Then he closed his remarks with a hauntingly accurate prediction. "Young men, there's no hurry for you to rush off to

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war now. No doubt many of you will hear the whistle of bullets before it's all over."

One hundred and twenty miles away, Leroy Craig was a thirty-two-year old black factory worker at Liggett & Myers in Richmond. He and his wife had been visiting friends and relatives all Sunday afternoon, and when they drove up in front of their house, Craig's mother-in-law came running out with tears streaming down her face. She said the Japanese had dropped bombs someplace out west and she was afraid that Richmond would be next.

Nineteen-year-old Florence Cabaniss of Petersburg was at home visiting her parents. She was at her next door neighbor's home when word of Pearl Harbor flashed over the radio. She would never forget the long drive back to Washington where she worked for the government. Everywhere they stopped along the way, she and her two friends found people talking about the war. The next morning at work, it was nearly impossible to get back to business. Everybody was concerned with what would happen next.

Indeed, for these people and for everyone who was old enough to understand, December 7, 1941, was probably the most unforgettable day in their lives. For most people alive then, the war would inevitably change their lives as they never would have dreamed. From Norfolk to Grundy, from South Boston to Alexandria, from Lexington to Norfolk, Virginians, old and young, black and white, male and female, rich and poor, would see their lives, their communities, and their native state change. Some changed more rapidly and dramatically than others.

December 7, 1991, is the fiftieth anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and America's entry into World War II. This date will mark a four-year commemoration of America's participation in the conflict, and I would speculate that we're going to see that commemoration matching much of what we saw during the Civil War Centennial some twenty-five years ago.

We at the Virginia Historical Society will also mark this anniversary by sponsoring a symposium, a monthly series of lectures and films, and a major exhibition commemorating Virginia's role in World War II. The focus of our activities will be on Virginia itself. We will examine Virginia's homefront from 1941 to 1945, and we are encouraging every local historical society to do the same thing in their communities.

I want to give you a preview of what is to come by looking at Virginia during the Second World War. A good way to study the war's impact on Virginia is to look at the newspapers. To start I looked at the

Richmond *Times-Dispatch* of January 22, 1991. Within the past two weeks, we've gone to war. How does it compare to fifty years ago? The January 22, 1991, headline in the *Times-Dispatch* concerned the war in the Persian Gulf, and there is no question that this is truly a monumental event. At the end of this decade, when we look back, this will undoubtedly be one of the decade's top news stories. Who knows how it will be looked at a century from now. Will it be simply another splendid little war, like the Spanish-American War, or will it be more complex, like Korea or Vietnam? Either way, the Commonwealth is being affected by these momentous events thousands of miles away, and it is evident in the newspapers. Every section of the paper I looked at had something on the war. It talked about security measures prior to the Super Bowl, and the shortage of deputy sheriffs on the Northern Neck because many of them had been called up on active duty in the National Guard. There were even a couple of cartoons in the funny papers that dealt with the war.

How does this compare with a newspaper from the World War II era? What we see in the present day paper relating to the war in the Persian Gulf is a mere shadow of what you would find in a World War II era newspaper, because it delved into the war much more deeply than anything we see today. This World War II era newspaper provides a perfect example of how all aspects of life in society became a part of the war between 1941 and 1945.

We'll take a look at the Richmond *Times-Dispatch* from the morning of January 22, 1943. In those days, the papers were smaller, only twenty-six pages. The headline was a dual one. In large type, the banner read "Five Hundred Thousand In Africa, Invasion Due Says Churchill." The other headline says, "Russians Capture Lozovaya and Slash Rail Lines." The first headline refers to the expected invasion of Italy, which would come many months later. The second refers to the Russian advances on the eastern front. I don't know how many of us today could find Lozovaya on the map [south of Kharkov], but I imagine that many people in 1943 could. I have a friend who claims that war is God's way of teaching geography. We've all been pulling out our maps in the last several weeks, looking at the Middle East. I know more about Iraq and Kuwait than I ever knew before.

Pages one through four, or about 15 percent of the entire newspaper, consisted of war news, mostly on the international level. There were eight AP and UPI dispatches from England, North Africa, Russia, China, India, and the South Pacific. They fill these pages. There were

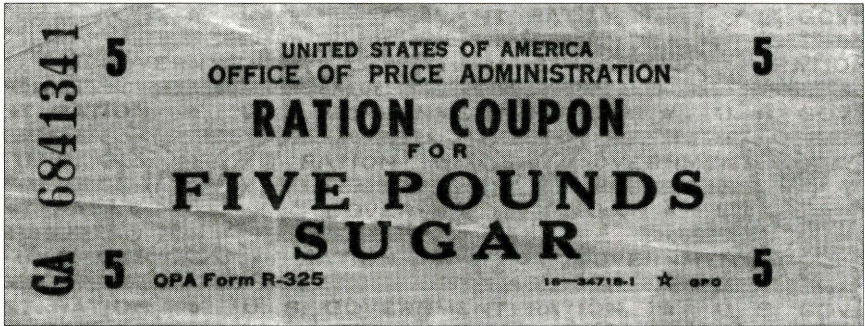
several maps of remote Pacific islands, and on page one, there was an announcement that the Canadian Dionne quintuplets were coming to the United States on a tour to launch five U.S. ships for the Navy. They would be coming to Norfolk.

World War II affected Virginia and Virginians locally as well, and it was not something relegated to the front page. It was not something you could miss by simply skipping through from the first section. It was omnipresent and its impact was apparent on almost every page of that 1943 newspaper. On page 5 was a full-page ad for Peoples Drugstore, pushing their Evening-in-Paris gift sets for Valentine's Day. However, if you really wanted to make the right impression, you'd do as the ad suggested—give a book of war stamps, which were also available at Peoples. Your sweetheart would be impressed with your thoughtfulness, but she would also think about your patriotism.

In the city and state news on pages six through nine, the Charlottesville Victory Garden Club announced a demonstration on how to dry fruits and vegetables. The Victory Garden program, like many wartime programs, was pitched to the average citizen and how he or she could help the war effort by fighting shortages and simultaneously keeping inflation down. Another article on page six announced the opening of the Navy League Club in Richmond, which would provide accommodations, snacks, and other amenities for Navy personnel passing through town.

In another article, the Petersburg city schools were scheduled to be closed on February 2 and 3 so that ration books could be distributed. When we think about the homefront during World War II, we automatically think of rationing. It was necessary, but it not was very easy to administer because of the complexity of the system. It had to be organized nationwide, the general public had to be educated, and the ration books had to be distributed.

Also on page six, we see an article announcing that the state Office of Price Administration—the Food Administration Officer, Harry Duvall—would meet with some 2,000 local leaders at the John Marshall Hotel to explain the OPA's new point rationing system. Local OPA leaders from all over the state - no doubt somebody from Lexington was there - would go and learn how to work this system. Then they would go back to their communities and explain how it would be administered. The article concluded with these words: "Both white and negro leaders will attend." Both white and *negro* leaders will attend. These words, I think, portended important changes in Virginia and in the South in gen-



eral. During the Civil War, President Lincoln faced a similar dilemma. He issued his Emancipation Proclamation, not because he thought slavery was wrong, but rather because slavery and victory were incompatible. In World War II, second-class citizenship for blacks and victory were increasingly incompatible. When Leslie Banks, who was a rationing supervisor for the Richmond board, announced that both white and Negro leaders would attend this meeting at the John Marshall, he was not saying that segregation was wrong or immoral; he was simply saying that segregation was inefficient and during World War II, inefficiency was unpatriotic.

Also on page six, we see an article announcing a meeting of the Virginia Reserve Militia in Fredricksburg, the outfit that was called up to take the place of the National Guard when it was nationalized. When the war came and the National Guard was called into service, the Virginia Reserve Militia was put into action. It was composed mostly of World War I veterans. In an interesting account in a local history volume from Prince George County, a local historian wrote that this unit was a group of men whose average age was forty-five to fifty. The duty assigned to them was to harass and hold at bay any Japanese parachutists who might invade the locality until regular troops from Camp Lee could reach the scene of action. The ability of fifty-odd quail hunters was not put to the test. Indeed, the best known exploit of the Virginia Reserve Militia was a patriotic reenactment of Jeb Stuart's raid. Crack troops to preserve Virginia!

Another headline on page six reported that four Norfolk policemen would be drafted. This doesn't seem all that newsworthy to us, perhaps, but by 1943, the inadequacy of Norfolk's police force and the venality of the city's administration were a national disgrace. There have been many books written lately that deal with the theme of young men com-

ing of age against the background of training in combat during the war. Norfolk, too, came of age during World War II. It grew up—more than 50 percent within a three-year period. It learned that small town solutions could not solve big city problems of crime, overcrowding, prostitution, and municipal corruption. During World War II, Norfolk became a city in every sense of the word, as did Richmond, Alexandria, and Roanoke.

On page seven, one headline read, “Five State Senators to Aid ABC Registration.” Liquor was rationed during the war, and Virginians needed to register before receiving a ration book. This put a strain on the ABC Board, which needed to find additional sites for registration and distribution. Also on this page was an article concerning the Third District representative, David E. Satterfield. In line with Virginia’s traditional political economy, Satterfield attacked the Treasury Department as wasteful for using cardboard containers weighing nearly 3/4 of a pound and capped with metal to mail materials to Congressmen. He said that was terribly wasteful.

On page eight is a short article reporting that two new buildings were being erected at Emory and Henry College in Southwest Virginia. They would provide quarters and classrooms for Navy personnel who were being trained there under the V-12 program. Emory and Henry, just like W&L, VMI, and most colleges in Virginia, would be put to good use during the conflict. W&L and VMI became very active in supporting the special service units here in Lexington, and you see that in faraway southwest Virginia with Emory and Henry.

Also on page eight, Washington’s War Manpower Commission cited Richmond, Lynchburg, and Roanoke as having surplus labor and therefore able to accommodate war industry. We don’t use the term, surplus labor, any more. We call it unemployment, but they called it surplus labor, and they said there were opportunities in those cities.

Surplus labor was certainly not the problem in Hampton Roads where the Commission ordered a minimum of a forty-eight-hour work week. Five years earlier, the federal government was also setting limits on workers’ hours, but these limits were maximum hours, not minimum hours. Workers would not work more than thirty or thirty-five hours a week during the Depression, but by 1943, a worker could put in as much overtime as he or she wanted. Many industries operated around the clock. These were heady days for those who remember that every job opening received thousands of applicants.



Page eight also had a report from the Richmond police court, similar to the metro log that you see in many city newspapers today. On January 20, 1943, four crimes came before the court. One man was convicted of bootlegging and another of selling a pint of liquor to a Navy shore patrolman. Their punishment? They lost their liquor ration coupon books. Another man, convicted of drunk driving, lost his ration book for a year. Today, we debate on how to deal with drunk drivers. I like that judge's solution. He simply took away the man's ability to drive. He couldn't buy gas, so the problem was solved. Also on page eight, we see a call for women to make surgical dressings for the Red Cross.

On page nine is a report of action taken at the hearing of the Richmond Rationing Board. This was similar to the police court report, but while the court prosecuted those who broke civil law, the Rationing

Board prosecuted those who violated rationing regulations. These usually consisted of charges that people were using their cars frivolously. Regulations allowed Virginians to drive their cars to work or out to dinner, but not to a movie or to some other form of entertainment.

Here are some of the verdicts from the thirty-eight cases that came before the Rationing Board:

Mrs. Maude B. Lane let out passengers at a place on January 14th. Mr. Lane, who appeared, said he drove his sailor son there when he was home on furlough. The judge wasn't sympathetic. He took four coupons from him.

Mrs. W. L. Harlow said, "Son on furlough, probably drove there." Four coupons taken. Mrs. Harlow said she thought the panel's action was ridiculous in view of the fact that the person involved was a serviceman on furlough. That made no difference with them whatsoever.

L. S. Hankins was reported to be parked on Molly Richardson's property on Broad Street Road. He said he was in that vicinity looking for a certain man to hire for the business firm for which he works. Four coupons were ordered taken when, after questioning Mr. Hankins, the panel said the trip was a wild goose chase to be considered legitimate business travel.

Maybe we ought to resort to some of these things today.

Also on page nine, we see that four Richmond women were commissioned as officers in the Women's United States Naval Reserves, or WAVES. There was also a notice that the *Sword and Key*, the Richmond Quartermaster Depot Magazine, would make its debut.

Page ten was the editorial page, and page eleven the op-ed page. The lead editorial praised Winston Churchill for his speech before Parliament. A second editorial cautioned against panic shoe buying in the wake of shoe rationing. A third expressed concern over government policy toward a forty-eight-hour work week. The editorial cautioned that the mandatory forty-eight-hour work week under consideration by the Office of Economic Stabilization would be inflationary unless accompanied by a tax increase.

There's a humorous column that chided a group of tailors who petitioned the OPA to lift a ban on the manufacture of vests with double-breasted suits. Production had been prohibited because the vest was considered a useless article of apparel with a double-breasted suit. Not so, rejoined the tailors, citing the garment's utility for carrying change, a watch, business cards, and even a wallet. The tailors lost.



Page twelve contained obituaries and national news. One article spoke of the intention of a Wisconsin cobbler of Dutch ancestry to manufacture wooden shoes in response to rationing.

Page thirteen was the religion and science page. It was kind of an odd pair, religion and science, but they were on the same page. The War Production Board denied that there would be any restrictions on the availability of sulfa drugs. The drugs were scarce but not to the point where the supply would be critical. However, the WPB urged the public to be cautious in their use. Thalhimer's department store ad on page twelve advertised a sale on washable rayon. The development of the rayon industry in the town of Hopewell meant a great deal in the absence of Japanese silk.

On the obituary page is a notice of the death of a flying parson, the Reverend Lee Milton, pastor of the St. John's Episcopal Church in City Point. He had joined the RAF in 1941, and was killed over the English Channel. That was the only war-related death on the obituary page for that day. I reeled ahead, and beginning by the middle of 1943 and on until the end of the war, almost every page is announcing the death of some young man, either in the Pacific or in Europe. By the end of World War II, some 7,000 Virginians had given their lives in World War II, and more than 300,000 Virginians had served in the armed forces during World War II.

Pages fourteen through sixteen are what we refer to as "the society section." In 1943, it was simply called "the women's section." Announcements of engagements and weddings appeared, as they do today, but plans were often indefinite as they necessarily depended on the armed forces for at least a portion of the wedding party. When it came to determining who would stand in where and what time, the Army proved to be less reliable than the mother of the bride.

Also on page fourteen, the paper noted that the mid-winter dances at the University of Virginia would begin on the next day, but on a reduced scale, quote, "in keeping with the policy of the student body to minimize all social activities for the duration of the war."

On page fifteen, Miss Betty Bly advised girls "to investigate character before saying yes." I assume she meant yes to a proposal of marriage.

CLAYTOR, SHERMAN ELWOOD, Pfc., A. Wife, Mrs. Bonnie M. Wolfe Claytor,
Glasgow
COCHRAN, IRA H., T/Sgt., A.
CONNELLY, WILLIAM JAMES, Sfc, N. Wife, Mrs. Marion Ero Connelly,
Lexington
CONNER, EDWARD DAVISON, Pvt., A. Mother, Mrs. Mary H. Conner, Fairfield
CONNER, LUTHER R., Jr., Pfc., M. Father, Luther R. Conner, Sr., Goshen
COOPER, IRVIN EDGEWORTH, Pfc., A. Parents, Mr. and Mrs. Everett Otto
Cooper, Lexington
COX, WALLACE, Sgt., A. Father, Wallace C. Cox, Raphine
*DAVIS, JOHN WESLEY, Pvt., A. Mother, Mrs. Blanche McKeny Carter Davis,
Lexington
DIXON, CARL GRAHAM, Pvt., A. Parents, Mr. and Mrs. Irvine Bell Dixon,
Lexington
DOWNEY, KEITHERN, Pvt., A. Father, Warren Price Downey, Lexington
EAST, JAMES GEORGE, Ens., N. Father, William Addison East, Raphine
FALLS, ROBERT CALVIN, Pvt., A. Mother, Mrs. Minnie C. Vanness Falls,
Lexington
FEILD, HARRY OWEN. (See Henrico County)
FLINT, LYLE HENRY, Pfc., A. Parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ned Flint, Lexington

Portion of a page from W. Edwin Hemphill, ed., *Gold Star Honor Roll of Virginians in the Second World War* (Charlottesville: Virginia World War II History Commission, 1947).

Another article headlined “Average Waste of Food Prolongs War.” It urged homemakers to carefully buy and dole out food, otherwise, they would carry the burden of lengthening the war.

Page seventeen was the amusement section. On this day, the *Times-Dispatch* reviewed a contemporary movie of political intrigue in the French colonial empire. *Casablanca* had opened the previous day at the Colonial Theater. The reviewer called the movie “well acted by both Bogart and Bergman,” but as we all know, Claude Rains as the corrupt French prefect of police stole the show. Also on the bill was a newsreel and a cartoon reminding the public that prompt payment of taxes would help win the war.

The sports section was on page eighteen, and on this morning, officials at Louisville’s Churchill Downs were much relieved. The Office of Defense Transportation had given the track the go-ahead to hold the Kentucky Derby. The race had been threatened by gas rationing, and it was feared that too much fuel would be expended by spectators traveling to and from the track; however, the ODT worked out a compromise. The race could be held, but only residents of Louisville who rode the trolley to the racetrack would be admitted.

Another article chronicled the woes of the Georgia Tech football team, which had been very successful the previous fall. They lost fourteen lettermen to the service, and they were concerned that they would not be much of a team the following fall.

Pages twenty and twenty-one concerned business and agriculture. The Treasury Department announced plans for a nine billion dollar bond drive in April. The way war bonds were marketed was fascinating. The government was partially criticized for its strong-arm tactics in selling bonds during the First World War. The bond drives of World War II relied less on coercion and more on modern methods of marketing. Madison Avenue executives were consulted and bonds were marketed as any other consumer product, using Hollywood stars and advertising stunts in abundance. By making bonds available in small denominations, the government encouraged investment by working Americans, thus keeping down inflation. The government also made a conscious effort to involve the average person in the war. Again aware of the widespread belief that the First World War gave millions to arms makers and caused the Depression in the rest of the country, the government wanted everyone to feel as if World War II was his war. Through war bonds, the government not only help finance the war, but also sold the war and held down inflation.

In addition to the announcement of the new bond drive, this section contained an article announcing that President Roosevelt was asking for one hundred million dollars to disperse incentive payments to farmers to encourage the planting of potatoes, soybeans, and vegetables. The article reminds us of the transformation of Virginia's farms during the Second World War. The farmer, like his counterpart in industry, had seen tough times during the Depression. The New Deal helped the farmer as it helped the industrial worker, but the farmer survived the Depression only by working in concert with others to limit production, just as the industrial worker had been asked to limit his production by shortening his hours.

World War II changed all of this, and brought prosperity to the farm as well as the factory. For the farmer, the problem was that the war drained all of the surplus labor from the countryside. Tenants and sharecroppers were no longer available to help during planting and harvest times. In the fall of 1944, when farmers were desperately needing to harvest the apple crop around Winchester, they called in German POWs from the POW camps in that area to help harvest the crop.

The farmer had to change, to rationalize. He invested in heavy machinery and expanded the size of his farm to increase production. Farming became more efficient and less labor-intensive than it had before. Prosperous farmers bought out their less prosperous neighbors. Farms grew in size. From 1939 to 1945, while the number of acres under

cultivation nationwide remained the same, the number of independent farms declined from 986,00 to 801,000—almost a 20 percent reduction. One historian calls this the “green revolution” in agriculture.

Pages twenty-two through twenty-four include the classified ads. It's hard to get a feel for what these ads say without something to serve as a comparison, so I looked at the classified ads for January 22, 1940, three years earlier. In 1940, under “Help Wanted, Women,” there were three ads. For men, there were eleven ads. The three ads for women included “Beauty operator, curler, all around experience, apply to Estelle's Beauty Shop.” “Stenographer wanted, competent, experienced, dictaphone operator; state age, experience, references, education, and salary expected.” “Colored girl, experienced to do housework.”

For men: “Men wanted to sell our extensive line of fruit trees and ornamentals, cash commission or salary paid weekly, Waynesboro, VA.”; “Salesman, distributors of aspirin, soap, razorblades, etc.”; “Salesman to sell Frigidaire appliances, old reliable organization.” This was 1940 on the eve of the war.

In 1943, you find ninety-six ads under “Help Wanted, Female.” During World War II, you see a 50 percent increase in jobs for women; jobs that quite often were only held by men prior to the war, such as bookkeepers. Here is an ad that we would never read today. “Clerk, attractive, refined, young lady with pleasing personality for a new, interesting occupation created by shortage of manpower. Reply in handwriting, stating age, education and background.” Another ad related to the war reads: “Naval officer's wife has available guest room for responsible, congenial serviceman's wife who can work with children 10–12, for excellent salary and full assistance.” There were a number of ads for jobs that normally were not available to women.

Under ads for Men: “Office man wanted, essential war industry, metal mining, located in small village in Southwest Virginia; should have experience and ability to take over important duties after reasonable training; give education, experience, marital status, and draft classification.”

One ad from the Diesel Engine School in Richmond promises to get you out of the draft. I'm surprised they let this one go through. In big letters, “Draft Deferment. Even for Men With Children! Virtually Wiped Out by the War Manpower Commission Order. Don't Wait Another Day to Select Your Defense Job. Act Before the WMC Selects It for You.” They say there are a number of essential jobs in the Diesel Engine School in Richmond, a total of ninety-six in all.

On page twenty-five are the comics, where the heroic Terry and the Pirates are fighting the Japanese in China. And finally, on page twenty-six, there is a full-page ad for Miller & Rhoads department store. This was the only page in the entire paper where there was no reference to the war.

When we ask ourselves how the war affected Virginia, we must go beyond the experiences of the men and women who served in England, France, China, Burma, Italy, and the Pacific. We also must search at home. The war was on almost every page of the newspapers. It touched every facet of society: labor relations, race relations, gender relations, education, religion, agriculture, industry, sports, entertainment, transportation, and morality. There is little question that World War II entered almost every aspect of life in Virginia. It permanently changed the Commonwealth and its people.

In his classic, *America Goes to War*, Bruce Catton noted, “With modern war you do not go back to the way things were. The mere act of war compels you to face the future, because war always destroys the base on which you had been resting. It is an act of violence which, whatever the dreadful cause, whatever it’s insane wastage of life and treasure, means that in one way or another you are hereafter going to do something different from what you had done in the past.”

When Virginians celebrated V-J Day on August 15, 1945, they no doubt hoped to return to normal. But within a few days, they had to readjust to the sometimes troubling realities of postwar life. Returning GIs came home, having seen new worlds and having been exposed to new ideas and values. For many, life down on the farm was no longer desirable. For blacks coming home to the Old Dominion, it meant a return to the old order of segregation and discrimination. For many women who had held responsible jobs during the war, peace meant a return to domesticity as former GIs reentered the work force. For tens of thousands of former soldiers and sailors, a college education was now possible, thanks to the GI Bill. In many ways, the Old Dominion had become a “new” Dominion. The state’s population grew 20 percent between 1940 and 1950, with growth particularly evident in Northern Virginia and Tidewater. The 1950 Census revealed that for the first time in its history, more Virginians lived in urban areas than in rural.

The state’s economy also was transformed. As elsewhere in America, the war accelerated the growth of industry, and returning servicemen created a demand for housing. Housing starts were up, and builders, real estate agents, insurance companies, and banks profited

from the building boom that lasted until the early 1960s. Many small towns, which had served as outlets for agricultural produce, became more urban and industrialized as a result of wartime industries. Virginia farms became much more dependent on machine power than man power. Virginia became a special beneficiary of the war stimulated economy. With a rise of Cold War tensions and the ongoing arming of America, the continued presence of military bases and defense industries would stimulate and permanently alter the social, political, and economic structure of Virginia. By the 1980s, Virginia ranked first among the states per capita in defense-related jobs.

After the war, the once powerful rural courthouse politicians controlled by the Byrd organization began to lose their grip on state government. In their place came people representing the emerging urban corridors around Richmond, Washington, and Norfolk. The number of non-native Virginians living in the state more than doubled in the two decades after World War II, as people from all over America were drawn to jobs in the Old Dominion. As it was happening elsewhere in the South, Virginia's black population began to ask questions. "Why did we fight a war to save democracy, yet we continue to allow a large part of our population to live in a segregated society that faced discrimination on a daily basis?" Only a decade after World War II, the structure of segregation in Virginia and the South would begin to crumble.

Yes, America had changed because of World War II. So did Virginia, a phenomenon that we will look at in depth, at the Virginia Historical Society. No doubt, Lexington and Rockbridge County changed as well. I wish the Rockbridge County Historical Society well in its efforts to study this most important event in the state's history since the Civil War. I hope that some of the observations that I have made will suggest questions that you might think about in relation to Rockbridge County during World War II.*

While most people tend to think of Rockbridge County mainly in terms of the great conflict of the 1860s, I think the public will find the events of the 1940s to be no less interesting. Good luck. V for Virginia and V for victory!

* "We Did Our Part: Rockbridge County in World War II" was the Society's Campbell House exhibit during the April to October season in 1992 and 1993.

Buena Vista: The Bud Not Yet Blossomed

Patricia Gibson



THIS is a tale of awakenings; a personal awakening and that of a city, both intertwined and inseparable.

Driving into the city of Buena Vista as an incoming freshman at what was then Southern Seminary College, I could not believe this little town I was entering. On first glance, it seemed to be mired in the past and had, as I then thought, no hope of joining the twentieth century. During my two years at Sem, I became acquainted with a town of charming old buildings; broad streets and avenues; and warm, caring people. Still, I was not awake to just what Buena Vista really offered, and neither was most of her population.

In the intervening years, as I moved around the world and lived all over the country, I realized what I had found in Rockbridge County and, in particular, Buena Vista, was a sense of home. Each trip back for a class reunion or for old times sake convinced me that Buena Vista was where I belonged. With a passion for large old houses and Victoriana, it seemed a perfect match. A house called my name one wintery January day, and before I could say Southern Seminary, I was a resident of the city of Buena Vista, living in a charming (read that deteriorating) large old house, and so the tale begins.

Patricia Gibson was chair of the Public Relations Committee of the Buena Vista Centennial Commission at the time she delivered her presentation to the Society on April 22, 1991, in the Ballroom of Main Hall (formerly the Buena Vista Hotel) at Southern Seminary College (now Southern Virginia College). She graduated from Sem in 1976 and moved back to Buena Vista in 1988. Her house is pictured on p. 90.

The town that I thought was so mired in the past that it could not join the twentieth century, turned out not to be mired, but rooted firmly in its history; not pretentious, as some towns have become, but a small city that held on to what it was in the first place.

As I researched the origins of my new home, I began to study the architecture of the surrounding structures. What at first looked like a collection of old, faded houses turned into a treasure. It was like looking in an old jewelry box and finding pieces that at first glance seemed insignificant but, upon inspection, turned out to be gems.

To understand these treasures and the city that contains them, one must return to the history of Buena Vista, "the infant Pittsburgh" of the South. Only by knowing the origins of the city and the vision of the founding fathers can one appreciate this town for what it is—a time capsule of a Victorian manufacturing town that is little changed today. This encapsulation has served Buena Vista well and prepared it to enter the twenty-first century in good stead. Intact company towns are rare, and it is truly a treasure that we see today.

Early surveyors of the area recognized the riches of the timberlands and the potential for the mining of a variety of ores. Long before there was the town that we see today, there was industry in this area. As early as 1779, it was noted that iron production was occurring in the Valley of Virginia. The site for this production was only eight miles north of present day Buena Vista. This production really began in 1738 when Benjamin Borden, an agent of Lord Fairfax, returned to Williamsburg from explorations of this part of Virginia. He presented Governor Gooch with a buffalo calf and, in appreciation of the effort, the governor granted Borden almost one hundred thousand acres in the Valley, with the stipulation that Borden settle the land with one hundred families. Within six years, Borden had attracted his one hundred families (mostly Scotch-Irish Presbyterians and Germans from Pennsylvania) and was able to claim the grant. These families constructed log homes and churches, some of which are still visible today, and they instilled in the area the strong Scotch-Irish Protestant work ethic.

Among the settlers was Alexander McCluer and his six sons who settled along the South River in 1742. It was three of these sons (Halbert, Moses, and Alexander) who built the first iron furnace on South River in 1778. This furnace was a small bank furnace that averaged two or three tons of pig iron per day. The McCluers later expanded their operation to include a furnace, a forge, and a small foundry. Their operation was sited on the land that was to become the Old Buena Vista property.

This property passed through several hands until it was finally sold to Samuel F. Jordan on May 9, 1848. Another furnace was constructed by Jordan and remained in operation until it was destroyed during U.S. General David Hunter's raid on June 12, 1864.

The quality of the iron from this location was well documented by the good market it commanded. Purportedly, iron from the McCluer furnace was used in the manufacture of cannon balls used during the Mexican War. It was, in fact, the Mexican War connection that caused the furnace to be named for the American victory at Buena Vista, Mexico, on February 22, 1847.

Men who mined this area realized the richness of the land. Iron, manganese, limestone, marl, clays of various sorts, sandstone, and ochre were found in what was then thought to be inexhaustible quantities. Timber was abundant and this in turn enabled the furnaces to be fired easily. It appeared to be an ideal location for more industry.

Part of Jordan's 11,800 acres was one of the three sites that were purchased and joined together to form the present-day city. The other two were Hart's Bottom and Green Forest, each of which carries its own history.

Hart's Bottom was named for the earliest settler of that region. The land was marshy and covered with brush; not at all desirable. It has been said that at one time the land was offered to the Paxton family, prominent local land owners, in exchange for a sorrell mare. The Paxtons declined the offer.

Ultimately, the land passed into the hands of John Robinson, known as Jockey Robinson due to his horse-trading ability, a local character who was originally an Irish weaver. Robinson was able to purchase his lands from John Boyer through his enterprise as a weaver and a horse trader. He was also able to afford to purchase slaves to work the land. Always one to capitalize on a situation, Robinson built a tavern on the southwest corner of his farm in order to avoid having to entertain the travelers and wagoners who were passing through to Lynchburg. He employed a tavern keeper, John Chiders, to manage the business. This place became somewhat famous in its day as the stopover between the Valley and East Virginia. Robinson continued to purchase property until his death, at which time he deeded all the property, including his slaves, to Washington College (now Washington and Lee University). The college sold the land and it passed through several hands until it was taken over by W. S. Gurnee of New York shortly after the Civil War for pay-

ment of money owed. Gurnee sold the property to the Buena Vista Company in 1889.

Green Forest, originally the home of the Glasgow family, was sold to D. C. Moomaw, who passed the land on to his descendant, Benjamin C. Moomaw. When it was revealed that two railroads, the Chesapeake & Ohio and the Norfolk & Western, would form a junction at Green Forest, Benjamin envisioned a great city arising on this land and he proceeded to develop his town. The boundaries of Moomaw's town are Beech Avenue, Factory Street, Canal Street, Brook Street, Allegheny Avenue, and 29th Street. He was able to attract a canning factory, a tannery, a plane mill, and a pulp mill; however, he realized that he would have to attract more capital to make his city a success. To increase the possibility of development, Moomaw purchased the lands of Hart's Bottom and began to divide it into lots with streets, alleys, and roads. During Christmas of 1889, a prospectus was written, glorifying the natural resources of the land.

There was much to offer at this location. From previous mining it was known that there were many mineral deposits in the area. It was a logical assumption that the ore veins were large simply because of the geographical location and geologic age of the Valley. Buena Vista lies within the great mineral belt that extends from Pennsylvania to Alabama. Geologically, this section of the Valley belongs to the lower Silurian Age. It is classed as belonging to the Potsdam or Cambrian group. The formations appeared to be approximately two thousand feet thick and contained slates weathering into clays and alternating layers of sandstone. Beneath this layer was a fossiliferous layer composed of granites, mica, slates, and feldspars of the Archaen Age. Exposed layers of all the above deposits were visible at Balcony Falls and in gorges along the mountains, as well as on the property of the Buena Vista Furnace.

The climate is mild and there is a river that would provide water and energy for industry. The first prospectus began with a quote from George Washington to Sir John Sinclair dated 1796:

The western parts of Virginia, more especially above the Blue Mountains, in my opinion will be considered, if not considered so already, as the garden of America; forasmuch as it lies between the two extremes of heat and cold, partaking in a degree of the advantages of both, without feeling much the inconvenience of either, and with truth it may be said is among the most fertile lands in America west of the Appalachian Mountains.



Brokers and salesmen at the Buena Vista Real Estate Exchange, 1891.

The prospectus also quoted a “distinguished Pennsylvania publicist,” William D. Kelley:

Wealth and honor are in her pathway. Her impulses are those which are impelling the advances of civilization throughout Christendom; and as her resources including geographical position and climate, are greater and more diversified than those in the possession of any other people of equal numbers, she must at no distant day break from the thralldom of a misguided past, and resume her once proud position in the van of civilization's advancing column. She is the coming El Dorado of American adventure.

With recommendations such as these, how could investors go wrong? The noted geologist W. H. Ruffner was commissioned to investigate the potential mineral resources. His report stated that his investigation was both “scientific and practical” and that he wrote the report to inform the public of what was at Buena Vista. Ruffner was well respected and his work was considered very reliable. Perhaps today it can be questioned by contrasting Ruffner's observation about the North River (now the Maury River)—“the bottom lands are not subject to overflow to any great extent”—with the reality of the disastrous floods of the past six decades.

The merits of the forests were extolled, the soil was proclaimed fertile, and local society was deemed refined and agreeable. At a time when natural beauty was extolled in the very essence of Victorian life, the

public was offered land nestled between the two natural wonders of the Natural Bridge and Luray Caverns. Education, always a primary concern, was addressed by noting the nearness of the Virginia Military Institute and Washington and Lee University. In fact, the 1889 prospectus cites the nearness of Lexington as a “highly valued attribute in the sum of Buena Vista's advantages.” The stage was set for what was to become the start of the boom.

On January 17, 1889, the *Lexington Gazette* reported the organization of a joint stock company which anticipated the development of the Buena Vista iron ore and the construction of a new furnace at Green Forest. A week later the paper reported on a meeting of the organizers that was well attended by a “large and enthusiastic” crowd. At that time, it was stated that “over one-third of the capital stock was taken.”

The fever of the boom had overtaken the population. Farmers sold their farmland to purchase the very same land rezoned as city lots. Homes were mortgaged to purchase stock. As this increased the funds available, the lands comprising Hart's Bottom, Green Forest, and part of the Jordan property were purchased by the Company for a total outlay of \$199,500. The acreage amounted to over 13,000 and the estimated actual value of the land at that time was between \$50,000 to \$75,000.

Land was cleared and laid off in lots of either 25 or 50 feet wide (depending on location and purpose—business or residential) with a uniform depth of 125 feet. Streets, alleys, and avenues were named and numbered—the avenues for trees indigenous to the area and the streets numbered from First to Forty-first. The width of the streets was sixty feet with the exceptions of the wider main thoroughfares of Magnolia and Forest Avenues. The width of the streets remains basically unchanged today. The vision of the founding fathers seemed to understand that something other than horses and wagons would be utilizing these roadways. Wooded sites were laid off in one-acre lots known as the Villas. Later, during the bust, these were known as the “Villainous Villas” due to the amounts overcharged for them and the owners' inability to resell these “valuable” properties.

Stock for the budding company was offered for sale on January 22, 1889. Within nine days of the organization, 7,780 shares of stock in the company were sold at a par value of \$100 per share. An oversubscription of approximately 25 percent occurred and the books were closed. Six hundred thousand dollars of the original \$1,000,000 of capital stock was to be initially issued at 50 percent of the par value. The proceeds of this stock purchase were used to purchase lands as was previously men-

tioned. The remaining \$400,000 was to be used as the capital for the development of the property and for further promotion of the effort. Lots were awarded to purchasers of two or more shares; either residential or business, depending on the preference of the purchaser. The location of these lots was determined by literally pulling lot numbers out of a hat. In February, the charter of the company was granted by the Virginia state legislature.

Now that the money had been obtained, it was time for the organizers to deliver what they had promised. Construction had to begin; the industries had to be developed and the infrastructure had to be in place. One of the first things the promoters of the city concerned themselves with was the construction of a fine hotel, because the promoters believed that the attraction of commercial travelers was necessary. J. P. Pettyjohn of Lynchburg was awarded the contract; the hotel was to be a copy of the Bluefield Inn in Bluefield, West Virginia. It soon became apparent that the hotel was not large enough to accommodate all of the travelers, so an addition of fifty rooms was begun in January 1889. This Buena Vista Hotel did not last long; it was destroyed by fire in July 1890. The ashes of the fire were not yet cool when construction plans were being made to replace the “chief pride” of Buena Vista. By 1891, the new structure was beginning to take shape and it was obvious that it was going to be grander and more elegant than its predecessor. The officers of the company were convinced that a structure of this size and grandeur was necessary to accommodate the throngs of investors they felt would be arriving imminently.

Industry needed to be attracted to the infant city. Inducements such as free land were offered by the president, Alexander T. Barclay. He traveled extensively throughout the United States, and his reports of success were followed closely by the *Lexington Gazette* and the *Buena Vista Advocate*. On February 22, 1890, the following results were announced:

Industries secured – Buena Vista Company; Basic Steel Works; Rolling Mills; Appold and Son, Steam Tannery; Stationary Works; Furnace Plant; Buena Vista Iron Co.; Buena Vista Paper Mfg. Co.; Buena Vista Saddle and Harness Co.; Buena Vista Woolen Mills, Buena Vista Tin Works, Buena Vista Planing Mills, Buena Vista Saw Mills; Buena Vista Building & Improvement Co.; Buena Vista Water & Light Co.; Buena Vista Fire Brick Works; Buena Vista Fence Factory; Wise Wagon Works; Lexington Investment Co.; Advocate Newspaper and Job Office.

Industries under negotiation – Tin Can Factory; Tin Plate Works; an additional furnace plant and paint works.

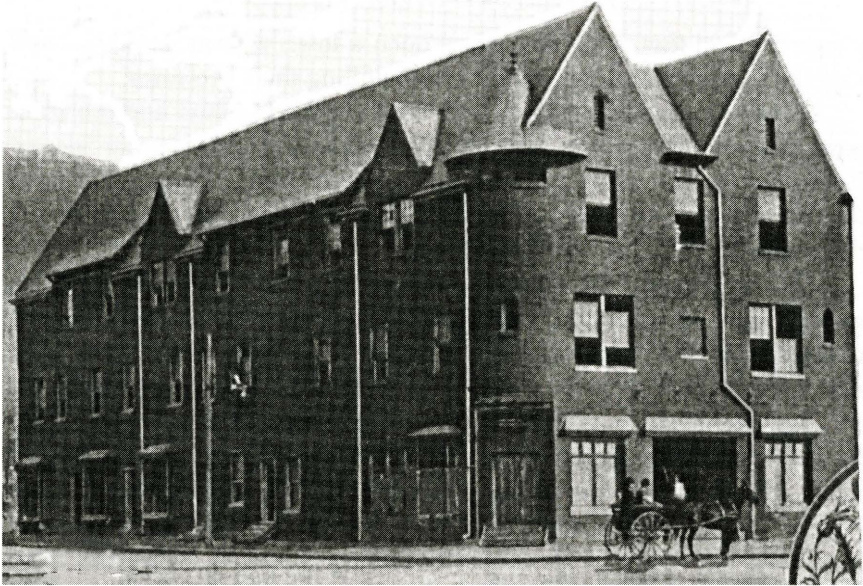


The rebuilt (1891) Buena Vista Hotel, now the main building at Southern Virginia College.

The results of the industrial development were impressive and the company reported a surplus of \$1,027,592.25 at their first annual meeting. The population in January 1890 was claimed to be one thousand. From villages with a combined population of approximately one hundred to a city with a population of one thousand in a year, meant things seemed to be progressing well. Some stockholders were unhappy when the company did not declare a dividend this first year. Instead, the profits were utilized to construct water and electric facilities and to subscribe to the stock of incoming industry. Stockholders were placated as their \$50 stocks were now worth \$65 to \$85 and the deeds to the lots were now selling for anywhere from \$350 to \$2,000.

The boom was gathering momentum. Real estate transactions were moving swiftly. The *Rockbridge County News* Buena Vista correspondent reported in early 1890: "To put it mildly, things are getting wild. . . . It is not unusual for eligible lots to jump \$100 in twenty-four hours." The value of lots was known to jump 100 percent in two weeks. Hugh A. White, a real estate agent, was quoted in the *Richmond Dispatch* as saying:

People drifted in from everywhere and the real estate agents largely made up the population. Lots sold so rapidly that a large bulletin board, or blackboard, was erected in a public place. Lots were in the hands of



The Opera House, torn down in the early 1980s.

practically all the real estate agents, and when a sale was made the lot was noted on the bulletin board so that other agents might take notice. When it was announced by Barclay that a contract had been made for the removal to Buena Vista from Columbus, Ohio, of a large foundry, known as the Rarig Works, pandemonium reigned and the bulletin board was not sufficient to hold the sales. Within the space of one-half day more than one hundred thousand dollars of property had changed hands, of which at least one-third was paid in cash. Lots sold and changed hands so rapidly that often a sale to one man was made again and again by the purchaser to another, and sometimes even by the second or third purchaser before the first sale could be cleared, and the last purchaser would simply take the deed and jump the intermediate purchasers.

A series of articles on the “Boom In The Valley” was run in the *Baltimore Sun*, and the reporter stated that “Every town in this section of Virginia just now seems to have a separate and distinct boom of its own, each like Barnum’s Circus—the very greatest boom on earth.”

Expectations were running high, but the speed of construction was very slow. The people were beginning to object to all of the speculation and wanted to get on with the actual building of the town. Editorials were written in the *Buena Vista Advocate* to prod building. Strong lan-

guage implied that there never had been a town without buildings and that the investors had better set about fulfilling their promises.

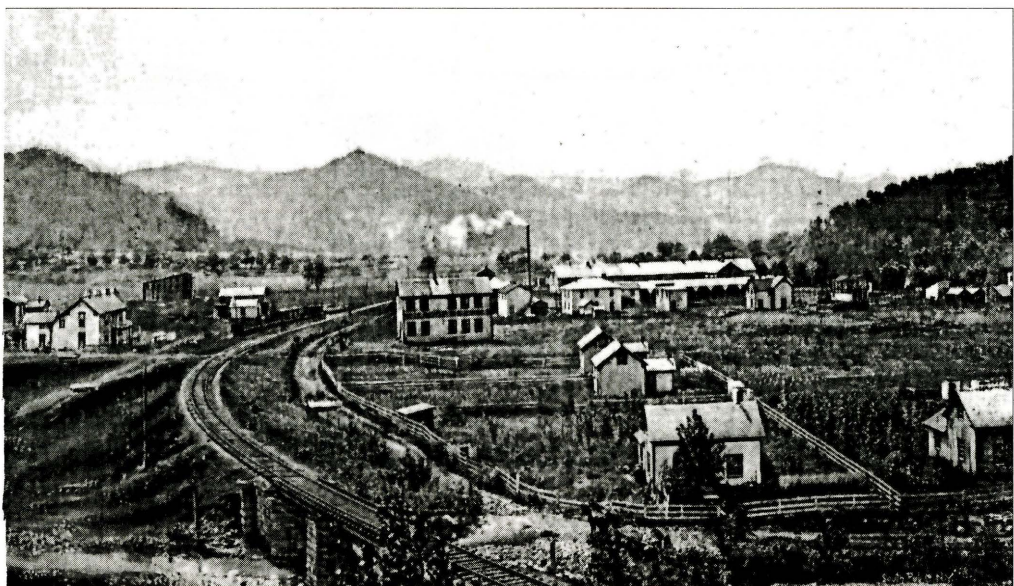
Construction finally began with the Colonnade Hotel and the company office building. The latter building was constructed in the Second Empire style with its very distinctive mansard roof. Construction costs for this structure were \$7,500. An opera house was also constructed at the same time at a cost of \$25,000.

The architecture of the city becomes extremely interesting at this point. People from all over the country had been attracted to the Valley to start a new life. Although they brought with them a desire for a newness, they held on to some things with which they were most familiar.

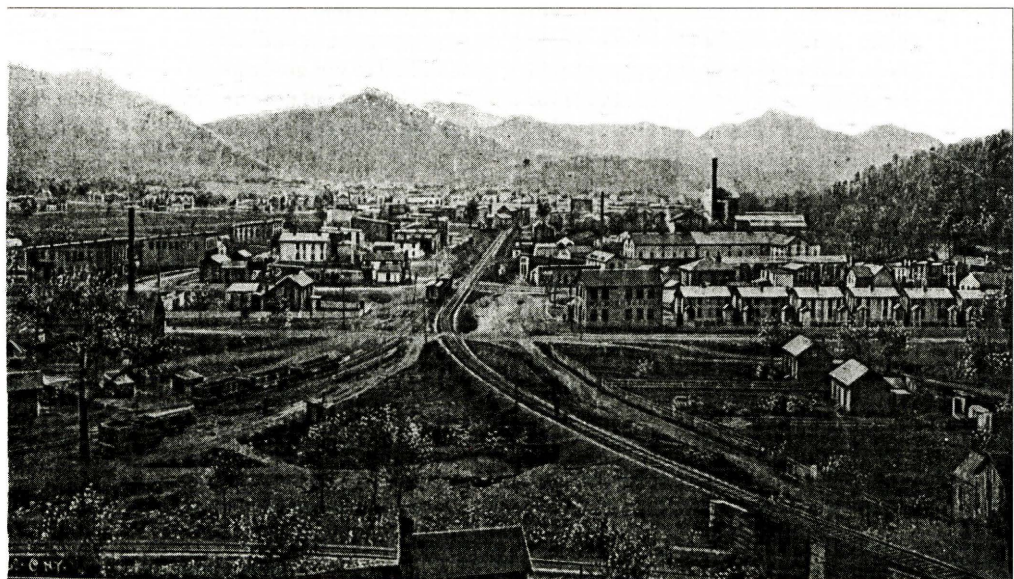
The most visible of these is the construction of their houses. Plans for their homes range from Italianate Revival to the ever-popular Queen Anne, Exotic Revival to Gothic, the common I-style farm house to the high Victorian Second Empire. Other homes were created by people who took an aspect from one style and combined it with parts from other styles that they liked. These houses are so distinctive that they could almost be called "Buena Vista Vernacular." Certain styles of trim were favored by the builders, and they applied that trim to all of the houses that they built. It could be said that the quality of architecture suffered according to Victorian standards of beauty. The editor of the local paper wrote editorials begging people to "have some well defined ideas as to something pretty in their style of architecture." He asked for less of the Italianate style, pronounced flat roofs unattractive, and suggested more of the Second Empire or Queen Anne style. Some builders heeded this warning, but others disregarded it completely.

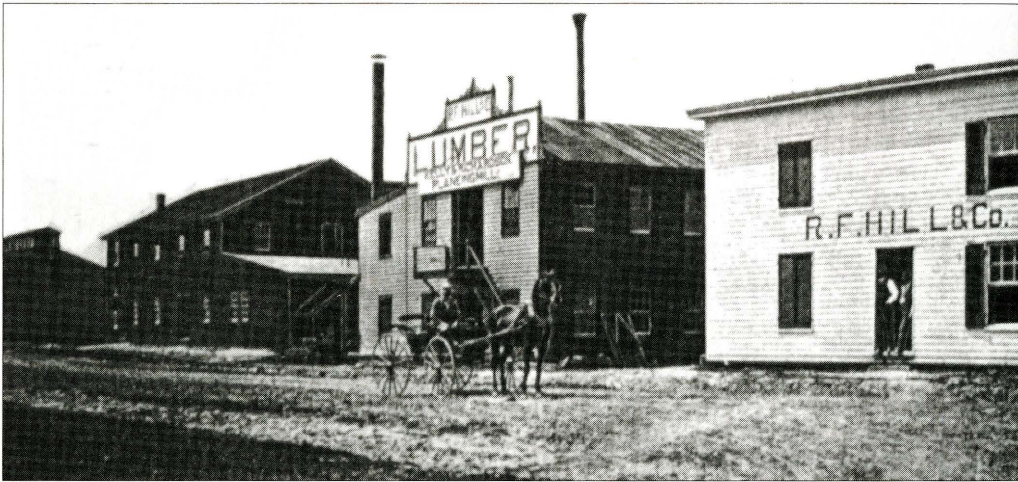
Today, rather than being eyesores, as so concerned the editor, the architecture is a commentary on the diverse nature of the people attracted to Buena Vista. These houses and buildings reflect the circumstances of the founding of the town, and they are some of the most beautiful gems in the "jewel box" referred to earlier. It is indeed unusual to find so many diverse styles in one location that were created in such a short period of time. Larger cities and towns usually arose over longer periods and the diversity of their architecture comes from that. Here we see that in two years, Buena Vista had over six hundred buildings constructed that ranged from the simplest to the most complex and reflected styles from all over America.

A second prospectus, far more elaborate than that of late 1889, was published in 1892. It included photographs and engravings of the buildings and homes and illustrated the city's progress. It was a handsome



Two views of Buena Vista looking south from the hill above the present intersection of U.S. 60 and U.S. 501. Photos from the 1892 Buena Vista Company prospectus. Top picture 1890, bottom picture 1891.





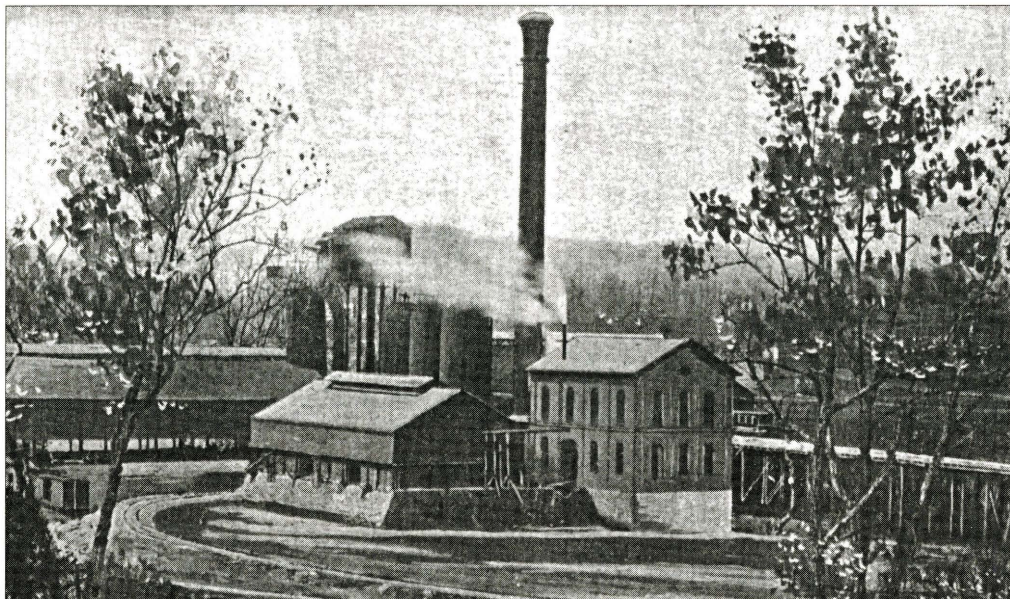
Cassimere Mills (extreme left), Marr Egg Crate Factory, and the two buildings of R. F. Hill & Co. Planing Mills and Lumber Yard.

volume, quite state-of-the-art by the standards of the day. Surely a city capable of producing such a fine volume would be one that would thrive. The prospectus stated with certainty that

Buena Vista was never a “boom” town in the unfavorable acceptance of the term. From the day of her foundation, conservatism, sound judgment, and a prudent and cautious policy have united in the guidance of her affairs; and to-day she stands on a solid and substantial basis, as shown by her industrial resources, her taxable values, and her growing and prosperous population.

Mercantile enterprises kept up the progress being made in other parts of the city. In January of 1890, there were 93 dwellings (total value \$106,000) and four stores with \$7,800 in stock. In January 1891, there were 409 houses (total value \$498,000) and 44 stores with \$114,600 in total stock. At this time there were three hotels, two restaurants, thirty licensed boarding houses, three market houses, one hardware store, two drug stores, four clothing stores, twenty-seven general merchandise stores, two tin and stove stores, three churches, one graded school, a female academy, and an opera house.

By January 1891, banking facilities were made available. One state bank, a loan and trust company, and a national bank were established. Prior to this, the only banking establishments were in Lexington. At this time the payroll of the town was \$50,000. The Rarig Works, the Buena



Buena Vista Iron Furnace.

Vista Iron Company's furnace, and the Steel Works were all capitalized at \$300,000. Various land companies with significant funding came into existence to capitalize on the building boom as it was thought that the city limits were too small to accommodate all of the expected influx of humanity. Fields that had been standing in wheat suddenly were divided into lots and streets.

An individual examination of the industries proves the availability and utilization of the natural resources. The second prospectus begins by asking the question, “Do you know of any other town in America than Buena Vista, in which the iron ore is taken from the earth, converted at the furnace into ‘pig’, and manufactured into boilers, engines and other machinery of the highest grade all within the corporate limits?” This statement sums up the success of the city.

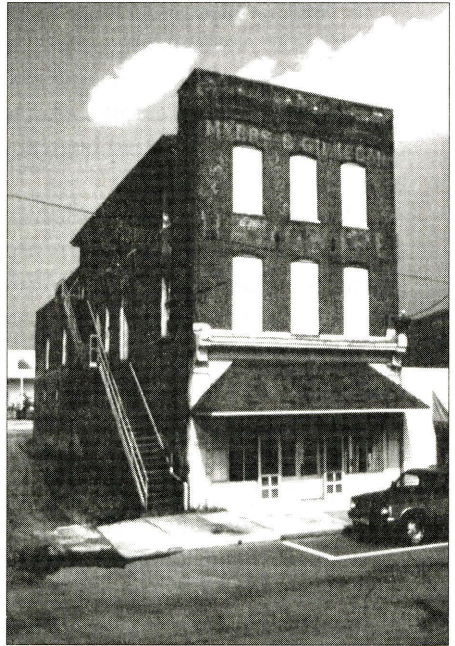
The natural resources of the various lands that were incorporated into the city limits allowed for the harvesting of raw materials, the conversion into an intermediate form, and the manufacture of the final product all within the immediate area. The only real exception was that the Cassimere Mills, which depended on sheep raised just outside the limits. Timber was harvested, sent to the planing mills, and constructed into furniture, wagons, and houses. Ore was mined in the city, brought

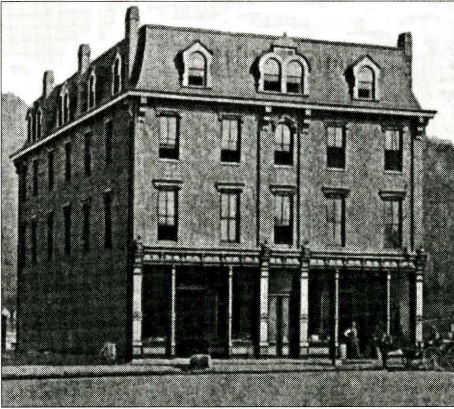


Buena Vista Company Headquarters

Buena Vista Buildings

Myers & Gilkeson Building (21st St.)

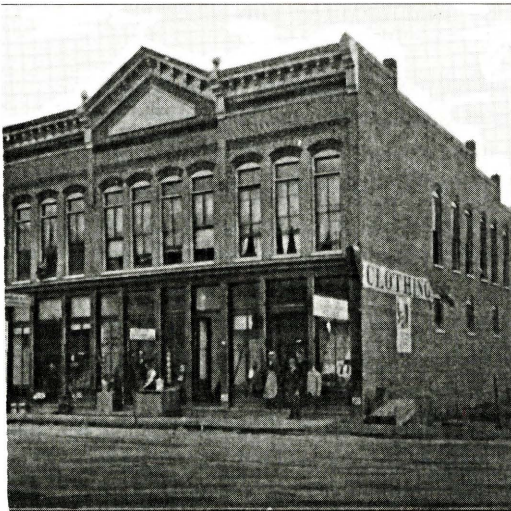




City Hotel (Sycamore Ave. and 18th St.)

1891 and 1991

Magnolia Ave., between 20th and 21st Streets.





Residence of Col. Charles F. Jordan, 1891, on Maple Avenue—now the author's home.

into the plants by a narrow-gauge railroad constructed for just this purpose, converted into pig, and sent to be manufactured into machinery and boilers by the Rarig Works.

The Buena Vista Paper Mills manufactured from eight to ten tons a day of various forms of paper. The wood pulp came from the forests of the city. Another use of the wood pulp was in obtaining the “liquor” necessary for the tanning process. A steam tannery was already in operation in Green Forest at the time of the city’s founding. The previously mentioned Cassimere Mills produced 650 yards per day of woolen cloths. Interestingly, the machinery used at the Cassimere Mills was produced by the Rarig Works in the city. The Marr Egg Crate Company manufactured a new design egg crate and, like the Cassimere Mills, all of the machinery was produced by the Rarig Works.

The Wise Wagon Works was established in 1885 at New Market in Shenandoah County. In 1890, it was enlarged and converted into a joint stock company that was moved to Buena Vista. Another industry, the Wilbourne Saddle Factory, was one of the first enterprises established in the city. The Wilbourne saddle was widely received and immensely pop-

ular throughout the country. The location of the factory near the railroad was vital as the company distributed saddles through various mail order catalogs as well as filling custom orders. These saddles are extremely distinctive and are still found in use today. Not only were astride saddles made, some examples of Wilbourne sidesaddles exist as well. Leather for the manufacture of these saddles and harness was produced by the Green Forest Tannery.

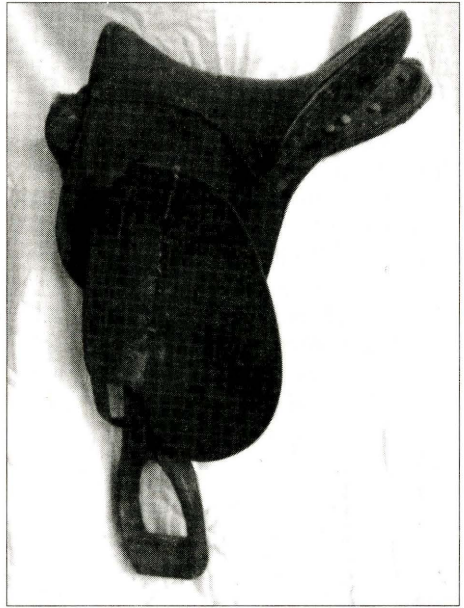
Other products that were manufactured from these local resources were bricks, made from the clays, and flint glass, asserted to be as fine as the glass produced at Wheeling, West Virginia.

The table on page 92 shows the number of employees of the various enterprises in 1890 and their daily wages. It was anticipated that many more men would be employed when the operations were in full swing.

Progress continued to be made in the overall scheme of the city. By May 1890, the water mains were being laid and by June, electricity was available. Schools were modernized—from a log structure to a two-room frame structure and then an addition of a two-story, four-room section. Churches of various denominations were constructed—the Methodist in January 1890, the Presbyterian in March, and the Baptist in November. A Baptist church for African Americans was dedicated in 1891, followed by the dedication of white Episcopal, Catholic, and Lutheran churches.

In 1891, the national economy began to go into a decline. The sale of lots sank. In February 1891, one week’s sales amounted to only \$16,000. Contrast this to sales of lots at the peak of the boom that amounted to \$262,000 in one week in October 1890.

Even though the recession was being felt, Buena Vista carried on. By February 1892, Buena Vista’s population reportedly numbered 5,240, enough for the application to the state legislature for the granting of a city charter. The Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors dissented



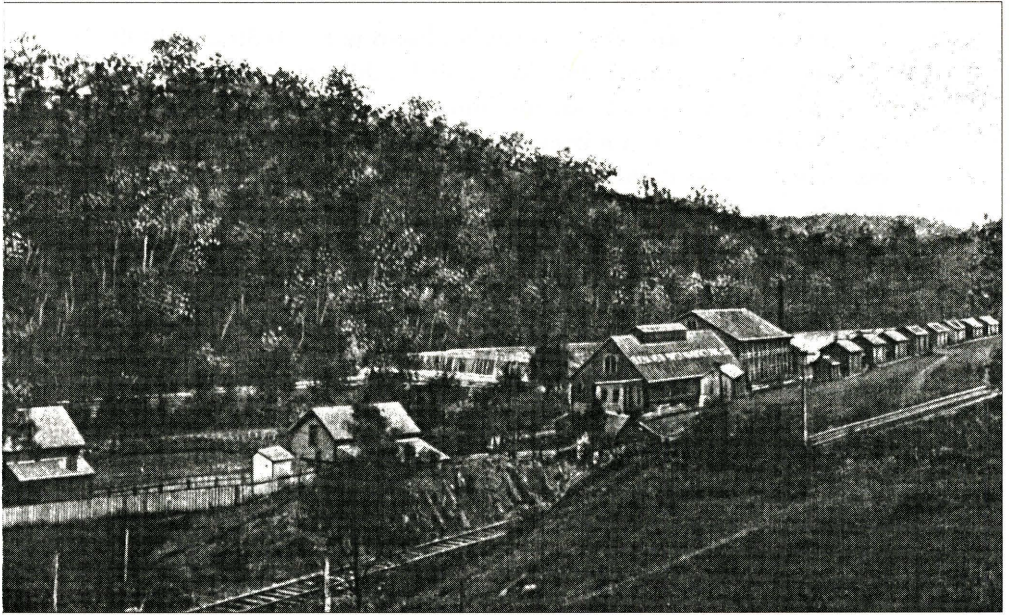
A Wilbourne saddle.

<i>Enterprise</i>	<i>1890 employment</i>	<i>Full Operation employment</i>	<i>Daily Wage</i>
Cassimere Mills	30	75	\$1.40
Saddle and Harness Factory	10	15	2.00
Buena Vista Advocate	10	10	2.00
Alexander K. Rarig Co.	150	1,000	2.00
Pennsylvania Investment Co.	13	20	2.00
Sitterding & Deaver	15	38	2.25
Buena Vista Planing Mills	16	20	1.75
Buena Vista Glass Co.	100	100	1.20
Buena Vista Paper Maufact. Co.	62	100	1.25
Wise Wagon Works	20	20	1.50
Buena Vista Fire Clay Co.	100	100	1.50
Buena Vista Iron Co.	300	300	1.25
Buena Vista Steel Co.	(not in operation, building)		
Brick Yard	13	25	1.10
Brick Yard	20	50	1.25
Brick Yard	15	20	1.25
Electric Light Plant	12	15	1.50
Buena Vista Saw Mills	25	25	1.25
Marr Egg Crate Factory	15	50	2.50

strongly, questioning the validity of the census. There was reason to question, as the *Buena Vista Advocate* reported as late as February 5, 1892, that "there were from 3,000 to 3,500 inhabitants in all and a steady, progressive, live people." Only after the city assumed \$30,850 of the county's debt, did the state legislature grant a charter on February 15, 1892. It is interesting to note that the city's population was fixed at 2,388 by the federal census of 1890.

The depression was finally felt in Buena Vista in late 1892. Workers were laid off and some factories shut down for a specified length of time. By November, there were no reported lot sales and on December 12, 1,135 lots were to be sold at auction to pay back taxes. The bust which Buena Vista was "never to experience" had occurred.

Rather than this being the final chapter in the history of Buena Vista, it must be noted that the city held on and weathered the storm. Although she never reached the zenith anticipated by her founders, she did not meet the fate of the Rockbridge County boom towns of Savernake, Cornwall, Raphine, and others. Today, many of them are no more than crossroads, and some cannot be found at all.



*The Buena Vista Paper Mill and its dam across North River
(now the site of Bontex Co. on 29th Street, U.S. 60).*

Buena Vista fell back on her resources, even though her mineral veins proved to be far more shallow than anticipated. The furnaces stayed in operation to some degree by the importation of ores from other localities. No one could take away the intersection of the railroads. Manufactured goods could still be taken to market more easily than in other locations, and now, even more importantly, raw materials could be transported into the city.

Over the intervening years, the population of the city rebounded to an estimated 6,400 in 1987. One hundred sixteen various establishments were in existence in 1986, and there were an estimated 3,423 members of the work force at that time. These figures do not contrast greatly with the projected figures given by the Buena Vista Company. It is almost as if their projections were off by one hundred years.

Today, these attributes make Buena Vista highly desirable. The railroads still pass through the town and the spurs still continue to the plants. No longer is the canal system in place, but the intersection of two interstates lies just a few miles to the west. Buena Vista sits poised, with her desirable climate, refined people, and ample workforce, for the introduction of additional industry into the city. A current prospectus for


the city could include many of the attributes listed in the 1889 and 1892 versions. Buena Vista sits nestled in the scenic foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, waiting expectantly for the boom that will surely happen in the future. Her balloon did not break in 1892, it merely deflated.

Buena Vista should realize that her future does depend in part on her past. Industry has always played the major role in the city, and today a new definition of that word should be considered. It is not limited to manufacturing. Tourism is the second largest industry in the state of Virginia, and if tourism were actively pursued by the city, it could boost her economy considerably.

The recognition of historic resources—the Victorian industry and the houses—is crucial to a dynamic entrance into the twenty-first century. One can stride with confidence into the future only if an awareness of the past is kept in mind. Look into the “jewelry box” of Buena Vista and examine her gems. As with antiques of all descriptions, they become more valuable with every passing day. The city deserves the recognition it should command. Welcome those who appreciate the beauty of the natural resources and her treasures, and enter the twenty-first century riding the crest of a new boom already in evidence in the tourism industry.

An Inventor's Perspective of Cyrus H. McCormick's Invention of the Virginia Reaper

Lewis Tyree, Jr.

OME time ago, I received a copy of a magazine called *American Heritage of Invention and Technology*. One of the lead articles was called "The Great Reaper War," rehashing the argument between Rockbridge County's Cyrus McCormick and Obed Hussey of Ohio. The article explained that while Cyrus McCormick had won the commercial war, he really wasn't the first inventor of the reaper. As I read the article, I thought the person who wrote this article doesn't know one thing about inventing, because the rationale and the conclusion were wrong. It's not what any inventor I know would say, and I've been associated with many inventors during my career. Once I arranged for an inventor friend who held nearly 160 U.S. patents to speak at Washington and Lee University. The most patents held by any recent American was nearly 600 held by Edwin H. Land of Polaroid camera fame.

I obtained a copy of Professor Hutchinson's biography of Cyrus McCormick, written in the early 1930s, and I took it to Chicago with me when I was testifying as an expert witness in a patent trial in U. S. Federal Court, where I was defending a patent. I had to sit in court and listen, and I had to be available at night in the hotel room in case the lawyers wanted to question me about something I had heard. Consequently, I had the time to carefully read Hutchinson's book. It depicted

Lewis Tyree, Jr., is an inventor with numerous U.S. and foreign patents. He spoke to the Society on October 28, 1991, at Mary Moody Northen Auditorium, Washington and Lee University.

almost the same scenario as the trial I was in; I needed only to change the names of the characters and the dates. I read in the book about the same arguments I was hearing in court, and in both cases I thought the inventor was not fairly treated.

In this talk, I hope to right some wrongs done to the memory of Cyrus McCormick. One thing that inventors know is that the world misunderstands us. I suspect that in many professions what the media conveys is not what the people in the profession think is important. Some examples are: "Build a better mouse trap and the world will beat a path to your door." That is wrong. "All great inventors have a midnight flash of genius." That is wrong. Even Edison said it is wrong, but people still believe it. Another example is (and I saw this in many of the books I read), "A true inventor is an eccentric recluse, who has little interest in business matters." Polaroid and Land? Edison? Absolutely wrong!

Some inventors are like that, and the media like to talk about them, but a real inventor wants to be successful. He wants society to use his inventions. He does not do it for his own pleasure. You do not work that hard simply for your own pleasure. Generally, people do not understand the art of invention and what is important in it, just as the author of the article I mentioned did not understand the process of invention.

A particular facet of McCormick's invention had always interested me as a Virginian and as a Rockbridge Countyian. It was something I read in a history book written about thirty years after the Civil War. When you read history books that are written by people who participated, you tend to get a different view than from the history books written much later. One history book I read stated that it was the invention of the cotton gin by a northerner, Eli Whitney, that made the Civil War inevitable by raising the value of slaves. And it was an invention of a southerner, Cyrus McCormick, that made inevitable the ending of that war in favor of the North, by simultaneously releasing men for the army and increasing shipments of wheat to a very needy England. These two factors laid the basis for the ending of this horrible Civil War which so decimated society. This is an interesting thought not frequently advanced.

Cyrus McCormick was born in 1809 in a log cabin at Walnut Grove, near Raphine. The log cabin had been built by his grandfather and inherited by his father, Robert, who, in 1808, had married a local lady named Mary Hall. In 1831, the year of the reaper's invention, Cyrus was twenty-two and his father was fifty-one.

In order to set the stage for this crucial invention, I would like to discuss a bit of background. The world prior to about 1850 was astoundingly different from the world today. Farming in the 1820s and 1830s was

much as it had been since Roman times. Rockbridge County was far different from what it is today. There were few trees in the county, thanks to land clearing, fuel gathering, and charcoal making. The Shenandoah Valley was generally open, and a wide variety of grains grew here. The Valley truly was ready to become the granary of the Confederacy.

Life was very different then. I recently viewed the video tape that is shown at Walnut Grove, done in 1930, purporting to depict how the reaper was invented in 1830; but it showed the Hollywood version of how people lived back then. In reality, it was tough living then; it was not a society of carriages and footmen, drivers, and people in fancy outfits going out into the fields. It is interesting how our perception of history changed when Hollywood wrote it.

The status of wheat then is difficult for people to understand today. We know that bread was “the staff of life”; what we do not realize is how important it was then. Grains were one of the few foods that people could store. Wheat flour was particularly valuable, because it fermented and allowed bread to rise. I have a little breadmaker at home, and no matter what kind of flour I use, rye or brown, I have to put some white flour in to make it rise and be digestible. Now I know why wheat flour had such a tremendous value. One old book I purchased listed the price of wheat in Philadelphia, between 1820 and 1840, at between \$2 and \$4 a bushel. That is what it costs today! But a dollar then was worth a hundred times what a dollar is worth today. It is the equivalent of saying that a bushel of wheat cost between \$200 and \$400, a seemingly incredible amount to pay for a basic commodity.

We also do not realize what kind of diet people had then. For example, the prescribed bill of fare at Washington College in the 1830s has the following: for breakfast, coffee, tea, or chocolate, with butter and bread; for dinner, one course of bread and meat with a simple sauce and vegetables; for supper, bread, butter, and milk, all to be of good quality and well prepared.

Wheat was worth so much that it tended to be used extensively for export to Europe. The Napoleonic wars had decimated the farm population there, driving up food prices. For instance, about 1800, a mason’s family of five in Berlin spent 44 percent of its income for bread. A total of 73 percent of his income went for food, leaving only a little over 25 percent for all other items.

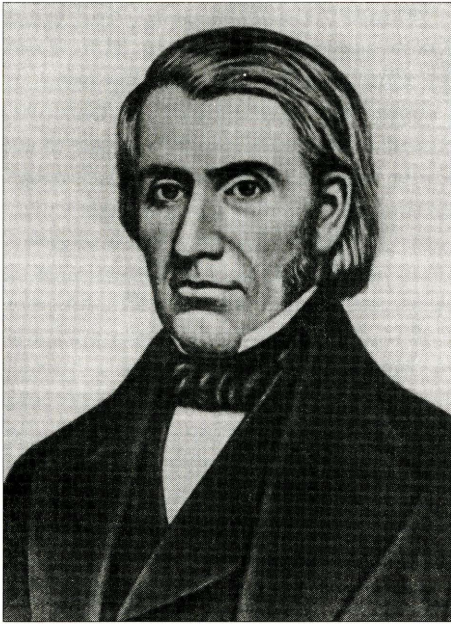
The farm houses in this valley were built at that time on wheat farms. Farms were what I call “yeoman” farms, to use Thomas Jefferson’s term, where people were self-sufficient. If you read the diaries that Professor Charles Turner has done on some of the Washington College students going north in the early part of the Civil War, and stopping at the farms along the way, they describe each as a small world unto itself.

The Shenandoah Valley, with 14 percent of the people of Virginia, grew 34 percent of the wheat and 36 percent of the rye grown in the Commonwealth. Wheat and rye cultivation requires open country and the Shenandoah Valley was open. They grew only 12 percent of the corn, 13 percent of the oats, and 1 percent of the tobacco. The owner of Lexington's Mulberry Hill estate grew 20,000 pounds of tobacco, but the Valley was not a significant tobacco growing area. Wool, butter and cheese from the Valley supplied better than 20 percent of the state's exports, which had to be transported on a river.

The North [Maury] River was used to ship commodities downstream during the nineteenth century, but one could not come upstream until after 1850, when the locks were built. All the tributaries that came into the Shenandoah Valley were used to take products down. The price for commodities at Lexington was set in Lynchburg. The pricing base in the northern portion of the Valley was Alexandria, and Richmond was the other pricing base. But none of these markets commanded as good a price as Philadelphia, whose port accommodated larger ships and less expensive shipping to Europe. To transport wheat thirty miles by wagon cost the same amount as to send it across the Atlantic. The United States did not have adequate roads then.

Wheat is a difficult product to grow. It has a short harvest period. You cannot harvest it green. If you delay the harvest too long, it falls from the stalk, and if it gets wet, handling it is difficult. Yet wheat was the most valuable of crops. Valley farmers planted only the amount of wheat that they could harvest, and extended themselves in calculating how much they could harvest. Every person who lived on a farm went into the fields at wheat harvest time. Even passing travelers might be impressed into service. There are records of the boatmen on the river stopping their boats and helping with the wheat harvest. Their daily pay for going out in the field was one bushel of wheat, and that was probably the highest pay that anybody could make all year. It was incredibly difficult. Dr. Benjamin Rush always complained that the favorite trick of the farmers was to get the harvesters drunk from dawn to dusk. It was difficult sickle and scythe work. The timing was very tricky; if it rained, the grain was ruined. Thus it was one product on the farm that would attract the attention of anybody trying to improve the farmer's productivity.

The need for mechanization was well known. People in Roman times talked about the need to improve the methods of gathering wheat. Until well into the nineteenth century, 90 percent of the people in the United States were engaged in raising food. Anything that could be done to release people for other duties was important. In 1783, Britain's Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturing, and Commerce offered a gold medal for a practical reaper. I could find no record of that



Robert McCormick

gold medal being presented to anyone, although Cyrus McCormick received a gold medal in 1851 at the World’s Fair in London.

In 1828, Patrick Bell of Scotland made a reaper, and within four years he made ten more. In 1835, one was shipped to the United States. In the records in England, Bell is credited as being the inventor of the reaper, even though he was not successful. The purpose of invention is to bring some device to the benefit of the public. In America, Robert McCormick, Cyrus’s father, began to experiment in 1816 with better reapers. Robert was clearly a talented engineer and worker with machines. He also had to harvest his own wheat, so, apparently, each year he would

work on a different model reaper. He would try it out at the next harvest, then lay aside that version, improve it over the winter, and try again next summer.

In June 1831, he tried this last version, and when it failed, he quit. He quit after a good try and with many other irons in the fire. Fifteen years is a long time to work on a dream. Simultaneously, William Manning patented a reaper, and, in 1833, so did Obed Hussey of Ohio. Nearly twelve thousand U. S. patents were issued on harvesting machines in the following fifty years. An incredible effort was being made to reduce the number of people working on farms. Today, less than 5 percent of the American population make their living on farms.

Cyrus McCormick succeeded where many people failed. There are seven key elements to a reaper: draft, traction, knife, fingers, divider, reel, and delivery. All appeared in Cyrus’s first reaper and in every reaper the McCormicks subsequently made, and additional elements appeared later. Some people assert that each of those elements was used by some earlier inventor; therefore, Cyrus did not do anything. But the elements had not been combined in the fashion in which he combined them. That is the essence of an invention. Nuts and bolts, for example, have always long been used, but it is how you use them that counts.

Let me briefly discuss patents. "Patent" is a legal word, and what constitutes a patent today is not what constituted a patent in 1830. One applied for them differently in 1830. One thing that is still the same is that a patent can only be given to something that is new, not obvious, useful and beneficial to society. A patent is a legal monopoly given to an inventor for revealing his secret for the benefit of society. For a limited time, he has a legal monopoly; after that, society has open access to it.

Patent rights were written into our Constitution. Congress was given the right to regulate them, and Thomas Jefferson was first Commissioner of Patents. When Cyrus McCormick received his patent in 1831, he paid a fee of \$40 (perhaps the equivalent of \$4,000 today) and received a fourteen-year patent. Unlike today, then there was no examination required and no patent examiners sitting in Washington who might say: "This was invented yesterday by somebody else." The commissioner relied on the oath of the inventor that he truly thought he was the inventor, and if there was later an argument, the courts decided. One result was that court dockets filled up, for Americans were almost as litigious then as now.

On the McCormick farm, in front of the museum (which was the old blacksmith shop), is a stone marker reading: "Cyrus McCormick, inventor of the reaper, was born on this farm February 15, 1809. Here he completed the first practical reaper in 1831." The word *practical* is well-chosen. The farm has a number of models showing the development of the reaper, because like all great inventions, it had to be improved.

Some of the books I have read on McCormick insist that he came from a poor Virginia family, having been born in a log cabin. One should point out, however, that the front part, which was added in 1821, was sixty-five feet wide and twenty-five feet deep. It was a typical valley farm house, a two-over-two with a center hall. The McCormick house was built at a time when almost half the people in the United States lived in houses that were twenty by fourteen feet or smaller. When we say someone was poor, it has to be relative. While the United States was not entirely "land poor," certainly very few had wealth in the way Europeans thought of wealth, but a large number of Americans had land. By 1830, Robert McCormick, Cyrus's father, owned twelve hundred acres, nine slaves, and fifteen horses. He was not poor.

Like most of the Scotch-Irish in this area, the McCormicks were dedicated to education, both formal and informal. Robert was a talented mechanic and inventor. From 1816 to June 1831, he worked on reapers almost constantly. In 1830, he patented a hemprake used by other farmers. From 1813 to 1830, he manufactured and sold fifteen mechanical bellows. In 1830, he patented a hydraulic machine, and in 1834, he manufactured and sold five threshing machines. He was an active and talented inventor.



Walnut Grove

Prior to inventing the reaper at age twenty-two, Cyrus McCormick had patented a hillside plough which could go back and forth and switch from side to side, a useful device around here. In July 1831, he invented the reaper. One of the questions often asked was how had he done it in such a short period? He answered that question by saying that he could not have done it without all the work his father had done, and without having seen all the pieces of failed experiments that were around the farm.

One of the questions asked later was: did Robert McCormick really invent the reaper? Robert answered—at the time, not ten or twenty years later—that Cyrus was the inventor. Cyrus patented the “Virginia reaper” in 1834. In the meantime, he was helping his father in Kentucky with the hemprake, trying to manufacture and sell it to farmers there, because Kentucky was expected to be a fertile producer of hemp. This effort did not succeed. Robert and Cyrus then joined in an iron furnace, called Cotopaxi, near Vesuvius. From 1835 to 1841, they attempted to operate the furnace, but it was not a financial success, principally because when they started, iron was bringing between \$45 and \$50 a ton in Richmond. The price soon fell to about \$25 a ton, so they did not make money.

Cyrus called these years a training period. One of the things that all inventors think of is, when will the market be ready for my invention? If you are too late with your invention, the market has gone ahead of you. If you are too early, you waste your time trying to attract users who

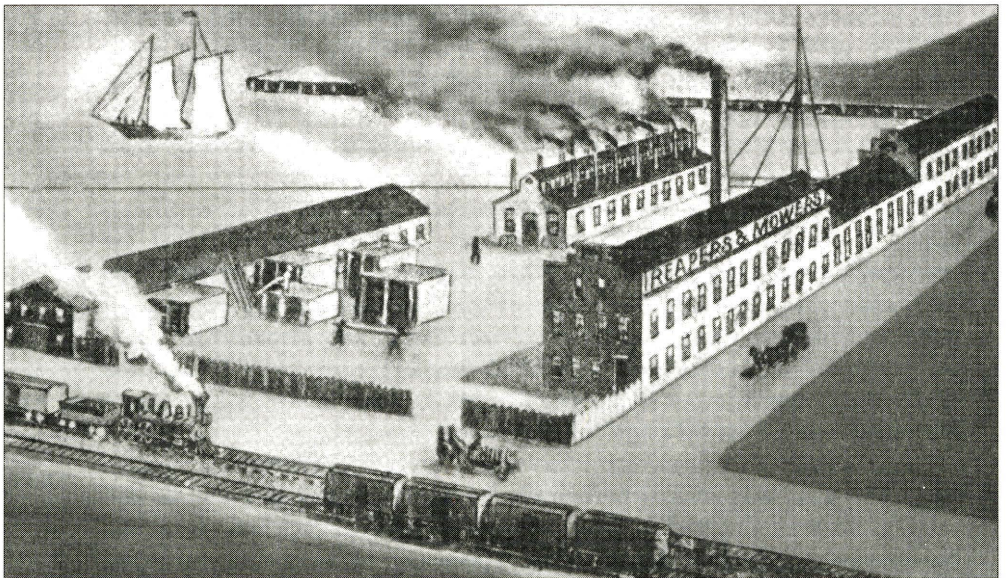
are not ready. In 1834, American farmers were not ready for a mechanical reaper. The flat grain lands of the midwest were not yet open; neither were the railroads, which took the place of the rivers, open to the midwest.

I was at a meeting in New York some years ago of a thousand people in new product development, and we talked about timing. One man told a story about it. You have two choices, he said. You can be too early or too late. If you are too late, the game is over for you; if you are too early, you should run out and see if anybody is ready to buy your invention. Then you have two choices again. You can run around trying to excite the public to buy your invention, or you can relax. You can sit by the side of the field until the world is ready, and *then* you go out. That is what Cyrus did; he waited. What Obed Hussey did was to expend all of his energies trying to develop a market for his version of the reaper, when there really was little chance of success.

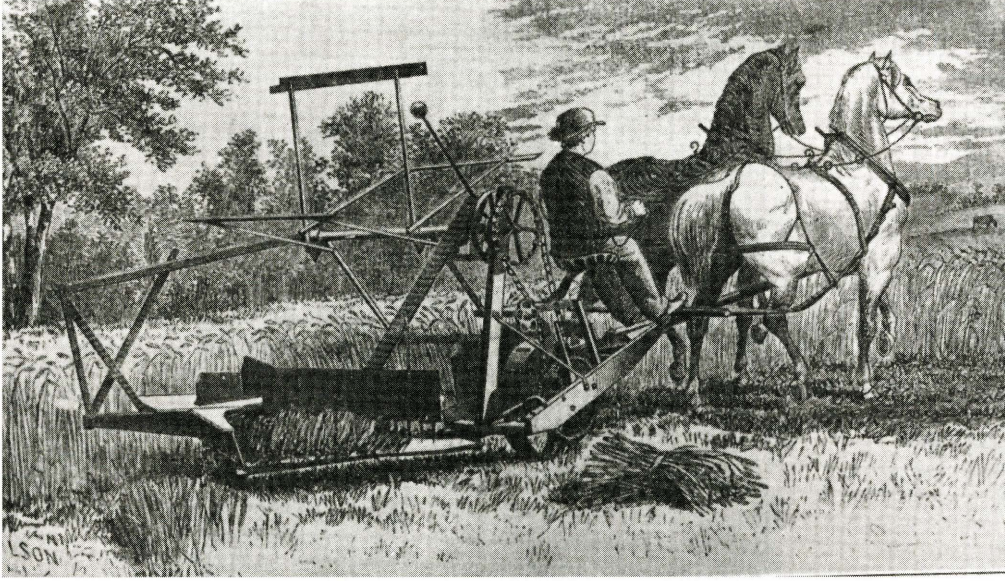
After the iron operation's failure, Cyrus, his father, and his brothers—it is uncertain just what role his brothers had at that time—manufactured reapers at Walnut Grove. The state of transportation being what it was, they thought the way to reach other markets was to have some manufacturers—for example, in Richmond, Cincinnati, New York, or the Tennessee Valley—produce reapers of the McCormick design under their patents and sell them locally. By 1847, nearly a thousand Virginia-type reapers had been made at various places, but they were frequently unsatisfactory. They were not made properly and sometimes they did not work. The bad reputation of those improperly made reapers had been broadcast around the country, and the McCormicks decided to concentrate the manufacturing in one place which they could supervise.

As the fertile farmlands of the Midwest were rapidly going under the plow, Cyrus decided on Chicago. When he arrived, there were about ten thousand people—barely twice the number in Lexington. He established a manufacturing operation there. The next year, his brother, Leander James, arrived, and the following year, their youngest brother, William, joined them. They quickly decided that Leander James would take responsibility for daily supervision of the factory and William for product development, with Cyrus then freed to do general management. All three brothers, however, participated in product development, with some patents showing one brother as the inventor, some showing two brothers, and others all three brothers. Accordingly, it is clear that they all, like their father, possessed mechanical talents and enjoyed using them.

The financial relationship among the brothers was interesting. They were employees, but they were partners in the profit. This was not an uncommon arrangement at the time. Thomas Edison's first partner-



*Top: Cyrus McCormick in 1860.
Bottom: The McCormick factory in Chicago about the same time.*



A McCormick "Virginia reaper" in action about the time of the Civil War.

employees had a similar arrangement. It precluded many lawsuits. The McCormicks were very successful. In 1850, they made 1,600 reapers, 2,500 in 1855, and 4,600 in 1856. When the Civil War came, they really went at it. In 1862, they made 33,000 reapers, and in 1864, 85,000. By that time, they had made a total of 250,000 reapers, and people estimated that every reaper released five men for military service in the U.S. Army.

Cyrus McCormick had many successful inventions. After receiving the gold medal from the Crystal Palace Exhibition in England, he received many other awards. The McCormicks continued to improve their machines, and a whole range of mechanized farming equipment came out of their International Harvester Company. Some years later, the company was combined with other farming equipment companies under the stewardship of J. P. Morgan, and they ended up making some 80 percent of the world's agricultural machinery.

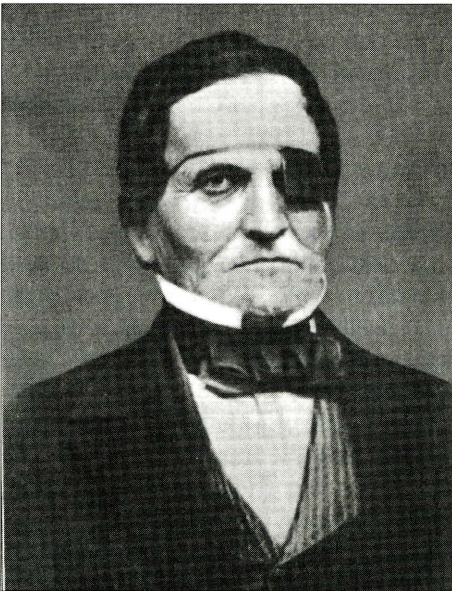
A number of controversies have hurt Cyrus McCormick's reputation. The first was over whether Cyrus was the real inventor of the reaper. Various Europeans, who thought up the individual elements, have been put forth as the inventor. Those claims were easily refuted. Taking elements from different inventions in a non-obvious way, as Cyrus did, does not take anything away from him. One might assert that Patrick Bell, the Scotsman, invented the reaper, and somehow, Cyrus,

up in Steeles Tavern, Virginia, learned of it. That was extremely unlikely. The first Bell machine did not arrive in the United States until 1835.

Yet another claim was that Robert, Cyrus’s father, was the real inventor. The arguments to support this are various. One was that Cyrus was too callow at age twenty-two to have done it, which is nonsense—real inventors begin young. Another assertion was that Cyrus did not have time to invent something that important in only seven weeks. This does not take into account the fact that his father had a range of farming machinery that he had tried, but the reaper’s arrangement was wrong in Robert’s case; it was right in Cyrus’s case. Moreover, there is a contemporary statement by Robert that Cyrus invented the reaper. Cyrus’s critics within the family respond to that by asserting his mother *forced* his father to give her son the invention. (I call that the “wicked witch” concept.)

One final claim is that Obed Hussey invented the reaper. During the great patent squabble, some people asserted this; but if you compare Hussey’s to McCormick’s reaper, the conspicuous difference is McCormick’s rotating reel, one of the seven elements of a reaper that I previously mentioned. There is nothing that says that you cannot have separate patents on different machines, so I think that argument is also wrong.

The next criticism was that Cyrus McCormick’s success was due to non-inventive factors; that he succeeded for all sorts of spurious reasons—reasons that any good engineer would feel bad about. On the contrary, *I* would feel proud of them. His success was due to improved manufacturing techniques. He used interchangeable parts, and he had a repair manual—the first one with an exploded view, so you can see how the parts fit together. I think he understood the problem of taking a reaper, or any mechanized thing, to the farm. In the short period of harvesting, if anything went wrong with that machine, the farmer had to fix it immediately and with the parts he had on hand. He could not fabricate them or have them shipped in from somewhere.



Obed Hussey

McCormick's solution met his customers' problems. The fact that he had to think up these solutions, because they were not in place, made it all the harder and praiseworthy.

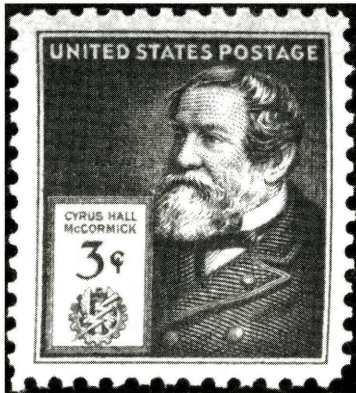
The next noninventive factor was that he improved marketing techniques. Sometimes, when you say "marketing," people sneer and think that some salesman is doing something wrong. But in McCormick's case, the improved marketing technique was the appointed, permanent local agent, somebody that the local farmers knew. The agent had a reaper to show, and he was there for the farmer to deal with when something went wrong.

The other tricky thing McCormick developed was credit selling. By the time of the Civil War, a reaper sold for a lot of money, say \$1,200, but farmers had little cash. He sold the reaper for a small down payment, and then payments were due after each harvest, so the farmer could pay for the reaper out of the profits he made from it. That made the cost sound more reasonable, was smart business, and solved a problem.

Yet another anti-McCormick assertion was that he really did not invent a very good reaper, but merely incorporated a series of improvements. In modern terms, what would it be like if our automobiles were like the first one Henry Ford made? We need a series of improvements. Someone read to me a letter from William McCormick to Cyrus when Cyrus was in England during the Civil War. It said, "You must do something about Leander James. He keeps experimenting with new improvements, and I can't get production out of the factory with him changing the design all the time. We should rest on our ability to operate an efficient factory and incorporate the thousand changes that I use instinctively." What intelligent thinking! It is clear that all the McCormicks were smart, and all were inventors.

Some critics said that Cyrus McCormick hogged all the glory; he did not fairly share the credit with his brothers, Leander James and William, who were the inventors of many of the improvements. I think this is a fact of life. When somebody is first in doing something, he gets most of the credit. Both Leander James and William were skilled inventors, engineers, manufacturers, and executives. If either had been born first, perhaps he might have invented the reaper. One never knows. But Cyrus did and Leander did not. The first person often gets most of the credit. Cyrus said that he could not have done it without his father, or been so successful had he not started young. Certainly, it was a problem for the family when Cyrus went off to Europe and was showered with honors, but there is nothing in the record demonstrating that he unfairly appropriated the glory. There was little he could have done to share the glory. He did share the money; they all ended up wealthy. Most of the arguments about sharing the glory come from Leander's and William's chil-

Academy, who, Cyrus stated, was a gentleman and a scholar, publicly said it was worth \$100,000. I have tried, but failed, to find this in the history books. The other thing that I found of interest was that Colonel Samuel McDowell Reid, who built the house that is now behind the Lexington post office and later owned Mulberry Hill, was one of the first local observers to try the reaper. He thought it was a “trying device if your fields contained tree trunks or rocks.” I do not find that statement as critical as do some of McCormick’s critics, but I can see why Cyrus went to Illinois, where there were fewer trees and rocks. I don’t think that Obed Hussey’s machine would have worked very well with Rock-bridge County’s tree trunks and rocks, either.



Preservation in the Great Depression: The WPA Historical Inventory Project and Rockbridge County

Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr.*



WITH the nation still caught in the Great Depression, the federal government in 1935 initiated a “second New Deal,” which included among its many new programs a broadly based Works Progress Administration, or WPA, as it became more familiarly known.¹ Its aim was to hire at a “security wage” as many of the unemployed as possible to work on locally sponsored public-works construction and improvement projects. The WPA, unlike many of its predecessors, also included a quite different program—one

* The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Pierre Courtois, Petie Bogen-Garrett, Mark Fagerburg, Stacy Gibbons Moore, Carolyn S. Parsons, and Minor T. Weisiger of the Library of Virginia, Richmond, and especially Pamela H. Simpson for her generous help in unraveling the story of J. W. McClung.

1. The easier designation WPA became quickly adapted, as the program labored under several names, including the now more familiar Work Projects Administration.

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intended to assist the growing number of white-collar unemployed.² In Virginia, for example, although much of the work force between 1935 and 1937 experienced some mild forms of recovery, the number of white-collar workers seeking relief had increased steadily. Thus, although the Virginia WPA wage ranged from only twenty-one to seventy-five dollars per month, one of the lowest rates in the country, there was never any lack of applications for government-funded white-collar relief projects in the Old Dominion. Many were the critics who considered the government-supported activity as wasteful, useless make-work; they were the ones who joked that the initials WPA meant “We piddle along.”³

Some white-collar programs, such as the state’s Federal Drama Project, did rather poorly. Others did somewhat better. For example, the Virginia Art Project and the Virginia Handicraft Project in time employed scores of people in scattered localities, and the Federal Music Project funded a joint North Carolina–Virginia symphony orchestra. But even the WPA’s loudest enemies had to admit that other programs had proved extremely useful. The WPA hired hundreds of clerical and professional workers to complete detailed compilations of public health and education needs, city land-use surveys, traffic studies, and analyses of rural land values, assessments, and mortgage-assistance programs.⁴ Easily the best known of the WPA’s new white-collar programs was the Federal Writers’ Project, which in Virginia, under the direction of the

2. For contemporary overviews of the WPA and its projects see Grace Kinckle Adams, *Workers on Relief* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939); Donald S. Howard, *The WPA and Federal Relief Policy* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1943); and Arthur W. Macmahon, John D. Millett, and Gladys Ogden, *The Administration of Federal Work Relief* (Chicago: Public Administration Service, 1941).

3. Ronald L. Heinemann, “Alphabet Soup: The New Deal Comes to the Relief of Virginia,” *Virginia Cavalcade* 33 (1983): 16–19. For a general pictorial overview of the depression’s impact on the state, see Brooks Johnson, *Mountaineers to Main Streets: The Old Dominion as Seen Through the Eyes of the Farm Security Administration Photographs* (Norfolk, Va.: Chrysler Museum, 1985); and [Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr.], “Shadows of an Era: The WPA and FSA Collection of Virginia Photographs,” *Virginia Cavalcade* 36 (1987): 128–47.

4. Ronald L. Heinemann, *Depression and New Deal in Virginia: The Enduring Dominion* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), pp. 92–94; see also Milton Meltzer, *Violins and Shovels: The WPA Arts Projects* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1976); Christopher DeNoon, *Posters of the WPA* (Los Angeles: Wheatley Press, 1987); Edward B. Stanford, *Library Extension Under the WPA: An Appraisal of an Experiment in Federal Aid* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944); Jerre Mangione, *The Dream and the Deal: The Federal Writers’ Project, 1935–1943* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972); and Monty N. Penkower, *The Federal Writers’ Project: A Study in Government Patronage of the Arts* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1977).

well-known historian Hamilton J. Eckenrode, hired clerks, researchers, writers, and editors to compile superb anthologies of oral history, folklore, and music, as well as several well-received local and specialized guides and the still incomparable statewide *Guide to the Old Dominion*.⁵

Unfortunately, much of what the WPA accomplished would not prove useful for decades. Extensive photographic and typescript files that were stored in state and federal archives have in the last twenty years emerged as invaluable resources. Other programs and their research collections still await our full attention. Dr. Eckenrode supervised such a program, one generally forgotten, its files rarely utilized, and its contribution to the preservation of Virginia's cultural and architectural history still unappreciated—the WPA Virginia Historical Inventory.

Whereas the far-better-known Historical American Buildings Survey, part of the 1930s Civil Works Administration, employed architects and draftsmen to measure and record the nation's most significant architectural landmarks,⁶ the VHI recorded the more mundane, the local and vernacular, the homes and work places of ordinary folk. In other words, because of their very profusion and familiarity, they were the structures most easily ignored and often untended, at best cared for only as a little extra money might accrue in the midst of hard times. Thus they were also the most endangered remnants of Virginia's seventeenth- and eighteenth-century past.

The VHI, like so many WPA programs, was federally funded but state sponsored. Every six months the program applied for renewed funding, but the day-to-day hiring, training, and supervision of field-

5. The two foremost titles published by the WPA Virginia Writers' Project remain *Virginia: A Guide to the Old Dominion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940); and *The Negro in Virginia* (New York: Hastings House, 1940). Local guides and histories include *Alexandria* (Alexandria: Williams Printing Co., 1939); *A Guide to Prince George and Hopewell* (Hopewell: Hopewell News, 1939); *Prince William: The Story of Its People and Its Places* (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1941); *Sussex County: A Tale of the Centuries* (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1942). Editions later published from the WPA files include Charles L. Perdue, Jr., Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips, eds., *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews With Virginia Ex-Slaves* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976); Charles L. Perdue, Jr., *Outwitting the Devil: Jack Tales from Wise County, Virginia* (Santa Fe: Ancient City Press, 1987); and Thomas E. Barden, *Virginia Folk Legends* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991); see also Charles L. Perdue, Jr., Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips, eds., *An Annotated Listing of Folklore Collected by Workers of the Virginia Writers' Project* (Norwood, Pa.: Norwood Editions, 1979).

6. For examples of Historical American Buildings Survey projects, see Henry G. Alsbera, *America Fights the Depression: A Photographic Record of the Civil Works Administration* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1934), pp. 97–106.

workers; the review, editing, and preparation of reports; and the creation and organization of the inventory files were functions of state government, in this case the State Commission on Conservation and Development's Division of History and Archaeology. It was a surprisingly complex program. Just keeping track of the workers, much less the files, was a massive task.⁷

With workers scattered all across the state, with supervisors constantly on the road, and with clerical workers required to follow every bureaucratic nuance, problems were bound to arise. Time after time, Dr. Eckenrode found himself either soothing or ruffling feathers, depending on the situation. In 1935, in defense of a secretary, Eckenrode instructed his supervisors to let her distribute the paychecks, "Otherwise, she may become indignant and refuse to let us have any checks." He chastised an aide "that in the list of hotels given us by you are several high-priced ones, particularly the Monticello at Charlottesville and the Stratford at Fredericksburg. You might as well understand," he added, "that such high-priced hotels are out of the question." And with so many people involved, the quality of the work varied. One supervisor commented on an August 1936 report that the "dates and facts seem correct but [the] English is rotten. I started to assist [the field-worker], easing him over the bumps, but found I was rewriting the whole thing."⁸

Each week the field-workers, usually one to each county or major locality, submitted to the Richmond office their reports, accompanied by an undeveloped roll of film. The materials were formally logged in, with each site recorded in its respective county's spiral notebook. The notebooks evidently functioned as both a project catalog and a record of each worker's pace. The regional supervisors, often on the road during the week, spent considerable time reviewing the week's reports (frequently on Saturdays), requesting additional information and notations, editing, and finally passing them on to a battery of typists. Once each

7. See memoranda H. J. Eckenrode to Bryan Conrad, M. F. Pleasants, and R. M. Allyn, August 4, 1933; Eckenrode to Pleasants, June 21, 1935; Pleasants to Eckenrode, November 9, 1935; Eckenrode to S. L. Ferguson, Jr., February 26, 1936; Pleasants to Eckenrode, March 19, 1936, March 1, 1937, June 15, 1937, November 12, 1937, and November 20, 1937, all Hamilton J. Eckenrode Personal Correspondence, General Correspondence Files 1927-1950, Department of Conservation and Economic Development, in Archives Collection, Library of Virginia (LVA), Richmond.

8. Memoranda H. J. Eckenrode to M. F. Pleasants, May 1 and June 21, 1935; Bryan Conrad to Eckenrode, August 20, 1936, all in Eckenrode Personal Correspondence.

report was complete, the field-worker's developed picture of the site was affixed and the materials were filed by county.⁹

As with so many WPA-sponsored projects, some workers interpreted their instructions far too liberally and inventoried everything they could find. Thus, the files for several counties—Alleghany, Amherst, Fauquier, Mecklenburg, Prince Edward, Prince George, Stafford, and York—include genealogies, excerpts from local wills and broadsides, transcriptions of diaries, recollections by former slaves, descriptions of antique furniture, even a description of a World War I training area for trench warfare. Some files—Gloucester County's, for instance—are incomplete, containing only brief and scribbled notes.¹⁰ Nevertheless, there are research collections of varying quality for all but eleven Virginia counties.¹¹

The Rockbridge County collection includes its log notebook, a separate list of sites, and specific files, arranged alphabetically by category, as well as a map marked with each of the sites researched. More important, the Rockbridge files precisely follow the assigned categories. There are detailed research reports on 27 buildings, 20 cemeteries, 17 churches, 10 hotels and taverns, 12 mills, another 17 miscellaneous structures (academies, forts, and foundries, for instance) and 448 houses—551 reports in all.¹²

The remarkable and diverse files are the work of James Willson McClung. How he came to accept the task of compiling them is a singular story. Born in 1866 to a farm family in Brownsburg, a resident of Lexington for decades, and treasurer and deacon of the Lexington Pres-

9. "Virginia Historical Inventory," Microfilm No. 509, LVA. Accompanying photographs and the original typescript reports are filed by county, Picture Collection.

10. "Genealogy of Moncure Daniel Conway," Stafford County, Reel 28; "Will of John Ballard," York County, Reel 30; "T. F. Humphreys' Advertisement," Mecklenburg County, Reel 18; "Diary, kept by Mr. Edward Turner of Kinloch," Fauquier County, Reel 11; "Slaves Owned by David Martin and His Wife, Mrs. Julianie Martin," York County, Reel 30; "Secretary in Home of Mrs. Edgar Berry," Madison County, Reel 18; "World War I Trenches and Dugouts," Prince George County, Reel 23; see also Gloucester County File, Reel 13; "Old Covered Bridge," Amherst County, Reel 1; "Biography of E. M. Nettleton," Alleghany County, Reel 1; and "Copy of Testimonial from Thomas Jefferson," Prince Edward County, Reel 23, all Microfilm No. 509.

11. Not included in the WPA Virginia Historical Inventory are Amelia, Bland, Brunswick, Charles City, Charlotte, Clarke, Essex, King and Queen, Mathews, Richmond, and Smyth Counties.

12. Rockbridge County, Reel 25, Microfilm 509. All file categories cited hereafter are to this reel.

byterian Church, McClung already knew and appreciated much about Rockbridge County. He also brought an analytical eye to the job. For several years, McClung had worked in Lexington for the Rockbridge National Bank and in 1904 helped organize and later served as president of the Peoples National Bank. In October 1914, he had accepted an appointment as treasurer of Virginia Military Institute, and there he would likely have remained except for a catastrophic lapse.¹³

In the autumn of 1931, while implementing a new accounting system, state auditors noted improprieties in McClung's handling of at least seven hundred dollars in Institute funds. When further investigation revealed that the various amounts in question exactly matched deposits to the treasurer's personal bank account, VMI's Board of Visitors had no choice but to demand Major McClung's resignation, submitted in November 1931. A subsequent and more extensive audit exposed an even darker truth: over seventeen years, McClung had misappropriated, including interest lost, nearly thirty thousand dollars. Arrested the following April and indicted in May, McClung, at his July trial, in a courtroom packed with onlookers, pleaded guilty to all charges against him. He might have faced a ten-year prison term, but the judge, after noting his age and "that he had made restitution satisfactory to the Institute and in so doing had sacrificed nearly all of his property and that of his wife," sentenced him to two years in the state penitentiary. He was fortunate on several counts. With good behavior, he would be out after a year. And, as fate would have it, the prison superintendent, Rice McNutt Youell, was a 1914 VMI graduate; he assigned McClung to the prison library, thereby sparing him much discomfort.¹⁴

Thus by the mid-1930s, McClung found himself an applicant for WPA employment assistance. Assigned to the WPA's Virginia Historical Inventory project, McClung began work collecting materials on March 23, 1936, and by early June was evidently already submitting detailed reports to the Richmond office and his district supervisor in Waynesboro. Understandably regarded by VMI as a "faithless employee," it must at times have been painfully difficult to face many of his Lexington

13. Dorthie Kirkpatrick and Edwin Kirkpatrick, comps., *Rockbridge County Births, 1853-1877* (Athens, Ga.: Iberian Publishing Co., 1988), 2: 400; *Rockbridge County News*, February 1, 1945; *Roanoke Times*, February 1, 1945; *Register of Former Cadets: Memorial Edition* (Lexington: Virginia Military Institute, 1957), p. 375.

14. *Annual Report of the Virginia Military Institute for the Session 1931-1932* (Richmond: Division of Purchase and Printing, 1932), pp. 8-9; *Rockbridge County News*, May 5, July 7 and 14, 1932; *Roanoke Times*, July 6 and 7, 1932; *Richmond Times Dispatch*, July 7, 1932; *Register of Former Cadets*, p. 152.

and Rockbridge neighbors.¹⁵ Nevertheless, he gamely asked for the community's assistance, especially welcoming "any suggestions" and "any historical data which anyone may have."¹⁶

To ensure that the assembled information was consistent from county to county, field-workers were to list only those structures built before 1860 and to follow certain precise guidelines. For example, in his report on the ca. 1840 Hughes house, McClung provided location, date of construction, a detailed chronological list of owners, and a description of the property, with source citations included. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the inventory was its broad definition of "historical significance." It was sufficient, then, that the Hughes house had been the home of Lewis Hughes, for years a custodian at Washington and Lee University and a greatly respected member of the local African-American community. In later years, it was of interest, too, that the first-floor front was used for a Chinese hand-laundry and the corner room somehow fitted in a small bakery.¹⁷

For each file McClung also included a summary sheet. His analysis of the R. H. Figgat house, built in Lexington in the early 1790s, provides details on brick, wood, and roofing materials; styles of doors, porches, windows, hardware, mantels, and stairways; the number of chimneys and rooms; and even details as to walls and doors. The Figgat house, for instance, sported "two flights of stairs" of "pine newel, rail and balusters, turned, painted brown," while the floors were "store, oak, uniform, four inches wide, [and] stained."¹⁸ The inventory also asked field-workers two very subjective questions: "present condition, and state if spoiled architecturally by remodelling" and whether or not the "occupant seems to appreciate old architectural features." It was not unusual for McClung to respond that a building was "right much run down. Owner cares for nothing but the rent."¹⁹ As often, though, he was able to respond that considering the hard times a house was in "good" shape, "pretty well kept and modern."²⁰

There was ample opportunity, too, for field-workers to note more aesthetic aspects of buildings and to include legends and other anecdotal material. McClung described the Jacob Armentrout house, suppos-

15. William Couper, *One Hundred Years at V.M.I.* (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1939), 4: 290.

16. *Rockbridge County News*, April 9, 1936.

17. "House of Lewis Hughes," House Files.

18. "Home of R. H. Figgat," House Files.

19. "Presbyterian Home for Aged and Indigent Persons"; see also "Home of Richard S. Bruce," both House Files.

20. "Business House of C. M. Koones and Brother," Building Files.

edly completed ca. 1775 by Andrew Elder, as “built for the most part of beautiful sandstone, of different colors,—some very dark, some gray, and some of a lighter color, which gives it a very pleasing effect.” The thick stone may have also proved useful, since “there is a tradition that [the] cellar was used in the early days as a place of protection against attack by the Indians, who were plentiful.” He added another long-accepted story: “that when this house was built, most of the stone was carried by the workmen on their shoulders from a quarry a short distance from the house. If this is true, it was a herculean task, to say the least, but there is no reason to doubt the tradition.”²¹

In many of the files VHI researchers also added stories that revealed much about a community’s personality. The Frederick Snider house, significant as a converted 1755 log structure, was to McClung equally important as the home of Frank Snider, “a great singer” who “taught music and singing all over the County at various times and places,” and was always “in demand at Sunday Schools and Conventions to lead the music.”²² Of the Whitesell house, McClung could find “little or nothing” about its owners, and remarked that “the only thing of interest that can be found is its age.” Undiscouraged, he could at least add that “there is a very well founded tradition that Samuel Whitesell kept the cellar well filled with brandy, and that there was room enough to store ten barrels of it at a time.”²³

Every file’s coversheet bears the caveat that “unless otherwise stated, this information has not been checked for accuracy”—in most cases, a warning plain enough to pull up any contemporary researcher. With McClung, though, the sheer volume of detail provides some measure of comfort. In many cases, he added considerable tangential material and local news. In discussing the George Dixon house, built on Buffalo Creek by John Wallace in about 1792, McClung commented that “the present owner, Major Lewis E. Steele, has been connected with Virginia Military Institute for over thirty years, first as Secretary, and at the death of Major E. A. Sale during the [past] summer, was made Purchasing Officer. It is understood that he bought this property for a summer home, however, it will require considerable expenditure to make it suitable, and it is badly in need of repair.”²⁴ In a similar vein, in describing the home of John R. Beeton, McClung added that there the family operated “the first laundry in the town” until the Lexington Steam Laundry opened in about 1915. There, also, was a “‘Gun Repair Shop’ in the base-

21. “Home of Jacob Armentrout,” House Files.

22. “Home of Frederick Snider,” House Files.

23. “Samuel Whitesell Home,” House Files.

24. “George Dixon Home,” House Files.

ment for a number of years and the early recollections of the writer, more than fifty years ago, recall seeing its sign, which was a large wooden gun mounted in position on the front of this building."²⁵

It was especially difficult for any field-worker to come upon houses that were not likely to survive. McClung could at least take comfort that the Virginia Historical Inventory was expressly meant to provide a record of just such dilapidated and disintegrating buildings. His descriptions nevertheless reveal a sadness at their passing. The home of Lafayette Sehorn "has been," he remarked, "unused for a number of years, and was locked so the writer could not secure entrance." Worse, the house "is in a bad state of repair, with moss and vines covering part of the building, and the roof is nearly covered with moss." He likely was quite familiar with the weakened and undoubtedly slippery roof: his report includes measurements for the chimney top. Unchanged, "except being weatherboarded," for more than a century and a half, the house, he lamented, "is now only a relic of the past."²⁶ Another, the John A. Brown house, a log cabin built by Isaac Campbell in 1774, he had to admit "in all probability will never be rebuilt. It is almost covered by the limbs of a large oak tree and vines creep up its walls."²⁷

Whether a house seemed doomed to oblivion or not, McClung was always careful, as instructed, to provide the most detailed descriptions so as to create a record not only of a building's history and design, but of its contemporary appearance and condition as well. For the file entitled "Home of Alexander M. Glasgow," McClung recorded, among other details, including the house's various names, that "the coping under the roof eaves is stone," the brickwork English, and the "two-story porch in front, ten by twenty feet, supported by four brick columns, eighteen inches in diameter, plastered and painted white." As for the interior, "the doors are of pine, four feet wide, three panels, transom and side lights, painted," the interior walls "plastered and painted," with "an eight inch pine wainscoting . . . above the floors, which are of old fashioned pine planks, varying in width from four to eight inches." Below all that, "there is a cellar under the front . . . dug out of solid rock." As for its state in December 1936, it had been converted "into a grocery store and meat market" and was only, he believed, "in fair condition and needs repairs very badly."²⁸

Despite having to report on the sad condition of so many commercial establishments, McClung seems to have particularly enjoyed

25. "Home of John R. Beeton," House Files.

26. "Home of Lafayette Sehorn," House Files.

27. "Home of John A. Brown," House Files.

28. "Home of Alexander M. Glasgow," House Files.

researching the many Lexington businesses and organizations. Of Wright's Old Livery Stable, he recollected that "father and son conducted this place of business for twenty five years," keeping "good horses and vehicles, and it was often that orders were booked for special occasions several weeks in advance." But that, he admitted, "was the horse and buggy day." He was not, then, obsessed with preservation for its own sake. At the other extreme, he pointed with a progressive citizen's pride to the Lexington Motor Company, which, when it opened its Ford dealership and garage in 1920, converted a small 1843 brick-and-frame structure into an "entirely fire proof" facility, one, he boasted, that ranked among "the most complete and modern motor buildings in this section."²⁹ To include a file on the Pettigrew house, it was sufficient that James M. Pettigrew and his son, S. G. Pettigrew, had "conducted a confectionary store on Main Street, probably for 75 or 80 years" where they also kept "a large stock of toys," making it "a great place for children."³⁰

The Fairfield Hotel provided an altogether different attraction—fame and a bad roof. Originally known as the Allbright Tavern and, later, perhaps as a pun on the family name, as the All Night Tavern, the former stagecoach station had on several evenings hosted George Washington. When retiring one rainy night, he left his watch on the bedside table, directly beneath a leak in the roof. Anna Akers, the owner in 1936, commented that arriving guests still asked two questions: if they could sleep in Washington's room, and if the roof still leaked.³¹

In reading his file on the Central Hotel, formerly the Lexington Tavern, one is struck by McClung's entertaining frankness. "It has always been used as a home for the traveling public," he wrote,

but as the town was small, and there was a better hotel in the town, its patronage was never large, rather taking what the better hotel could not accommodate. In later years, its rates have been less than those at the regular hotel, and its patronage has been greater. No item of historical importance has been discovered by the writer.³²

The Irvine house, when used as a tavern, had faced similar difficulties. Located just off Main Street, "it was not successful" and was in turn "a bar-room," a "restaurant and eating house," a pool hall, grocery store, and finally a shoe repair shop. Its claim to fame, however, was that the owner, C. W. Irvine, in partnership with a local bank cashier, became so

29. "Wright's Old Livery Stable" and "Home of the Lexington Motor Company," both Building Files.

30. "Home of James M. Pettigrew," House Files.

31. "Allbright Tavern," Tavern and Hotel Files.

32. "Central Hotel," Building Files.

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over-extended in real estate speculation that in 1895 they ultimately brought down the Bank of Lexington.³³

Far less numerous than the Virginia Historical Inventory files on houses and commercial buildings are the reports on churches and cemeteries. They are, though, considerably more detailed. For example, in studying local burying grounds, including small family graveyards, McClung listed not only names and dates but also inscriptions.³⁴ In the decades since, weathering and other deterioration must have made many of those same stones indecipherable. One can not help but be moved by the lists of children's graves (died "aged 2 years, 2 months, & 24 days"), or be impressed by the precise detail of transcriptions (the marker for William Cross states that he died "in the 84th year of *her* age"), or be taken by the opinion of the deceased whose "afflictions sore sometimes I bore, physicians were all in vain."³⁵ The church records are no less complete, and occasionally inadvertently amusing. The High Bridge Presbyterian Church took considerable pride in its congregation's many foreign missionaries, its devoted and brave souls who labored abroad in strange and dangerous lands: China, Turkey, Greece, the Belgian Congo—and West Virginia.³⁶

James Willson McClung apparently submitted his last research notes in the autumn of 1937, at which point the Richmond office then edited and organized the hundreds of files. The staff and McClung evidently also made several corrections or additions, as a few of the reports include pasted revisions.³⁷ McClung was justifiably proud of his accomplishment, and a year and a half later, in 1939, he published an abbreviated sampling of his work. In the book's preface he commented that he had completed 688 reports, whereas the final collection numbers 551.³⁸ That was not remarkable as field-workers' files were sometimes

33. "The Old Irvine House" and "Annex to the C. W. Irvine House (Tavern)," both Tavern and Hotel Files.

34. For further compilations see for example Angela M. Ruley, comp., *Rockbridge County, Virginia, Cemeteries: Kerrs Creek District* (Utica, Ky.: McDowell Publications, 1989); Frances Lee Rudolph, *Inscriptions from Cemeteries in Augusta and Rockbridge Counties, Virginia* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1953); and Anne M. Hogg and Dennis A. Tosh, eds., *Virginia Cemeteries: A Guide to Resources* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986), pp. 230–31.

35. "Falling Springs Cemetery" and "High Bridge Cemetery," both Cemetery Files.

36. "High Bridge Presbyterian Church," Church Files.

37. See for example "Allbright Tavern," Tavern and Hotel Files.

38. James W. McClung, *Historical Significance of Rockbridge County Virginia* (Staunton: McClure Co., 1939), p. 3. For further architectural analyses, see Ann McCleary, comp., *An Evaluation of Architectural, Historic, and Archaeological Resources in*

declined and far more often merged. What is remarkable is that he completed such a task within perhaps as few as eighteen to twenty months—and that when he died in 1945, his obituaries made no mention of his singular feat, or his crime.³⁹ Perhaps no matter. His neighbors knew of his mistake. They also knew of his work in behalf of the county's history, a restitution of sorts. And through the incomparable Virginia Historical Inventory, posterity knows of his own and his fellow field-workers' contribution to the architectural and local history of Virginia.

Rockbridge County, Virginia: The Valley Region Historic Preservation Plan (Richmond: Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks, 1985); and Royster Lyle, Jr., and Pamela Hemenway Simpson, *The Architecture of Historic Lexington* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977).

39. *Rockbridge County News*, February 1, 1945; *Roanoke Times*, February 1, 1945.

The Virginia Military Institute and World War II

James M. Morgan



THE *Rockbridge County News* of December 4, 1941, reported a number of items which conclusively pointed out just how headlong this country was going towards war. I was a VMI cadet, a Rat, who had matriculated less than three months earlier, had never seen a copy of that local publication, was not permitted to have a radio in my room, and never had an opportunity to know that there was a *Roanoke Times*. I did know about the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, but we never saw it, so I was woefully unprepared for the day-to-day gallop we were taking towards that conflict which soon engulfed us all.

However, Matthew W. Paxton, Sr., editor and publisher of the *County News*, was right up to the minute in his astute observations. On that December 4, 1941, he reported that since the preceding issue, a number of Rockbridge men had been inducted into the Army, that to date 2,700 men had registered in Rockbridge County, and that 23,750 Virginians had already been called to the armed services because President Roosevelt had declared a state of emergency, and hence the draft was in effect.

James M. Morgan, Jr., graduated from the Virginia Military Institute as a member of the Class of 1945. He received his Ph.D. in engineering from Johns Hopkins University and served as head of VMI's Civil Engineering Department, as Director of VMI Research Laboratories, and as a member of many state engineering boards. Major General Morgan served as Dean of the Faculty at VMI between 1965 and 1984. His presentation was delivered in Evans Dining Hall, W&L, on January 25, 1993.

Furthermore, the lead column on the front page of that issue reported that on the previous night, December 3, Lexington was host to—and VMI's White's Farm property the campsite for—80,000 members of the 1st Infantry Division on its way north from the South Carolina maneuvers to Ft. Devens, Massachusetts. The division was divided into three columns. One went up U.S. 1 through Richmond, one on U.S. 15 through Gordonsville, and the third came through Lexington on U.S. 11. Accompanying the 1st Division was a field artillery unit which camped at VMI's White's Farm.

Mr. Paxton reported that the streets of this small town were “filled last night with quiet groups of soldiers, wandering somewhat aimlessly. Restaurants and soda fountains did a thriving business. Barber shops, which remained open after hours, were especially heavily patronized. There were no disorders.”

The editorial page was somewhat more somber. The astute Mr. Paxton titled his signed editorial “War Looms with Japan.” His lead sentence was prophetic: “Authoritative sources in this country and in Japan seem to be agreed that war between the two countries is inevitable. Nearly the only question is when hostilities will break out.” Of course, three days later, they did.

The date was December 7. There was a Dodgers-Giants football game at the old Polo Grounds in New York City, and radio station WOR announced the onset of hostilities at 2:26 P.M. No matter how that came over the radio—I was in Room 111 in Barracks, listening to a radio that was in my dyke's room—no matter how they learned of Pearl Harbor, every VMI cadet alive at that time can vividly describe how the news first came to him. The next day, like some of you, we cadets listened to President Roosevelt when he made his famous “day of infamy” speech. Each cadet then in Barracks was to be caught up in the war effort one way or another. None were to escape. All were to be affected.

Charles E. Kilbourne, the man who led VMI throughout World War II—and guided it with good humor, I might say, as well as a steady and authoritarian hand—was the son of an Army officer, a Virginian by birth, a distinguished soldier who graduated from the Institute in 1894, second Jackson-Hope medalist, and a holder of the Medal of Honor, which he won in the Philippines.

General Kilbourne said: “Stick to your own job.” That was his keynote. There was little chance of an American expeditionary force or any other type of overseas expedition at that time. The Superintendent concluded: “Here at the Institute, we should stick to our own job and do

it well, for by doing our own job, we serve our nation best. Until there is further clarification, our greatest possible need is for an intelligent approach to the situation with a lack of emotion."

The very next day the VMI student newspaper, the *Cadet*, had as its headline: "Let the Generals run the War." They had the right idea. The *Cadet* reported also that at the Lyric Theatre, *Three Cockeyed Sailors* was playing, and that *Great Guns* was at the State Theatre. The old Patio(?) Grill, no longer in existence, at 171 South Main, was advertising the fact that "All cadets' credit is good." I have to admit that I took some part of that.

One week later, the Superintendent addressed the Corps on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the ratification of the Bill of Rights. He emphasized that we all had to steel ourselves for bitter war. However, just six nights after Pearl Harbor, in a long-planned pre-Christmas event, the Monogram Club—the athletes who had earned their letters—held its informal show in Cocke Hall at 8:00 P.M. The VMI Commanders band furnished the music and the guest vocalist was Miss Virginia Nicely, whom some of you will remember, from Lexington. There were, I am happy to say, eight young ladies from Southern Seminary, and they appeared on the program three different times and presented dance routines and a chorus in, what we thought then, very risqué outfits.

Within a month after Pearl Harbor, the Corps was saddened to learn that its first casualty in action was Lieutenant George Ben Johnson Handy, Class of 1940, from Richmond, and a member of the Philippine Scouts. He died on January 23, 1942. After he had graduated, he had gone to the University of Virginia Medical School, but for whatever reason, he entered the Army and went to the Philippines in October 1941, and was killed three months later. We had a memorial service in Jackson Memorial Hall. There was not a dry eye in that house when Abisha Collins Pritchard, '42, the famous VMI football player, sang "Rock of Ages." George Ben Johnson Handy was the first of more than 160 VMI men who would die in the war.

Cadet life and VMI are different today. If you could look back fifty years, you would see on the Post, physically, only half of what is there today. Besides the Barracks, there were only seven major buildings. Since that time, eight additional major buildings have been constructed. The Corps of Cadets then was just over seven hundred; today it is just over thirteen hundred. But the things that govern the Institute, from the cadets' standpoint, have not changed. The so-called "General Committee," a cadet organization of the elected officers from the class, safe-

guarded the decorum of cadets in public, and the Honor Court enforced the Honor Code. Throughout the war those two organizations continued to operate pretty effectively.

It is not well known, but the Board of Visitors had decided well before Pearl Harbor to enlarge the VMI Barracks. The Commonwealth of Virginia had given some money for planning, but it certainly was a blessing that the New Barracks, as it is called, had not been constructed (it was built in 1948), because it would have been empty during the conflict.

One example of war preparedness and civilian seriousness in Lexington was the practice blackouts that were held on a regular basis. For instance, three were held on the night of Friday, February 13, 1942, at 7:30, 8:00, and 9:30. Each lasted fifteen minutes. All lights in the barracks and around the Post were supposed to be extinguished within fifteen seconds. That did not happen, but the Institute gave it a good try.

Another area-wide blackout—including Lexington, Glasgow, Buena Vista, Staunton, Waynesboro, Harrisonburg, and Charlottesville—was held on March 19, 1942, and within fifteen minutes after 9:00 P.M., the entire western sector of the state was darkened, but I remember that the moon shown pretty brightly. No enemy aircraft were expected, but the test was valuable as a drill. It was later reported that people in Lexington and at the Institute “watched the sky and the surrounding sable night” for fifty minutes. There were no automobile accidents, no fires, and no casualties reported as a result of the exercise.

The cadets were also practicing civil defense measures, and on Friday, March 6, the Corps took over Lexington in an “emergency drill exercise.” The town and its environs were divided into six sectors—or company areas, because that is how many cadet companies there were—under the command of their company commanders. In their sections, the companies guarded streets and controlled the roads and bridge approaches, and pre-medical students set up first aid units. The war was a long way away, but its effects were thus felt in Lexington.

The cadets’ social activities continued during the spring of 1942. There were regular sets of hops, or dances, and there was a Second Class show. That is something that has passed into history; the junior class would put on a show to raise money for its First Class year. In 1942, the Second Class show was called “A Murder Has Been Arranged.” I remember going, but I cannot tell you whom they were arranging to murder.

Post life had returned somewhat to normal by that time, even though nationwide food, gasoline, alcoholic beverages, and other

rationing programs were in the planning stages. Early in the spring of 1942, contrary to persistent rumors that pervaded the ranks of the alumni, VMI announced plans to continue as scheduled its 1942 sports program. They not only played the 1942 program, but the '43, '44, and '45 programs—with disastrous results, but they played. The Institute had few cadets. Most of the people who played varsity football and basketball during the war were Rats and sophomores.

On Thursday afternoon, May 7, 1942, in the midst of a general government inspection—that is, when the Army sent people to see if we were up to snuff—General Kilbourne addressed the Corps on "Manila Bay and its Fortifications." General Kilbourne had been significantly involved in the design and construction of the defenses on Corregidor Island, and I recall that he got up on the stage at VMI with a big blackboard and said, "I am going to tell you all that I know, because it may come in handy some day." He sketched the Malinta Tunnel and told what he thought happened on Corregidor and the Bataan Peninsula.

General Kilbourne had been in the Chief of War Plans of the War Department and was privileged to know all of America's war secrets. He reported that it was planned that Corregidor could hold out for six months. If it held out six months, it had served its purpose, but it fell in five, surrendering on May 6. He was very high in his praise for the support and loyalty of the Filipino soldiers. He concluded his remarks—and this from a man then over seventy—with: "Let me go back. I'd like to lead the expedition myself." He received a thunderous ovation because of that statement and because of his presentation.

Upon recommendation of the Academic Board and approval of the Board of Visitors, the Class of 1942 graduated on New Market Day (May 15), one month ahead of schedule. Of the 127 men in the class, 91 percent went to active duty and the others, with one exception, into medical or dental school. There was no Baccalaureate sermon at that graduation; it was a very stripped-down affair. In previous years, Finals activities had taken five to six days; this was a one-day affair.

There were eight military colleges in the United States at that time: Clemson, North Georgia College, Norwich University, Pennsylvania Military College, Texas A&M, The Citadel, VMI, and VPI. These eight colleges began to get some favors from the War Department. They were allocated certain materials and continued to have uniforms, although they would not allow coatees to be made. The military colleges were promised that when their students went into the service, the Army would replace those students with soldiers. These soldiers formed a

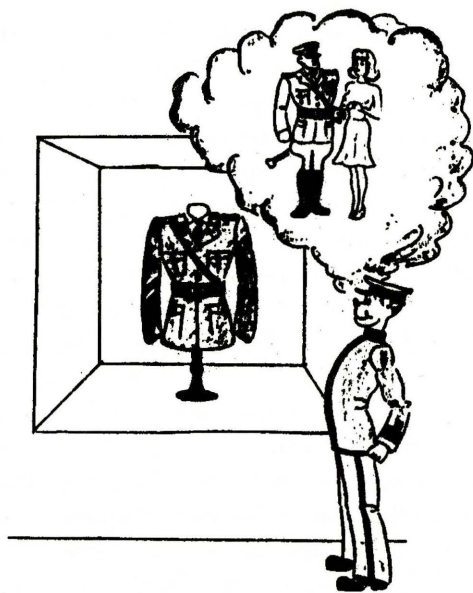
cadre known as the ASTP—the Army Specialized Training Program—which was a revised version of the World War I Student Army Training Corps. At the military colleges and some others schools, ASTP units went into operation. Colonel John Mann, a member of the Class of '21 and a VMI engineering professor, told me that during World War I, Student Army Training Corps (SATC) was sometimes labeled “Safe At The College.” Similarly, during World War II, the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) became “All Safe Tonight Pa.”

The Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) continued; cadets were paid twenty-five cents per day. Those who were in the top two classes got \$18.25 for being in the Army ROTC, and that continued through 1943. In 1943, the Commandant, John M. Fray, '08, a very ruddy-faced, bluff, big-hearted, field artillery colonel, announced the end of First Class capes. The cape was a delightful garment that looked something like Batman's cape but bigger. You could be completely undressed under the cape, but as long as you kept it closed in the front, it made no difference. You could go anywhere within Barracks, although not uptown. Capes and coatees disappeared, and in time, cadets were wearing Army caps, but not right away.

In the fall of 1942, which began the next full session after the first year of the war, the Institute had an enrollment of 761—the highest in its history to that time—although the capacity was about 680. This meant pretty tight quarters. It was unusual how many youngsters decided they would like to come to VMI. General Kilbourne jocosely noted in one of his reports to the alumni that “some old-timers would be pleased to know that there are some cadets, because of the overcrowding, using pitcher, basin, tin dipper and slop bucket.” Writing that last sentence surely must have made General Kilbourne chuckle. As the general's daughter, Betty, can tell you, he was well known as “Chuckling Charlie.” When he would dismiss a cadet—perhaps for some major infraction of regulations such as running the block, going to Southern Seminary and staying there too long—he did it with good humor. He would say: “Aha, Mr. Morgan, you are no longer a cadet.” He was very pleasant about that.

The war in North Africa captured the cadets' attention. They found out, since it had been reported in the press, that Lieutenant A. Rudd Spencer '41, killed in action in Italy in 1943, had commanded the artillery battery that allegedly fired the first American artillery shots at the Germans. That's what we were told.

Lieutenant Walter Goodman, a civil engineer in the Class of 1932, amputated the leg of one of the men in his tank platoon after he had



"IT WON'T BE LONG NOW!"

been injured. He did it with a knife given to him by a full-blooded Sioux Indian who was in his company. Lieutenant Goodman put the man on his shoulder and ran with him across the brow of a hill until he was out of range, while the Germans, it is reported, in respect for his heroism, withheld fire.

There were a number of other people who captured our attention. One of them was Edgar Marshall Dickinson, who had been a cadet for only six and a half months in the Class of 1930. He had been a captain in the Bolivian Army and then served as a corporal in the French Foreign Legion. He served in the North Africa campaign and was reported killed, I think, four times. But all that the VMI *Register of Former Cadets* says is that Dickinson was "reported missing in action in North Africa since 30 October 1942" during the British El Alamein offensive.

In the 1942-43 session, bayonet combat drills were introduced into ROTC instruction for all cadets. We received instruction in street fighting, obstacle courses, and rifle marksmanship. Chuckling Charlie was getting us ready to go into the services. A truck company came from the Camp Lee, Virginia, Quartermaster Center, so we then had the opportunity to become experienced in day and night convoy movements.

The Chinese Army faced a severe rifle shortage at this time, so VMI's 1903 Springfield rifles were crated up and, we understood, sent to China. Some of the replacement rifles were less than satisfactory.

Visitors were extremely rare because of the low gasoline ration available. We did have two that I remember. The first was a public lecture by the commandant of the Military Academy of Brazil. He came on November 20, 1942, and we had a garrison review. He addressed the Corps of Cadets and I could understand what he said. The man who followed him was a former Italian diplomat and a captain who was in a leadership position with the anti-Fascists. He addressed the Corps in March 1943.

One of our publications was *The Turnout*, a humor magazine that included many jokes and jibes pointed at the members of the faculty and at cadets. (The three illustrations in this piece are from that publication.) One issue had a First in the Class of '42 named Spessard say to a Brother Rat named Aston: "I hear that the Institute authorities are trying to stop necking." Aston replied, "Is that so? First thing you know, they'll be trying to make the cadets stop it, too."

Then there was Sergeant William Zollman, an Army enlisted man who was an ROTC instructor. A Rat asked him this question: "Sir, is it true the harder I pull on the trigger, the further the bullet will go?" Then there was a great big man in the Class of 1942 by the name of Stan Harold, who was on a first date with a girl from Hollins College. *The Turnout* alleged that Stan said, "What am I, a man or a mouse?" And the Hollins girl responded, "You must be a mouse because you sure frighten me."

Major Herbert Dillard was an assistant professor of English, and he had a student, William F. Byers, who later became a professor of English at the Institute. Major Dillard said, according to *The Turnout*, "Mr. Byers, are you smoking back there in the back of the room?" Byers is reported to have answered, "No sir, that's just the fog I'm in."

The story that I like best is a true one. Those of you who were ever cadets or lived in Lexington before 1965 may have known Colonel B. D. Mayo, who graduated in the Class of 1908, became a VMI faculty member in 1910, and stayed for forty-five years. A good instructor, Colonel Mayo would say, "Now watch the blackboard while I run through it one more time."

Acquiring alcohol was something of a problem in those days, and the following vignette was recorded in *The Turnout*: "Neighboring colleges please take note. Virginia has her whiskey, W&L her rye, VPI for ginning, but for coffee VMI." Don't believe that for one minute.

There were some fairly famous people at Washington and Lee and VMI during the war. Washington and Lee had Red Skelton, David Wayne, Lanny Ross, Bill Foster, Melvin Douglas, Ben Hogan (the golfer), and Price Daniels (who later became governor of Texas). VMI also had its special military programs. The Army lived up to its promises and sent about 2,150 enlisted men to VMI to study engineering. VMI had among its group Mel Brooks, the comedian and movie producer; Gore Vidal, a playwright and author; and then, for one twelve-week period, a man by the name of Warren H. Phillips, who has just stepped down as chairman and chief executive officer of the *Wall Street Journal*.

Before the war, one of the nicest things VMI had for us city boys was horses. The Army maintained over one hundred horses at VMI from 1919 through 1947; sixty of them were in the cavalry squadron and forty drew the artillery pieces and the caisson. We saw combat teams or had garrison reviews with mounted soldiers in the infantry battalions. There had been a successful appeal by Colonel William Couper to build a stable for these horses. He said, "A college education should be tempered with horse sense." But in the spring of 1943, there was a change in artillery instruction under Lieutenant Colonel Edward Roxbury, who headed the artillery ROTC, sort of pushing the horses out. The Army sent some 6 x 6 (2½-ton) trucks to pull the artillery pieces.

Only a small group graduated in the spring of 1943 at VMI. Among them were sixteen pre-meds. They had gone to summer school before, and every one of that group went to medical school and was awarded an M.D. or a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree. Those sixteen graduated before the regular Class of 1943 did in late May. After that graduation, the bottom dropped out of the Corps. One day there were 560 cadets, most of whom had volunteered for the Army; but in June 1943, only sixty-nine old cadets came back, and they were foreigners, under age eighteen, 4F, or among the sixteen pre-med students. So VMI began its 104th year with a very small Corps of Cadets, and it began to dwindle further to the point where if the war had lasted much longer there would not have been any Corps of Cadets.

VMI is so hidebound, it could never change its program. The Army ASTP program consisted of twelve-week cycles, four per year with a week between cycles. But even though there were few cadets, VMI would not go from its semester system of sixteen-weeks to the twelve-week quarter the ASTP cadets had. This created havoc for the professors and the graduations never coincided.



Finals Parade, 1944

But social life did not dim. There were a reasonable number of hops, and the usual parties in barrack rooms from time to time, with alcohol involved. Picnics at and hayrides to Goshen Pass were held in the late spring, summer, and early fall months. There were many attractive young ladies who resided in Lexington, not a few of them daughters of Washington and Lee faculty and staff, and they provided attractive companionship. There were so few old cadets in the Corps that almost everybody was a commissioned or noncommissioned officer. The Corps' normal six cadet companies were reduced to two—A and B—and ASTP cadets, depending upon their numbers, had either two or four companies.

The Dean of the Faculty was Stuart W. Anderson, a very tall, spare man, with absolutely no humor and very little spark of emotion. He was a very dry lecturer, and his main pastime, it seemed to me, was standing at a pencil sharpener and sharpening from a full pencil to a nub, humming to himself all the time. I'm sure he did his job wonderfully well, but he had absolutely no personal relations with other people.

The first wartime commandant was Henry B. Holmes, Jr., known as "H", of the Class of 1916. He was born in East Lexington. He left VMI on December 23, 1941, became a general officer, and later lived in Richmond until he died. The second wartime commandant was Colonel John M. Fray '08, who served from January 1942 until September 1946. He loved all animals, and as a field artilleryman, he loved horses. His favorite pet was a big German Shepherd named Zip. As the cadets would march up and down the hill, that dog was always in the formation, nipping at heels. Colonel Fray made certain that he was at break-

fast every morning with the cadets, and he sat at the regimental staff (or First Captain's) table. I have always thought that the only reason he did this was that after the cadets left, he got up all the meat scraps for Zip.

The tide had really turned in World War II between the Battle of El Alamein, October 23, 1942, and the beginning of the Stalingrad battle in November, and the end of the Guadalcanal Campaign on February 9, 1943—a period of about one hundred days. After that the tide slowly turned towards the Allies, and there was victory after victory. With the detonation of two atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in early August 1945, the few VMI cadets still there knew that World War II was ending.

On the morning after the surrender of Japan was announced, on August 15, General Kilbourne made a stirring address to the Corps of Cadets. He had been on the staff of the War College, and he said that while he was on the staff, he had spent a few hours each day on the study of Japan—her history, her people, her governmental systems, and her ambitions—and this led him to conclude that Japan would go to war at some future date, attempting to dominate Asia, and in a series of lectures before the end of the war, he predicted that Japan would be defeated and reduced to a second-class military and economic power. Today it is not even a second-class military power.

Thus, after more than three years and eight months full of hard-fought days, the guns of the United States armed forces and her allies were stilled. There had been 3,800 VMI alumni in that conflict, and cadets really gave thanks on that particular day. There was one hell of a party in Lexington the night that the surrender was announced. To quote Mr. Paxton again: "The announcement of the end of the war with Japan was made known to those residents of Lexington who did not have their radios turned on at 7:00 Tuesday evening. By long, steady sounding of the fire siren, automobile horns sounded to the noise, crowds appeared in the main street, members of the fire department drove their trucks all over town with the bells clanging. The initial excitement was shortlived, but crowds remained on the streets for several hours after they announced it. Incredulity was the prevailing spirit and overwhelming thanksgiving seemed to keep people from going completely wild." I went to a party that night in the Robert E. Lee Hotel that went completely wild. My friends, who went with me, would not admit to it today.

Probably the most serious problem facing VMI was finding faculty. It had over seven hundred cadets and forty-seven full-time professors: a ratio of about fourteen or fifteen to one. Today, they have just about the

same ratio with thirteen hundred cadets with ninety-four full-time faculty. Faculty who had been teaching one subject for thirty years quickly had to change horses in the middle of the stream, teaching something else to the engineering ASTP students and still keeping up with the VMI cadets.

VMI lost to the services more than half its faculty, which went from forty-seven to about twenty of the regular people. Not only did they have to bring in some new people, but faculty teaching assignments changed once the ASTP cadets arrived. For example, Brigadier General Stuart Anderson, who taught electrical engineering, was forced to teach mathematics. I don't know how Colonel Robert Bates ever did it, but he went from psychology to geography. "Wild Bill" Hundley "talked" about economics but didn't teach it. Colonel Samuel M. Millner, a fine man who normally taught French, taught mathematics. Hernando "Son" Read went from teaching English to physical training. Robert A. "Buzz" Marr, Jr., who had taught mathematics briefly after World War I and then taught civil engineering, was forced to go back to teaching mathematics. Carter Hanes, who had been teaching civil engineering, taught physics. And perhaps the biggest switch of all was by Colonel Stanton F. Blain, who went from teaching Spanish to physics.

The cadets were well fed during the war. Here is the per capita cadet consumption of food in the Mess Hall, the Officers Mess, and by visiting athletic teams (a semester lasted sixteen weeks, so this was the average consumption of a cadet over a thirty-two-week period): 3/4 pound of bacon a week; one-half pound of chicken a week; about 1 3/4 pounds of frankfurters a week; almost a pound of ham a week; calves liver (but the cadets swore it was beef liver), very little; two pounds of beef a week; sausage link and country style sausage, 22 pounds in 32 weeks; turkey, very little except at Christmas and Thanksgiving; fish (referred to by the cadets as "sewer trout"), very little; flour per cadet .62 barrels.

Evert Ravenhorst, the baker at VMI, had been brought up in the German tradition of baking—that is, pastries and bread—so we had hot rolls and biscuits every day. He also made all of the desserts—apple pies, peach pies, etc.—and I can assert from personal knowledge that cadets prayed almost daily that nothing would ever happen to Mr. Evert Ravenhorst.

The food statistics credit each cadet with a dozen eggs a week, although some of that went into baking. Over the course of the school year, cadets had fourteen pounds of coffee, cocoa, and tea, about a half pound a week. They were also eating two pounds of sugar a week. Dry

cereal amounted to twelve pounds for the year. I could not find any reference to butter. If you look at the ham, beef, etc., you can see that the cholesterol count must have been pretty high in those days.

Fortunately, VMI was reasonable as far as price was concerned. Here is the daily cost of a VMI education based on stated board fees and tuition. The Institute charged the Army for each ASTP enlisted soldier \$3.11 a day between 1943 and 1945. The cost for a First Class cadet, if he were from Virginia, \$2.92 a day. In 1992, every First Class cadet from Virginia paid \$35.00 per day; non-Virginia cadets paid \$60.00. A non-Virginia cadet Rat between 1943 and 1945 was getting his full education for less than \$5.00 a day; today it costs \$62.00. If you compare the ratio between Virginia and out-of-state cadets today with the ratio between Virginia and ASTP cadets during the war, you see that the Army was getting a bargain price for its ASTP cadets.

The number of traditional cadets at VMI just about faded away to nothing. In the 1941-42 session that started before Pearl Harbor, they started with 726 cadets, lost 41 during the year, and ended with 685. We began the 1942-43 year with 761 but lost 200, especially Rats called to the services. By May 1943, when the Class of '43 graduated, there were 561 cadets on the roll. The next month only 69 old cadets came back for the 1943-44 year and only 199 new cadets arrived; everybody else went into services. By the time Japan surrendered, there were only 105 cadets. If this trend had continued for a few more years, there would not have been any cadets.

In the period from May 1943 until about March 1944, VMI had twelve hundred "regular" and ROTC cadets. Regular cadets were those people who had been in the service but who were selected to study engineering and were assigned to VMI. The ROTC cadets were those in the Class of 1944 who had finished some ROTC and went on to take their basic training, and came back to wait to go to Officer Candidate School. After the June 6, 1944, Normandy invasion, the Army stopped its regular and ROTC program and had a program of ERC [Enlisted Reserve Corps] cadets—people who had no military service. ERC cadets had seventeen-year-olds who had volunteered to go into the Army, so the Army gave them a uniform and sent them here to VMI and gave them their education.

As for VMI's alumni, according to Colonel Couper, as of May 1945: 21 in various Allied armed forces; 3,074 in the U.S. Army and Army Air Forces; 2 in the Coast and Geodetic Survey (people who were armed who helped with the planning and the mapping of invasion beaches);

230 in the Marine Corps; 5 in the Merchant Marine; 450 in the Navy, which is a surprising number since VMI had only Army ROTC. A total of 3,800 served, and 169 were either killed in action or died in the service. Twenty-two were missing in action, thirty-one were prisoners of war, and nine were liberated; so of those 3,800, between five and six percent were casualties. One out of every sixty-two alumni (including George C. Marshall, who was the head of the Army and Army Air Forces, and the most important member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) served as a general officer, a tribute to a very small college.

How Rockbridge County's Roads Got Their Names

Winifred Hadsel



ROCKBRIDGE County was established in 1777, and as one of the Virginia counties crossed by the Great Wagon Road between Philadelphia and the South, it grew rapidly and developed an extensive network of roads that covered the county well before the Civil War.

Yet it was not until the 1990s that the county gave official names to any of its roads, and it did so then only because it decided to adopt the 911 emergency system, which required that every dwelling and business have a specific street and number address in order to help the police, fire, and rescue squads locate sites quickly. The county's 369 state-maintained roads were accordingly given official names in 1992, and the approximately 800 private lanes, which had two or more buildings on them, were added in 1998. The 911 system became fully operational in the county on October 14, 1998.

One result of the public-road-naming is that it is possible for the first time in the history of the county to have a map with names on the roads.

Winifred Hadsel is a past president and a current trustee of the Rockbridge Historical Society. Her paper was presented as a slide lecture at the Society's program held at the George C. Marshall Library auditorium on the evening of April 26, 1993. The talk was given several months before the publication by the Society of her *Roads of Rockbridge County*. A revised edition that included the approximately eight hundred "lanes," private roads with two or more inhabited buildings, named between 1993 and 1998, was published in December 1998.

The first such map for use by the general public has been made by Larry Bland, the Rockbridge Historical Society's editor, and printed along with a dictionary elucidating the road names, *The Roads of Rockbridge*. The Bland map is based on the huge stack of detailed surveys the county hired a professional cartographic company to make, using both aerial photography and ground checks of all the public roads. Each of these surveys has been fed into the computer base that will serve 911's central dispatcher, as well as the various fire departments, police, and rescue squads. Under the 911 system, anyone dialing that number will be identified and located automatically.

Bland has taken the bulky surveys and put them into a convenient form that can be easily used at home or in a car. Thanks to this handy map, it will no longer be necessary for members of the public to rely on the old type of directions for getting around the county that involved references to familiar landmarks, such as distinctive trees or the color of a gate or a cluster of mailboxes.



A brief historical survey of the county's maps shows how important a change the adoption of the 911 road names has brought about. The first map of the county, published in 1859 by Major Gilham of the Virginia Military Institute and a group of eight cadets, carried not a single name on any of the scores of roads it showed running through all parts of the county.¹ Yet Gilham and the cadets named mountains, rivers and creeks, iron furnaces and forges, settlements, and the short stretch of railroad that then existed in the northwestern corner of the county. They even managed to squeeze in the names of most of the scores of mills and churches they located and, as a rule, they added an identifying initial to

1. No information about the making of the Gilham map has been found in the VMI archives. This lack of any field book or other records such as Gilham presumably kept while working on the map, along with the absence of any surveys the cadets must have made, may possibly be explained by the ransacking and burning of the VMI barracks, where Gilham's office was located, during U.S. General David Hunter's raid on Lexington, June 11–14, 1864. This theory is suggested by the discovery that Gilham's work book (kept while he was in charge of maintenance at VMI during the 1850s) is now in the National Archives (Navy and Old Army unit). Gilham's record book was turned into the Engineer Bureau from the files of Lieut. John R. Meigs, Chief Engineer of the Department of West Virginia. Meigs had been with Hunter in Lexington and present at the burning of the Barracks.

a farmer’s surname, alongside the dot they used to locate his house. But all roads, to repeat, were left unnamed.²

The second map of the county was made by Confederate engineers in 1863, in the course of the remarkable map-making effort General Robert E. Lee began when he took command of the Army of Northern Virginia in June 1862. Known as the Gilmer map, this survey is far more complex and informative than the Gilham effort and makes the latter seem by comparison a mere outline of a map.³ But thorough though it was, the Gilmer map omitted names on all the roads, except for a few major ones (the two turnpikes and the Ridge Road) that would clearly be of military importance if the war spread to Rockbridge County. All others were left unnamed.

The third map, by John Carmichael in 1883, was a private venture intended to sell well at a time when increasing attention was being given to mineral wealth in the county.⁴ With the help of Professor John L. Campbell, a geologist at Washington and Lee University, Carmichael based his work on the Gilham map, using the same format and the same lithographer.⁵ However, Carmichael updated names of residents, added

2. Copies of the Gilham map of 1859 are rare. In Lexington original copies are at the VMI Museum, which produced a smaller-sized reproduction in 1989, and the Stonewall Jackson House Museum. There are no copies at the Library of Congress, the Virginia State Library, or the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia. Two topographical engineers, working for the U.S. Army during the Civil War, made maps of Rockbridge County that were based chiefly on Gilham’s map. These copies are now in the National Archives.

3. The Jeremy Francis Gilmer collection of Confederate Engineers Maps, including a map of Rockbridge County, is in the archives of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia. A good photographic copy of Rockbridge County has been given to the Rockbridge Historical Society by the Virginia Historical Society and is in the Society’s collection in Special Collections, Leyburn Library, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia.

4. A copy of the Carmichael map is in the collection of the Rockbridge Historical Society. The society reproduced it in a slightly smaller format in 1997, chiefly because of genealogists’ interest in the names of property owners shown on the map.

5. Jedediah (“Jed”) Hotchkiss, famed as “the mapmaker for Stonewall Jackson,” felt that Carmichael relied far too heavily on the Gilham map, which he dismissed as “merely an outline of the wonderfully varied county it delineated,” and failed to incorporate the water courses and mountain ranges of the county. On his map, Carmichael claimed that he had used surveys by Hotchkiss as one of his sources, but Hotchkiss insisted that he saw nothing on the map to substantiate this claim. *The Virginias* 2 (1884): 21.

some physical features, and noted new settlements and railroad lines. Like Gilham, Carmichael named none of the roads he showed.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, the U.S. Post Office sent maps to its Rockbridge post offices that had become part of the Rural Free Delivery System established by Congress in 1896. On each of these maps the route or routes fanning out from the post office concerned were indicated by arrows running along the appropriate roads. In this way the U.S. Post Office maps succeeded in indicating postal routes without referring to any road names.⁶

Then there was a new development in the map-making of Rockbridge County in 1932, when the State of Virginia's Department of Highways issued its first map of the county and used numbers to identify all the roads.⁷ Two of these were federal highways, U.S. 11 and U.S. 60, and a few were Forest Service roads. A half dozen roads were shown as state-maintained highways, each being a number the state had assigned when, under the Byrd Road Act of 1932, the state began to take over county roads that met certain minimum standards. At the time this first state highways map was made, Rockbridge County was divesting itself of its road maintenance responsibilities as quickly as it could, but it still had the great majority of county roads under its care. These remaining county roads were numbered in a third set of numbers, which the county had devised as a means of identifying the roads that were awaiting absorption into the state system. Within a few years this process of turning over county roads to the state was completed, and all Rockbridge public roads (except the federally numbered interstate highways) were duly included in the state's numbered system. By memorizing the numbers of at least the major roads and by using the simplified versions of the state's map that realtors and other companies distributed, it was possible for people to make their way around the county.

The state's numbering system always presented difficulties, however. The numbers were not in sequential order, and many of the numbered roads were intermittent. Nevertheless, the numbers became at least reasonably familiar to most people, and in the period of transition to the use of 911 road names, many residents still use the numbers along

6. For example, the U.S. Post Office map supplied to the post office at Glasgow, Virginia. One copy is in the private map collection of D. E. Brady, Jr., Glasgow, Virginia.

7. Department of Transportation, Commonwealth of Virginia, Map of Rockbridge County, June 1, 1932, RHS collection, W&L.

with the names. Since the numbers will continue to be used by the state in keeping its records on road maintenance, they will remain on the roads along with the new 911 names.



Why were road names so conspicuously absent on Rockbridge maps from 1859 until the adoption of the 911 system? It was clearly not because there were no road names in popular use. On the contrary, all long-time residents recall that they used names for the most traveled roads, and they had no difficulty in having these names recognized by other residents.

Deed books also show that property lines were occasionally identified by orally used road names, as well as by the stones and trees that were usually relied on until late in the nineteenth century. For example, a deed of 1897 for a lot sold for a school is said to be “situated on the Old Boat Yard road.” This road left Lexington at what is now Houston Street and made its way over the Poplar Hill area to the mouth of Buffalo Creek, where bateaux were built for river shipping during the long period before the James River and Kanawha Canal reached that point in 1850. After bateaux were replaced by canal boats, built elsewhere, the road gradually ceased to be used except at its Lexington end, and slowly stopped being called “Boat Yard Road.” It came to be known by the name of a folk hero who had been born on the Lexington end of the road, “Big Foot” Wallace, famed for fighting on the Texas frontier and killing a powerful Indian chief named “Big Foot.” In fact, Wallace Road became such a widely recognized road that when it became necessary to replace it in the 911 system, because it conflicted with Wallace Street in Lexington, there was a great outcry on the part of the residents. When a return to “Old Boat Yard Road” was suggested, the proposal met with an outright refusal. Some declared they had “never heard of that name,” while others rejected it because they thought it gave the incorrect impression that it was located near a river. The compromise finally adopted was the colorless new name, Old Farm Road.

Many other instances of changes that took place in the traditional names can be cited. In the case of roads named for farming families, such shifts were particularly common and took place about every second generation.

The clear conclusion is that road names handed down in the oral tradition changed fairly often and must, therefore, have been considered too undependable to use in identifying roads on a map. It was only when road names were made official that they could be confidently regarded as permanent. By fixing road names, the 911 system made it possible for the first time to include names on the roads.

The first step toward adoption of the 911 system was made by the Rockbridge County Fire-fighters Association in early 1987. The firemen took this initiative not because any specific disaster had occurred due to a vaguely defined location, but because of a general concern lest the influx of new residents, combined with increasing difficulty in finding fire-fighters who knew their district intimately, lead to a tragedy in the future. They had had, they said, many calls from people who found it hard, particularly in a frightening situation, to give clear instructions for finding their houses. The firemen were also aware that about forty Virginia localities either had adopted or were in the process of adopting the 911 system, and they thought it was reasonable to ask the County Board of Supervisors to look into the appropriateness of 911 for this county.

In August 1987, the supervisors decided to study what 911 would involve, and appointed a committee to consult the sheriff's office and representatives of the local fire departments and rescue squads. All the emergency services were favorable, but the supervisors felt that many aspects of 911, including its financing and numerous technical aspects, had to be considered prior to proceeding further.

Under a state law designed to encourage localities to adopt 911, the supervisors dealt with the problem of financing by voting that, as of July 1, 1988, a \$1.25 surcharge would be placed on all county telephones to offset costs of setting up the new emergency system. Then the question of how to handle the many technical problems involved in installing 911 was answered by hiring a 911 consulting firm, Hambric & Associates of Alabama, on May 1, 1990.

In his early presentations, the consultant advised the supervisors that all of the county's roads, public and private (identified as having two or more buildings), should be named to make sure that the emergency services would be able to find their way as quickly as possible to all locations where help might be needed. This idea of complete coverage, however, was unacceptable to the supervisors at that time. They pointed out that they had no idea how many private roads there were, particularly because so many houses had been built on new lanes in recent

years. They decided, therefore, that they would have only the state-maintained public roads named. They hoped that if it turned out that private lanes had to be named as well, it might somehow prove possible to identify them in relation to the named public roads.

The supervisors then turned to the problem of how to name the county’s state roads. In neighboring Alleghany County, two staff members in the county administrator’s office had been assigned to this task. In Augusta County, one man with a good knowledge of local history had been hired to do the road-naming. But among the Rockbridge supervisors, there was a consensus that the residents themselves should choose the names, insofar as possible.

The 911 consultant left the question of how to set up a democratic road-naming procedure with the supervisors. He did, however, lay down strict ground rules for choosing names. At the May 1, 1990, meeting with the supervisors—a meeting that was well attended by the public—he declared that 911 road names should be currently familiar. “Easy road name recognition,” he insisted, was the objective to keep in mind. Then he added, “Only if an old and familiar name is not found, or if a name repeats an already existing one, should a new name be proposed, and then it should refer to some familiar feature of the road.”

By the summer of 1990, the supervisors had decided to have the necessary road-naming done by volunteers from each of their districts. By the autumn, these volunteers—who were to be paid only transportation expenses—had been selected. They soon began to drive the roads and canvas the residents to find out what old names remained in popular use. Only if they found that several names existed for one road, or if a road had no name, did they intend to propose a new name that seemed suitable because it referred to some easily recognized feature of the road. They were also intent on securing general agreement on the names among the residents concerned.

Since the volunteers played a key role in 911 road-naming, it is worth making the point that all of them knew their districts very well, in many cases since childhood. They all had jobs—or had had jobs, for about twenty of the thirty-five were retired—that involved them in their communities. The group included nine farmers, nine school teachers and principals, one retired VMI professor, three county employees (Forestry Department, Registrar’s office, County Agent’s office), two retired State Highway engineers, two realtors, two owners of small businesses, a local historian, and two genealogists. A fire chief and several

rescue squad volunteers were also among them. Most important, all of the volunteers were willing to drive the roads, talk to the local residents, and telephone those they were unable to find at home.

When the volunteers began their road surveys, they expected to complete their work within a few months, since they believed that most of the road-naming would involve identifying traditional names that had been in existence all along, or in resurrecting names that had been half-forgotten during the years after the state took over the county roads and assigned numbers to them. Up to a point, the volunteers were right. When they first set to work, they found a large number of road names that residents said they had “always” known and used. Among the easily recalled traditional names with well-known explanations were these:

Alone Mill Road, named by John Letcher a few years before he became the Civil War Governor of Virginia. He was asked to suggest a name for the new post office being set up in the settlement that had grown up around the mill, and he proposed the title of a popular novel, *Alone*. This book, by a Virginia author, was about a Rockbridge County girl’s tribulations as an orphan and her success in making a happy marriage.

Decatur Road, named for the engineer of the first train of the Valley Railroad (later the B&O) that stopped, in 1883, to take on water at the watering tank built here.

Poorhouse Road, named for the five-hundred-acre Timber Ridge farm which the county maintained for its poor and homeless from c. 1830 until 1927.

Sack Road, so-called because farmers often dropped a sack of flour as they drove their wagons up this steep road on their way from Zollman’s mill on Buffalo Creek.

Jacobs Ladder, another steep road that was named by one who knew it well: the Rev. William White Ruff, first minister of the Poplar Hill Presbyterian Church. Ruff used this winding road to and from the church and his home near what is now South Lee Highway.

Possum Hollow, part of an old road from Lexington to Natural Bridge, and identified for the past 150 years by the proximity of its northern stretch to the little tributary of Buffalo Creek known as Possum Creek.

Muddy Lane, named because it was usually a mire during the years before hard surfacing. Although most of the road has long since been paved, its old name continues to be recognized throughout the county.

Jordan Road, the remnant of the road built by Samuel F. Jordan for the wagons that carried charcoal from the braziers in the Blue Ridge Mountains to his Buena Vista iron-smelting furnace.

Mt. Atlas Road, a road that is probably older than Rockbridge County. A 1764 deed refers to Mt. Atlas, and it is reasonable to believe that a rough country road passed over the hill called “Mt. Atlas” to the big bend in North River, the highest navigable point for bateaux heading for the James River and beyond.

Mackeys Lane, named for John Mackey, thought to have been the first settler in what later became Rockbridge County. He arrived in the Timber Ridge area in 1727, and various descendants of his have lived on Mackeys Lane near Fairfield ever since.

The volunteers’ original impression that old road names were just waiting to be written down proved wrong. As the committees drove the roads and talked to residents, they found that the process of road-naming was by no means a simple matter of uncovering traditional names. There were many repetitions among the old names. The ubiquitous cedar trees of Rockbridge County had given their names to creeks, hills, hollows, runs, drives, springs, and fords, and then roads had been named for these features. The presence of the cedar trees, moreover, convinced some residents that their roads had permanently named themselves, and they strongly resisted changes. For example, in the far southeastern corner of the county beyond the James River, a group of residents insisted that their Cedar Bottom Road had “always been called that.” They pointed to a patch of cedar trees and dense underbrush and claimed it was recognized by “people as far away as Brownsburg” when they came looking for the nearby Tolley Cemetery.

“Rocky” had also been used repeatedly in identifying views, streams, and coves, and then roads. “Mountain Views” also abounded, as did “Riversides” and “Dogwood” roads, lanes, crescents, and circles. Eliminating these repetitions required considerable patience and time on the part of the volunteers, for each old road name seemed to be precisely right to its residents.



Sam Houston Memorial

Erected near Houston's birthplace by Texas admirers in 1985.

SAM HOUSTON WAY



Worthington Faulkner

General manager of the Lees Carpet plant in Glasgow.

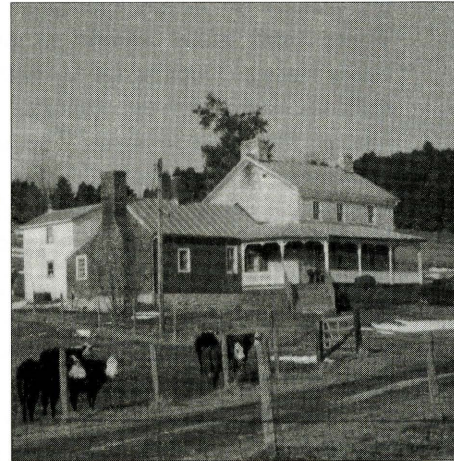
WERT FAULKNER HIGHWAY



I. R. Alphin and Family

Alphin was a dairy farmer who enjoyed fox-hunting and square-dancing. The family lived in the square brick house known since 1975 as The Art Farm. (Photo by Miley. Courtesy of W&L.)

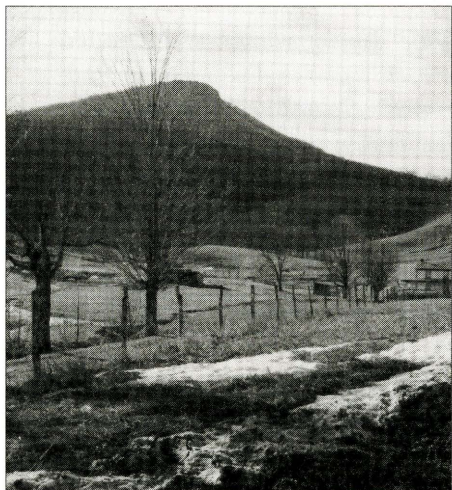
ALPHIN LANE



The Finley House

Old home place of the Finleys and their Brooke relatives from c. 1780 to the 1930s.

FINLEY ROAD



Jump Mountain

First stretch of an important road to the West during the 1820s and 1830s. (Courtesy Nathan Beck.)

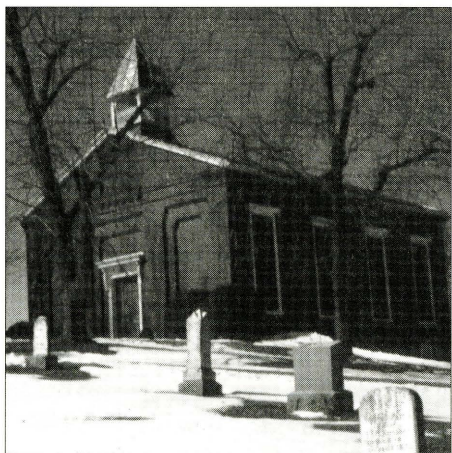
JUMP MT. ROAD



Kennedy-Wade Mill

Mid-18th-century mill, before its restoration in the early 1990s by Buffalo Springs Herb Farm.

KENNEDY WADES MILL LOOP



Oxford Presbyterian Church

Three buildings have stood on this site: log (1763), stone (1811), and brick (1847).

OXFORD LANE



Bird Forest School

Children at the Bird Forest School, built in 1892 and used until 1935. (Courtesy Janet Cummings.)

BIRD FOREST ROAD

Seasonal problems, such as icy roads during winter and flooded roads in spring, also interfered with the road surveys. Difficulty in finding residents at home was another major problem and made it necessary for the volunteers to make many time-consuming follow-ups. The biggest single problem for the volunteers, however, was the uncertainty they encountered about the old names. Some roads had one name at one end and a second name at the other. In a few cases there were two or even three traditional names recalled for the same road. There were also a few people who had never liked their old road names and were resolved to see them changed under 911.

To a far greater extent than had been anticipated, the volunteers also met residents who claimed that "there has never been any name" for their roads. One of the most important of these unnamed roads was a long stretch of what had been "Back Road" in the nineteenth century, because it ran roughly parallel to the Great Road in the northern half of the county. But Back Road had fallen out of use, and the road-naming committee for the South River District successfully proposed Borden Grant Trail as a new name. "Trail," they felt, was appropriate because of the wandering character of the road, and "Borden Grant" because the important 1735 royal grant of nearly a hundred thousand acres to Benjamin Borden, which had opened up the Rockbridge area to private development, had included land crossed by this road.

Another invention that proved satisfactory was "Miss Maries Road." Finding that SR 713 had never had a traditional name, the volunteers proposed naming it in honor of Marie Campbell (1893–1983), who had been born on this road and had then become a well-liked Fairfield school teacher for fifty years. The residents found the new name appropriate and agreed to it.

Still another new name for a previously unnamed road was one proposed by a group of residents in a remote area of Buffalo District. In their search for an interesting name for the road leading to their small settlement, this group studied a 1973 map of Rockbridge County that a Roanoke historian had made and given to the Rockbridge Regional Library. On this map, "Snakefoot" appeared as the name of a small region in the southwestern part of the county, and the group decided to adopt that name for SR 611. The Buffalo road-naming committee agreed, and recent research has turned up an 1873 letter showing that "Snakefoot" was used at that date to refer to the very area now crossed by Snakefoot Lane.

All the road-naming by volunteers and residents was reasonably complete by the spring of 1992, and the county administrator's office published the list of names in the *Lexington News-Gazette* of August 15, 1992.⁸ During the public meeting held soon afterwards, about twenty objections were made, and all were settled fairly quickly, with one exception: Skunk Hollow Road.

There was no doubt that Skunk Hollow Road was a traditional name and was still in common use. "Pole Cat Hollow," moreover, had made its way to the U.S. Geological Survey maps of the 1960s and 1970s. Residents in favor of keeping Skunk Hollow Road argued that it was a true country name and known by everyone in the county. Those who opposed declared they would find it humiliating to live on a road formally named for what they regarded as an offensive animal. Although this controversy remained unsettled, the supervisors adopted all the other names. As of September 15, 1992, Rockbridge County had official names for 368 of its 369 public roads.

The dispute about the 369th name continued during the autumn of 1992 and produced diverting articles in the local press. At last Supervisor Kenneth Moore, who died shortly before the end of the year, called on the residents along the mile and a half long road and good-naturedly suggested a compromise. "Why not," he asked, "adopt 'Flower Lane,' since it would refer to the nice little skunk in Disney's film *Bambi*?" Moore's idea, and his patience in presenting it, went down well with the residents, and SR 744 became "Flower Lane." Thus the two-year long effort to name the county's state-maintained roads came to an end by the close of 1992.

Regardless of whether the 911 names were old ones already in use or resurrected after considerable effort, or were new ones made up by residents and road-naming volunteers, virtually all of them referred to familiar features seen, or remembered as having been seen, on their roads.

What are the most frequent reasons for the county's names? Connections with people easily top the list. More than 120 of the 369 roads are named for individuals—and all of them are closely connected with

8. "The Weekender," *Lexington News Gazette*, August 15, 1992. The list ran under a large headline: "Pull Out and Keep This Section for Future Reference!" Notice of a public meeting, to be held on August 25 in the courtroom of the county administrative offices, was included in the story. All interested citizens of Rockbridge County were requested to be present "to express their views on the proposed names."

the county. About twenty of them are historical figures or early settlers. These include Lee Highway, named for Robert E. Lee, who lived the last five years of his life in Lexington; and Lincoln Road, named for a family of one of Abraham Lincoln's Virginia cousins. Others include early explorers such as Stephen Arnold, John Peter Salling, and John Poteet. Several refer to settlers who arrived before Rockbridge County came into existence: John Walker of Walker's Creek, who crossed the Blue Ridge in 1733; and John Hays of Hays Creek Road, who arrived two years later.

There are two Rockbridge inventors: Robert McCormick, famed for his reaper, and James W. A. Gibbs, who invented a chain-stitch sewing machine; and two folk heroes: one from the nineteenth century, Sam Houston; and one contemporary figure, Rick Mast, nationally known stockcar racing star.

About one hundred names referring to people mention farmers and farm families. Some of these families have left behind old home places that provide well-known reference points. Finley Road continues to recall a prosperous farm family, even though no member of the family has lived on the road since the 1930s, largely because its old home place is a prominent landmark. Similarly, Kygers Hill Road refers to David Kyger, a mid-nineteenth-century farmer who is recalled primarily because his house still stands alongside the road. Old home places, some modest and some grand and recognized as Virginia Landmarks, also explain the presence among the names of Cupps Hill Road, McCurdy Lane, Herring Hall Road, Tom Alphin Road, and Sterrett Road.

The names also refer to poor farmers, Hops Hill Road; blacksmiths, Hartsook Road; store-keepers, Lloyd Tolley Road; millers, Beatty Hollow; and blue-collar workers, Ollie Knick Road; and to one twentieth-century industrial manager, Wert Faulkner Highway. They also refer to miscellaneous rural residents other than farmers who have in one way or other become identified with their road. Claytor Lane, Edgars Way, Fanny Barger Road, and Higgins Hollow are some of these.

The next largest source of names is geography. In a county that lies between the Blue Ridge on the east and the Alleghanies on the west, more than twenty names include mountain, ridge, hill, gap, hollow, and cove—the two latter features tend to be used interchangeably in Rockbridge County. In the case of House Mountain, the county's single most prominent physical feature, there are three names referring to it: Big Hill Road, House Mt. Road, and Saddle Ridge Road. Jump Mountain, another easily identified physical feature, has a road with a particularly

interesting history. Jump Mt. Road, along with the historic Great Road itself and Bluegrass Trail, running into Botetourt County and thence to Kentucky, was an important route to the west in the 1820s and 1830s. Crowds of people, with their wagons and livestock, followed the trail, which began at what is now Jump Mt. Road, followed the path alongside the mountain to a gap in Little North Mountain, and descended to the Little Calfpasture River, where there was a choice of ways leading west.

Water is another geographical feature that figures prominently in the road names. Maury River Road follows the county’s principal river for a considerable distance in the northern half of the county, and South River and the James have important roads named for them. Creeks, springs, and runs are other much-used sources. One of these creeks, with the decidedly unimaginative name of Cedar Creek, was responsible for cutting through a limestone ridge, over the course of millennia, and creating the Natural Bridge.

Settlements also give their names to roads. Although the county’s population, excluding the two cities of Lexington and Buena Vista, is only 18,350,⁹ it is by no means all rural and includes two incorporated towns and a dozen settlements. Hence, there are roads named for such destinations as Glasgow, Brownsburg, Bustleburg, Collierstown, Murat, Tinkerville, and Waterloo. Even a few old settlements that have completely disappeared are still named in a few roads: Stuartsburg Road, Denmark Way, and Oak Bank Drive.

Landmark buildings also lend their names to a number of the roads. Twelve old mills are mentioned in the names, but only one has been restored and put into working order as of 1993. This is the Kennedy-Wade Mill near Brownsburg, which is now producing high quality whole wheat flour. Two of the other mills still stand, Red Mill near Natural Bridge and Furr’s Mill northwest of Lexington. All the other nine have disappeared, and only their sites can be seen from the roads named for them. Two of the most colorfully named are Alone Mill Road and Bunker Hill Mill Road.

Surprisingly, only a dozen of the approximately 120 churches now active in the county appear in road names. The reason is that the large number of twentieth-century churches, which include many Pentecostal and gospel sects, have been built on roads that already had traditional names. It is, therefore, the older mainline churches, all built before the twentieth century, that appear in the names. Half of these churches are

9. Figure from the 1990 U.S. Census.

Presbyterian; the other half include Associate Reformed Presbyterian (ARP), Baptist, Lutheran, and Methodist churches.

Old schoolhouses also make a sentimental appearance in no fewer than ten road names, even though not a single one of these one-room frame buildings remains. Two of them, however, have been extensively remodeled into houses. Some of these old schools had particularly attractive names, now preserved in Bird Forest Road, Walnut Flat Road, Forest Grove Road, and Unexpected Road. The latter is named for Unexpected School, which was built when the Buffalo School District was greatly surprised to find a local farmer willing to sell a corner of land that made it possible to replace and relocate a dilapidated school in a particularly narrow hollow.

Although most of the names recall the rural past, a few refer to the iron industry that flourished from the late eighteenth century until after the Civil War. The prominent ruins of the important smelting furnace built in 1848, near the mouth of the South River, and named in honor of a battle in the Mexican War, gives its name to Old Buena Vista Road. Many residents, however, overlook the old landmark and think of this road as taking its name from the fact that it links East Lexington and the City of Buena Vista, which did not come into existence until 1890. Forge Road makes another reference to the iron industry, albeit only the site remains of the forge that stood by Buffalo Creek from 1811 until 1867.

Another half dozen industries, some old, some contemporary, are referred to. Lone Jack Road leads to a working quarry. Wert Faulkner Memorial Highway honors the general manager of the Lees Carpet plant, who is credited with helping develop this firm at Glasgow into one of the largest employers in the county.

Earlier forms of transportation are another source of 911 names. Millers Landing Lane, located where Buffalo Creek flows into the Maury River, was successively a boatyard for making and loading batteaux, a canal landing, and a railroad stop. Four pre-Civil War turnpikes also appear in the names, as do a half dozen old railroad stations: Bells Valley, Raphine, Midvale, Riverside, and Greenlee; and two watering stops for steam engines, Decatur and Tank Hollow.

Only one road seems to be named for an actual happening, a full hundred years after the event had taken place. This is Hunter Hill Road, laid out in 1955, when an East Lexington landowner needed an approach road to the subdivision he had laid out, and used "Hunter Hill," because some of U.S. General David Hunter's artillery was positioned on this hill and fired on the VMI barracks on June 11, 1864. The

precise location of the Federal battery is believed to have been north of the midpoint of Hunter Hill Road, near the top of the hill.

Now that the 911 road names have been posted, you will find that most residents, if asked how their roads got their names, will give one of the following answers: “It has always been called that” (examples are New Providence Road and Bethany Road, both named for old churches); “We were told we had to come up with something, and we decided we liked this name and thought it appropriate” (Pleasant Valley Road and Robin Lane); “Someone had seen it on an old survey or heard of it a long time ago, and we liked it” (Smokey Row Run and Sack Road); or, “Beats me. The first time I ever heard about that name was when I saw it on the sign” (Whiteside Road, Hollow Rock Road, and others named by the volunteers to avoid repetitions).

Regardless of how the 911 road names were arrived at, they clearly meet the test of “easy road name recognition.” Although a few are puzzling and most of them have interesting explanations, often of historical interest,¹⁰ most are immediately recognized because they refer to specific persons, places or things that are seen, or remembered as having been seen, on the roads. It can be said that the county’s 911 public road names are labels on the land and succinct guides to the history of the county.

10. It was because so many of the road names made historical references that the Rockbridge Historical Society published *Roads of Rockbridge*, in which the meanings of the names are explained on the basis of research in both oral and printed sources. The latter include records in the courthouse (deeds and surveys, tax records, wills, and birth and marriage records), books, newspapers, and the society’s collection of documents and photographs in Special Collections at the W&L Library.

The book has received recognition from two organizations: (1) The Ruth Anderson McCulloch Branch of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA), which gave its 1993 Award for Significant Contributions to the Historic Character of Virginia to Winifred Hadsel and cited her “distinctive approach to local historical research,” and (2) The American Association for State and Local History, which presented the Rockbridge Historical Society with a Commendation for its book, *Roads of Rockbridge*, in 1994.

25 Rockbridge Specials

Of the 369 public road names adopted by the County Supervisors, on September 15, 1992, the following 25 include some that are probably found only in Rockbridge County.

Alone Mill Road
Beans River Bottom
Beth Horon Drive
Bird Forest Road
Blue Heaven
Borden Grant Trail
Bunker Hill Mill Road
Bustleburg Road
Denmark Way
Dug Row
Flat Woods Road
Hackens Road
Hunter Hill Road
Jacobs Ladder
Lone Jack Road
Mt. Atlas Road
Muddy Lane
Murat Road
Sack Road
Smokey Row Road
Shake Rag Road
Snakefoot Lane
Toad Run
Unexpected Road
Whistle Creek

TR

Taylor Sanders



EIGHTEEN ninety-three was a red-letter year for anyone interested in the American frontier. Chicago prepared for the World's Fair, celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's voyage that opened the era European settlement. That same year a report on the 1890 Census decreed that the United States was so populously settled that, henceforth, the frontier no longer counted in Census Reports. The saga of "westward movement" was officially over, closing a great historical moment that had begun in 1492.

The "wild west" had already come to a symbolic end. On October 5, 1892, the notorious Dalton Gang tried to rob two banks at once in Coffeyville, Kansas. The townsfolk, more than matching them in arms and determination, blasted most of the gang from the saddle in a tragicomic fiasco. A new era of telegraphs, railroads, telephones, automobiles, and Pinkertons (to say nothing of law-and-order-loving vigilantes) soon tamed the once wild west. The era of the outlaws and badmen was ending. The Dalton and James boys, Belle Starr, Johnny Ringo, and the Younger brothers were all related, with pioneer roots in the Shenandoah Valley's German community. They were soon replaced by a lesser breed of mere criminals.

Such was not lost on a young American historian, Frederick Jackson Turner, who addressed a crowd of "puzzled academics" at the American Historical Association meeting on a sultry day in July 1893 at Chicago's World's Fair on the topic: "The Significance of the Frontier in American

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History.” The hypothesis became one of the most influential theories used by later historians to explain American history. The frontier experience, he believed, was the most important element that determined why Americans are as we are. Although later generations have probed, tested, and at times decimated key elements of the Turner hypothesis, it remains a major theme in American myth and ideology, those shared values and doctrines that most Americans seem to accept as self-evident truths.

For Turner the “true point of view” in American history is not the “Atlantic coast; it is the great West.” The frontier allowed American society to experience “perennial rebirth.” As families left their old homes and moved west, the primitive conditions they found forced them to strip down culturally; they formed new social and economic units that were simple, self-sufficient, and ruggedly individualistic. Civilization atomized and had to be forged anew in each new community that found itself on the westward crest of the settlement wave. This process gave rise to the “fluidity” in American life that was born “on the outer edge of the wave—the meeting point between savagery and civilization.” The experience separated our forbearers from their European roots and transformed immigrants rapidly into Americans. They shed old cultural baggage and a New Man emerged; hard working, self-sufficient, egalitarian, optimistic, inventive, innovative, nationalistic, materialistic, and hyper-creative in his political, social, and religious institutions.

The frontier not only presented Americans with a hope for economic riches and upward mobility, but it gave them and their children access to positions of authority that would have been denied them in the more settled “East”—a concept that changed with each generation from the seventeenth to the late nineteenth century. Scornful of attachments to place and wastefully pioneering, we became essentially a nation of wanderers. But most importantly, Turner believed, “frontier individualism . . . from the very beginning promoted democracy.” At the core of the frontier hypothesis then is “individualism, democracy, and nationalism.”

Needless to say, this explanation for Americanism has been attacked and defended over the last century with vigor. Charles and Mary Beard, just fifty years ago, found that Turner “ignored” families and communities and traced “the secret of American uniqueness to the stoutest of all alleged individualists—the man on the frontier, as if there had been no women or families, communities or books or schools or churches there.”

Today Turner’s hypothesis remains a useful tool to help scholars understand the American character, although I imagine most students of American culture would include it as only one (rather crooked) arrow of explanation in their quiver of theories, rather than as the key weapon to

attack the problem of what makes us the way we are. During the 1890s, however, Turner's arrow hit a responsive target. During the so-called Patriotic Nineties, as South and North began the emotional recovery from the Civil War, many American leaders and scholars strove to define what an American is and where he came from. No one was more involved in this than TR.

Turner hit a bullseye with Theodore Roosevelt (my first TR), who was desperately working to finish off his epic saga of the American Frontier—the *Winning of the West*. Originally planned for five volumes, taking the story from Daniel Boone's passage into Kentucky in 1774 down to the heroic defense of the Alamo in the mid-1830s, sadly, he never got the story much past Lewis and Clark. In 1893, TR was feverishly finishing volumes three and four. In 1889, still in the first stage of the project, he called it “emphatically a labor of love to write of the great deeds of the border people.” Several years later, he was still working. His publisher—Putnam's—gave him an office in their shop, where he could race off a manuscript page and send it downstairs to the composing room. He needed the money. What had begun as a labor of love had become a time-consuming monster.

Volume one was an international best seller. TR's research was staggering. He mined piles of pioneer documents and letters, muster rolls and memoirs that had been untouched by previous scholars. He pored over the published government documents from the Revolutionary period. The amount of work he tackled was so huge that one of his few critics complained that no one man could have accomplished all that; so he must have employed an army of ghost writers and researchers. He had not.

The first two volumes, taking the story down to 1784 and completed by 1891, had a deep influence on Turner and became a seminal source for his hypothesis. Many of Turner's ideas found their first light in TR's vigorous, muscular, lively prose. It's an adventure yarn in which we can hear Kentucky rifles crack, feel the freeze of a mountain winter, listen to distant war drums throb, pray with frontier families huddled beside a warm but lonely hearth, or panic with green militiamen experiencing their first terrifying battle.

TR never minces words. He was not particularly fond of the British. He judges perfidious Albion “guilty of treachery to both friend and foe,” following policies that were “incompatible with the good of mankind in general, and of the English-speaking race in particular, for they strove to prop up savagery and to bar the westward march of the settler-folk whose destiny it was to make ready the continent for civilization.” He believed that French colonists were “unacquainted with what Americans called liberty.” And he viewed Thomas Jefferson, perhaps the one



Theodore Roosevelt pretending to be a frontiersman, 1884.

American president who came close to matching renaissance man or polymath, as a “timid but well-meaning statesman . . . the least warlike of presidents” who overloved the French with “servile devotion.”

Although, for example, he was willing to place a fair share of blame on the settlers for their crimes against the Indians, he concluded that the struggle between Red Man and White simply was not avoidable. He vents his spleen on the “sentimental historians” who place all the onus on the settlers—historians who (in TR’s words) are both “shallow” and “untruthful.” Though white folk had many sins to answer for, they cannot be “severely blamed for trespassing upon what was called the indians land; for let the sentimentalists say what they will, the man who puts

the soil to use must of right dispossess the man who does not, or the world will come to a standstill.” For TR, the settler who drove Indians from the land is owed a debt by mankind; otherwise, “this great continent” might have become a “game preserve for squalid savages.”

TR was a longstanding student of Manifest Destiny, the American doctrine that today we would call “ethnic cleansing.” He had defined it in his study of Senator Thomas Hart Benton, published in 1886. The idea “reduced to its simplest terms, was: that it was our manifest destiny to swallow up the land of all adjoining nations who were too weak to withstand us; a theory that forthwith obtained immense popularity among all statesmen of easy international morality,” he wrote.

The Winning of the West is one of the books that every school boy ought to read. Modern school girls might be miffed at how little space he gives women, although he cites examples of female heroism on the frontier, and he has some interesting things to say about institutions like the “Widows Court,” where frontier leaders parceled out women after their husbands died. On the whole, the ladies sink into the background in his colorful vignettes. For example, he tells the story of a perilous voyage down the Ohio by a party of four men and two unmarried girls. It was ca. 1790, and Indians lurking ashore had forced two wretched white captives to act as decoys to entrap trusting boatmen. With pitiful cries they claimed to have escaped the savages’ grasp and urged passing boatmen to pick them up. Three of the men wanted to push on, but “the fourth, a reckless fellow named Flynn, and the two girls who were coarse, foolish, good-natured frontier women of the lower sort, took pity upon the seeming fugitives, and insisted on taking them aboard.” The scow pushed shoreward and the trap sprung. One girl and one man were shot and killed, the others captured as the Indians boarded the boat and got drunk on the whiskey.

TR often selected his vignettes to show the contrasts of frontier life, one of his major themes. He used this story to tell the fates of the prisoners, each of whom fell into the hands of a different Indian party. One surviving male ran the gauntlet and later escaped and found his way home through the wilderness. A French trader ransomed the other man near Sandusky. The surviving girl was “outraged” and then bound to the stake. But an Indian took pity on her and eventually sent her home. “Flynn, the cause of the trouble, fell to the Cherokees, who took him to the Miami town and burned him alive, with dreadful torment.” TR uses this mixture of reversed fortune, courage, fecklessness, and kindness, to say nothing of cruelty, horror, passion, and luck to distill the rich variety of frontier experience. More than anything else, TR believed the frontier was a land of sharp contrasts. This is a crucial theme for him. Even more at the core of the book is his focus on common Americans and

their families. TR notes that the diplomats, important Indian fighters, and leading “wilderness wanderers,” were well enough known. But he believed that even more “memorable . . . are the lives and deeds of the settler folk for whom they fought and toiled; for the feats of the leaders were rendered possible only by the lusty and vigorous growth of the young commonwealths built up by a throng of westward pushing pioneers. The raw, strenuous, eager social life of these early dwellers on the western waters” form the crux of his story.

Taken as a whole, the four volumes tell a striking tale, and it was well-received by most academics who praised it for its prose, its scope, and the questions it raised to open up new areas of research. For people interested in Rockbridge county history, TR’s work is crucial. More than any frontier popularizer, TR placed the Scotch-Irish at center stage. Part of TR’s legacy is the modern recognition of Scotch-Irish contributions on the expanding frontier. Although appreciating that the frontiersmen were of “mixed race,” TR noted that the “dominant strain in their blood was that of the Presbyterian Irish—the Scotch-Irish as they are often called.” He goes on to note that Roundhead New Englanders and Cavalier Southerners, as well as other ethnic groups, had long been awarded “full credit . . . for their leadership in our history.” Yet, he continues, “it is doubtful if we have wholly realized the importance of the part played by that stern and virile people, the Irish whose preachers taught the creed of Knox and Calvin.”

It is probably hard for anyone who has ever lived in Rockbridge County to believe that the Scotch-Irish have ever been underappreciated. But one hundred years ago, they largely were. Praises were sung to the Ulster Scots prior to TR. But the voices were muted and local, dealing with Presbyterian churches, or the Presbyterian colleges, or this Valley or western Pennsylvania. Only after TR’s book appeared, did Scotch-Irish mania really take off, and it was only several years after the first volume appeared, on the eve of the Patriotic Nineties with its flood of genealogical and patriotic societies, that the Scotch-Irish organized as the Scotch-Irish Society of America, and TR’s praise of the ethnic group became a chorus.

In part, TR reacted to an influential book published by a Harvard scholar in 1884. N. S. Shaler wrote *Kentucky: A Pioneer Commonwealth*, as part of the prestigious American Commonwealth Series. He maintained that Kentucky had been settled by Virginians of “nearly pure English blood . . . from districts that shared Virginia conditions.” He never mentions the Scotch-Irish. Note how Shaler describes the settlement of this region. He writes that after 1725, the “stream of new comers” (European settlers to Virginia) decreased:

There was only one notable immigration from abroad after this... date. This came with the remarkable exodus of Scotch after the Rebellion of 1745. A large part of this folk went to South Carolina, but Virginia received an immigration of several thousand of these wanderers, who took up land [in and] beyond the Blue Ridge, principally in Amherst, Augusta, and Rockbridge counties.

Here the historian gets nothing right. Shaler is totally wrong with his interpretation, his numbers, his dates, his ethnic group, and its motivation. And he was not alone. Other influential American history books maintained that Kentucky immigrants arrived primarily from South Carolina and Georgia. TR noted that Shaler and others displayed a “complete misapprehension not only of the feeding-grounds of the western emigration, but of the routes it followed, and of the conditions of the southern States.” All this helps explain the muddled state of American frontier scholarship in the early 1890s and why TR and Turner reacted so strongly to it. As part of his task, TR highlighted Scotch-Irish virtues and foibles and the important role they played beyond the Alleghanies. He gave rise to many of the clichés and adjectives traditionally ascribed to these people with their “hard-featured Presbyterian preacher, gloomy, earnest, and zealous, probably bigoted and narrow-minded, but nevertheless a great power for good in the community,” leading a flock that was already a mixed people, “bold,” “hardy,” “grim,” “harsh,” “adventuresome,” “freedom loving,” and the like. He explored their ethnic and geographic origins, the routes they took, and the vibrant culture they created on the crest of the wave. And he correctly stated that they “settled always in groups of several families each, all banded together for mutual protection” against “red foes” who were “strong and terrible, cunning in council, dreadful in battle, merciless beyond belief in victory.” A major theme, one picked up by James Leyburn and other more recent scholars on the Scotch-Irish, was how rapidly they shed their European roots and became Americans. TR, then, largely set a flawed record straight.

In volume one, he also set out another key theme of his work: the rapidity of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century settlement surge. He expressed it well:

It had taken [the settlers] over a century and a half to spread from the Atlantic to the Alleghanies. In the next three quarters of a century they spread from the Atlantic to the Pacific. . . . The fathers followed Boon or fought at King’s Mountain; the sons marched south with Jackson to overcome the Creeks and beat back the British; the grandsons died at the Alamo or charged to victory at San Jacinto.

Families out at Timber Ridge (my second TR) often followed Teddy Roosevelt’s pattern, and they were known to express wonder at it. Governor James McDowell, a descendant of the original Timber Ridge patri-

arch, used to ride out here by his old family church. He always raised his hat and often broke into tears when he passed by the great grey rocks nearby and exclaimed, "What hath God wrought from the time my ancestor was murdered by the savages till I became the governor of Virginia." Born in 1796, he was educated at Princeton. After serving in the Virginia legislature, he was a reforming Victorian governor during the early 1840s, pushing for education and gradual emancipation in the capitol and Sunday Schools and Temperance at home. He succeeded his brother-in-law to the U.S. Congress and died in 1851. The family had arrived on Timber Ridge in 1737; Indians killed the ancestor, John MacDowell, in 1743. His son served in the legislature, led local men in a vain effort to rescue the Kerr's Creek captives, and erected one of the Valley's first Liberty Poles. He commanded a regiment at the battle of Guilford Courthouse (March 15, 1781) and spawned the distinguished Kentucky McDowells. His nephew, James McDowell, senior, wedded the daughter of a battle of King's Mountain commander and their son was a colonel in the War of 1812. The colonel's son became governor James, the emotional passerby at Timber Ridge, one of whose daughters married a congressman, and the other married Senator Thomas H. Benton, Roosevelt's champion of Manifest Destiny. The Bentons' daughter married General John C. Frémont, who helped bring California into the union. Indeed, although TR never mentions it, his saga, in part, tells of family lines spreading out from Timber Ridge to forge the core of a frontier elite.

Today, we usually think of Timber Ridge limited to its churches, Sam Houston's birthplace, and a highway interchange where it rises like a great aircraft carrier to the north of Lexington. In the 1730s, the Ridge had another meaning. Heavily timbered and well watered, the ridge started some three miles to the south of this church and ran all the way northward to the Rockbridge-Augusta line. Thus, in the 1730s, Timber Ridge included much of the Valley Floor. The MacDowell graveyard marked its center of gravity.

This community was a major launching pad for the western settlement, and families, either connected to its churches or its schools, or its original land grants, played a disproportionate share in Roosevelt's winning of the West. Its families—the Browns, McDowells, Lyles, Houstons, Alexanders, Trimbles, Stuarts, Brekinridges, Pickens, Lewises, Doaks, Christians, Campbells, Prestons, etc.—became fathers and mothers of a large number of remarkable leaders who fill TR's pages. They became governors, senators, supreme court justices, diplomats, scholars, physicians, and college founders. One, Sam Houston, even founded his own "country." I have often wondered if any comparable rural region in American history produced so many distinguished leaders during the early republic.

Leadership was not necessarily in their genes, although the families intermarried and married into other distinguished families. It is a good test for the Turner hypothesis, and shows that (unlike what we would expect to find if Turner were correct) eastern elites tended to reduplicate themselves by cousinhoods as they moved westward. I think the key was education, a factor that TR may not have stressed sufficiently.

A frontier school teacher played a crucial role in the life of Sam Houston, whose birthday (March 2, 1793) we celebrated this year. Born within a stone's throw of this church, he exemplifies Theodore Roosevelt's themes of how the winning of the west sparked innovation, democracy, and nationalism. Houston also makes one of my points: like so many notable sons of Timber Ridge, he made his mark in the west, far away from Rockbridge County. Finally, I hesitate to add, Houston shows how so many of us historians still fail to get it right. One recent biographer of Houston, John Hoyt Williams, places Rockbridge County in the heart of Virginia's "rugged Piedmont."

Had TR finished his series as planned, with the settlement of Texas, Houston would have been a major star. TR saw Houston as one of the great figures of America's heroic age; a man who shared his own outlook on life: aggressive, expansive, imperialistic, physical, intrusive, and nationalistic. TR had already written on Houston in the 1880s, at a time when American historians (in the days before Frederick Jackson Turner) still believed that to make our history respectable, scholars had to place it within the context of the European rather than the American experience. TR compared Houston and his Texans with the Viking freebooters who had wrested England from the Anglo-Saxons during her heroic or barbaric age. TR said that Texans had all the "faults and virtues" of such an age: "restless, brave, eager for adventure, excitement, and plunder; they were warlike, resolute, and enterprising; they had all the marks of a young and hardy race, flushed with the pride of strength and self confidence." In those days when the west was still wild, Houston and his fellow freebooters also displayed "boastfulness, ignorance, and cruelty, and were utterly careless of the rights of others, looking upon the possessions of all weaker races as simply their natural prey."

It is interesting to note that Roosevelt here sounds like staid government officials in Philadelphia (or even Thomas Jefferson) commenting on the recent "Irish," whom we call Scotch Irish, arrivals during the five decades prior to the American Revolution. TR's Houston was an archetype for his people: "the great Texas hero," he wrote, "drank hard and fought hard;" he was "mighty in battle and crafty in council, with his reckless, boastful courage and his thirst for change and risks of all kind, his propensity for private brawling and his queerly blended impulses for good and evil."

Houston always regretted that he lacked a classical education. He had had little schooling when the family pulled up stakes for Tennessee in 1806. When he entered a frontier school, he had already begun to read his Homer in Pope's translation. Thirsting to read it in the original, he begged his school master to teach him Greek. The teacher refused. At that point, Houston ran off to live with the Indians to begin his career that culminated in adventures, wars, politics, and the founding of Texas. As they say, the rest is history.

One can only imagine what Houston's life might have been like had his teacher been James Priestly, another son of Timber Ridge. He was the first tutor at Liberty Hall Academy when it consisted of a collection of nice New England-style cottages scattered about this church's yard after 1776. Priestly's wife was even more remarkable. Just two hundred years ago, in the year that Houston was born, Mrs. Priestly had come to Rockbridge County, bringing a nursing baby and small toddler, to study Greek at Liberty Hall. For the next few moments, I would like to focus on the Priestlys and on frontier education, an area that TR did not stress enough.

By 1793, perhaps only one in six hundred American males had any college training. An educated man, arriving at a frontier outpost, was marked as a leader; and usually selected as one. Full-blown academies like Liberty Hall, a school nurtured by this congregation, were nurseries for public service. A bit of advanced schooling, college training, or legal apprenticeship gave newcomers tremendous advantages. TR praises the Scotch-Irish school teacher, who, as he wrote, was "everywhere a feature of early western society. . . . In the hard life of the frontier, 'borderers' . . . lost much of their religion, and they had but scant opportunity to give their children the schooling in which they believed; but what few meeting-houses and school-houses there were on the border" belonged to the Scotch-Irish. Yet, even today, the individuals who ran those schools remain obscure.

During the 1740s on Timber Ridge, as later in Kentucky, the first schools appeared with the first settlers. The schools, like the early churches, functioned to help tame a wild land and to keep the citizens civilized. Early Timber Ridge leaders were Calvinists with a realistic, if pessimistic, view of human nature. They feared the pull of the wild that turned many of their numbers into what they called "Indian families," sabbath breakers, squatters, and ruffians, who stayed away from church, refused to school their children, and reverted to primordial ways. In pre-Revolutionary Rockbridge County, the so-called "godly folk" (churchgoers) were a distinct minority, and by 1785, many of the churchgoers saw themselves as a besieged one at that. By 1785, civilization with its fancy ways, gambling, horseracing, dancing schools, and balls among a

prosperous rising gentry, together with Deism and radical French ideas among the unchurched young, had become the major threat to a godly life. Stern local elders seemed to be fighting a losing battle against what they called “dissipation,” “riotous behavior,” indeed, “frolicking” and bad habits in all their forms.

By the opening of TR’s history, ca. 1770 (as he well knew), the frontier phase had passed well beyond Timber Ridge, economically, socially, emotionally, and demographically (the census bureau defined “frontier” as “the margin of that settlement which has a density of two or more” settlers “to the square mile.”) But, as Turner pointed out, the term was “elastic.” However you define frontier, by 1776 this part of the “west” had been won.

Three things symbolize a changed texture of life. First, the Houston house nearby, when it became the first neighborhood structure to have glazed windows; secondly, the disintegration of the old Houston family fort near the church. One final sign of social advancement was the decision (a controversial one, I might add) to start a college-level program, based on the Princeton curriculum, on this church’s grounds in May, 1776.

During the Revolution, when many of the local boys were in the army, Liberty Hall’s rector, a recent Princeton graduate, William Graham, moved to his farm near the wheatfield that later became the town of Lexington. The actual teaching here fell into the hands of a young schoolmaster named James Priestly (his name is spelled Pressley on early records). Although contemporaries referred to him as “celebrated,” he remains obscure today. In fact, his genius was so great, that many believed he hailed from England and was the son or brother of the noted English natural philosopher Joseph Priestly.

He was born on the Ridge around 1760, just before the last Indian raids swept the region. The son of poor but pious farmers, he gained Reverend Graham’s attention when he memorized the catechism in a flash and when he repeated sermons almost verbatim. He also had genius for classical languages. Soon Greek and Latin became “vernacular” to him. Graham took him into his family for training, and during the difficult days of the Revolution he became the first tutor at Liberty Hall. Later his pupils, men like Archibald Alexander, the founder of Princeton Theological Seminary, praised him as the man who first handed them their Latin grammar book, the celebrated *Ruddiman’s Rudiments*. Alexander believed that Priestly was a genius, a person who had less in common with other men than any other person he had ever met. Alexander often wondered how close Priestly’s genius, with his “retentive memory and a vivid imagination,” bordered on sheer “insanity.” Alexander said his zeal for education was unsurpassed, as was his rare ability to inspire his stu-

dents with the same. When he taught, he never referred to a text, and entertained his charges by “spouting, with astonishing vehemence, the orations of Demosthenes in Greek.” Unlike Graham, who packed a mean rod, young Priestly was no disciplinarian; the boys adored him. Although orthodox, he did hold one odd notion (more Mormon than Presbyterian) that he pressed on his students. He believed salvation “would depend very much upon the degree of intellectual culture bestowed on the mind, as well as on its moral improvement.” He inspired students to love learning; and the major college “text” used, manuscript copies of Wither-
spoon’s Princeton lectures, urged them to public service with a zeal for “Liberty, the nurse of Riches, Literature and Heroism.”

His pupils and schoolmates, in addition to the scholarly Alexander, included doctors, preachers, diplomats, founders of several colleges, legislators in the Kentucky, Georgia, and Virginia assemblies, Jefferson’s attorney general, U.S. senators, governors of Georgia and Tennessee, and judges, including at least one member of the Supreme Court, and other men of distinction. Not a bad record for an “Irish school teacher,” as TR would call him.

As a young man, Priestly was warm-hearted, imaginative, and enthusiastic. He loved to teach outdoors, particularly near gushing springs where he trained future preachers and orators to shout the torrent. His innovations apparently got him in trouble. During the fall of 1784, he wanted to take his students on a jaunt to Natural Bridge. He was not afraid of a frolic. The young teacher, who always thought Rockbridge Presbyterians were too rigid in their views, found himself called before the Timber Ridge session for a reprimand. When his old mentor, Reverend Graham, backed his elders, Priestly resigned in a huff; however, the college awarded him one of its first BA’s in 1785. (In 1802 he would still be on the books, owing the school one pound.) His pupil and successor as Liberty Hall tutor was Archibald Rowan, later governor of Tennessee.

Years later, when a Baltimore church issued a call to one of his former students, Priestly appeared before the session and warned the elders about hiring a man who had been reared under the harsh yoke of rigid Timber Ridge Presbyterianism. The preacher in question, who worshipped Priestly and recounts this story, also has praise for those strict Timber Ridge elders who were so fearful of “innocent amusements.” At a time when religion was at a low ebb in the neighborhood, these pious few visited the sick, supported the poor, prayed at the hearths of the unchurched, and kept religion alive among much “coldness” in the area. They were “dreaded by the wildest” among the locals and were simultaneously “reverenced,” “feared,” and “hated.”

Priestly’s career took him to Georgetown, Maryland, and Annapolis, where he ran schools. Among his many students who gained prominence

was the Maryland politician and writer, John Pendleton Kennedy. Another former student said that during the late 1780s, the law was seen as the quickest road to “preferment and emolument.” Priestly decided to follow many of his students into Kentucky to practice law and seek his fortune. The experiment failed when he sued a man for calling him a “mere pedant” and lost his shirt before a Kentucky jury of “Backwoodsmen.”

By November, 1788, he had moved to Bardstown, Kentucky, to teach at Salem Academy. His seminary was modeled on the Timber Ridge School, with stress on “Latin, Greek, and English . . . with the several arts and sciences commonly studied at academies and colleges in this country.” He only remained a few years, but he worked the old Priestly magic. Tradition has it that in a brief period he taught Ephraim McDowell, the famous surgeon, a native of Timber Ridge; Archibald Cameron, a distinguished Presbyterian preacher; John Allen, one of Kentucky’s top lawyers, sadly killed at the battle of River Raisin (January 22, 1813); and Ben Hardin, a distinguished lawyer, congressman, and noted frontier wit.

Others included Joseph H. Daviess, the first western lawyer to argue before the Supreme Court and one of America’s great orators of his day, who lost his life at the 1811 battle of Tippecanoe (but not before becoming known as the country’s first great frontier eccentric); and three U.S. Senators, John Pope, Governor John Rowan, and Felix Grundy, who was also U.S. attorney general. Five of his pupils had counties named for them. It was a remarkable record for only two years work.

Embroidered in legal controversy, he left Bardstown and headed back east. On the trail near Harrodsburg, he met a remarkable young woman, Sarah McBride. She was an orphaned member of the fighting McBride clan, one of the early pioneer families. Her father and an uncle had been killed at Blue Licks, the last battle of the Revolution. Her brother-in-law had been killed transporting horses between Kentucky and Virginia. Her mother was a Rockbridge woman, a member of the Lapsley family. Priestly and Sarah married in Kentucky in 1790. Priestly became guardian to her sister and small brothers, both of whom were later killed in frontier battles (against the Creeks and at the 1813 battle of the Thames in the War of 1812). Returning to Maryland, Priestly continued to teach. Like his old mentor, William Graham, he was interested in the education of young women. In fact, Graham opened up Liberty Hall lectures not only to local women of talent, but also to at least one former slave, John Chavis, who became North Carolina’s most distinguished black educator.

One of Graham’s female pupils was “Mrs. Priestly,” as the students called her. She arrived in Lexington, Virginia, around 1793 with a nursing baby and small toddler, while Archie Alexander was studying Theology. Her husband remained in Baltimore. Graham strove to teach her the classics and gloried in the experiment. Alexander often saw her at the

school, and wrote that she was plagued by the difficulty of taking care of her small children. In time she returned to her husband without mastering Greek and Latin; she “never got through pronouns.” (In other words, she worked her way through some two-thirds of Ruddiman’s grammar.)

Returning to Maryland, she was able to assist Priestly at Baltimore Academy, teaching geography, arithmetic, and English, and she later started a flourishing school for young females in the city, while rearing her five children. In 1800, along with Bishop Carrol, Priestly was a co-founder of the Maryland Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge. Never far removed from controversy, Priestly left Maryland after a dispute with the trustees over operations and with a “gentleman” who called “Dr.” Priestly a mere “school master.”

In 1808, he arrived in Nashville, apparently answering a call from an old pupil, Felix Grundy, to become President of Cumberland College, one of Vanderbilt’s academic ancestors. Alexander points out that Priestly never was a strong administrator. In Tennessee he was in theological disputes with local clergymen and political disputes with local leaders. But he was a remarkable teacher who demanded that his pupils read huge amounts of Greek and Latin. As with every great teacher, he kindled his own love of his subject in his charges.

Alexander stressed that throughout his life Priestly was dedicated to his principles, his schools, and his pupils. He called him a “Romantic” and noted that “he was indeed a very eccentric, though a very amiable man, and married a woman as eccentric as himself.” One student wrote home that he was very pleased with Dr. Priestly, but found the place lonesome, and food “extremely bad.” His Tennessee pupils included senators from that state, Ephraim Foster and John Bell; and congressmen Cave Johnson, Edward White (Louisiana.) and George Owens (Alabama.) William Graham’s son, later a noted physician, also studied under Priestly.

After Cumberland went broke, the Priestlys ran a farm (Montebello) and a successful girl’s school near Nashville. He paid some three thousand dollars in cash for the farm. He died in February 1821, on the eve of a planned voyage to Europe, where he hoped to give his daughter a complete and polished education. The Priestlys lost a son, the Liberty Hall toddler, at the battle of New Orleans.

Priestly’s career, which included the era covered in TR’s *Winning of the West*, opens with Indian raids at Kerrs Creek in Rockbridge, was touched by wars stretching from the Great Lakes to Louisiana, and concluded with foiled hopes for a voyage to Europe, where increasingly, children of local families were going to study. His career underscores the role played by individual teachers in polishing the frontier elite and how

rapidly that frontier was moving. Priestly's career lets me conclude with my third and final TR—Turner Revisited.

His critics note that Frederick Jackson Turner, and more particularly, his later champions, committed the sin of single causation and neglected other catalysts that defined U.S. history, including such things as the European heritage, slavery, religious revivals, the Revolution, class conflict, urbanization, and technological change. And like Turner's definition of the frontier itself, his critics found his theory too "elastic." After all, how much explanatory power could any hypothesis have that accounted for "nationalism and sectionalism, individualism and cooperation, materialism and idealism, innovation and conformity, coarseness and optimism," all at the same time?

Perhaps Teddy Roosevelt would have answered with his stress on the contrasting experiences found in his vignettes: "the marked and peculiar characteristics" possessed by the "western frontier folk" with whom Priestly worked: poverty and hardiness, ignorance, but with a thirst for education; hospitality with suspicion, a warlike but unmilitary spirit, individual liberty prized to so great a degree that it "weakened the very authorities whom they chose to act over them; lawlessness and respect for the law; rebelliousness with constitutional innovation, individualism in settlement patterns, marked by strong communal and family ties; and a host of other inconsistent and contradictory characteristics." Such marked "contrasts" were keys for Teddy Roosevelt in explaining the frontier, as in how the same neighborhood could produce geniuses as different as a Priestly and a Houston.

Priestly's pupils remembered him in old age as "grim," "gaunt," and "grizzled," replete with a great robe and skull cap, nodding over an ancient tome and flickering candle, yet always willing to help a youngster work out solutions to his problems; the essence of kindness and enthusiasm for learning . . . even past midnight." In his old age, Priestly was regarded as being man of "deep learning, laborious habits, great firmness, and of somewhat irascible and imperious temper"; his piety was seen as "scriptural, rational and unobtrusive," a Presbyterian surely but "no sectarian." Yet, we also know that as a young man he displayed amiability, flexibility, creativity, showmanship, exuberance, and kindness, a bent toward heterodoxy—a nontraditionalist with a burning love for the classics.

James and Sarah Priestly exemplify the social and geographic mobility one would expect on the frontier. His individualism verged toward the eccentric, some would say the insane. Willing to question authority himself, he demanded deference of others. Flexible in his approach to education, he seemed always willing to sacrifice his tenure and security

for his principles and his honor. As an arch individualist, he seems to have known how to create a sense of community and esprit d'corps in his schools. Mrs. Priestly displayed the patriotism, self-reliance, and courage that TR came to accept among frontier women. Her family paid a heavy price in blood over three generations.

The Priestlys were innovators in female education and their eccentricity bristled with nervous energy, intelligence, creativity, and a willingness to gamble. They were dreamy romantics, perhaps, but they also had a realistic vision of the future. Governing all this seems to have been a love for the classics and a talent for handling young people, and one imagines that the Priestlys combined a love of learning with a desire for gain and a hungering for status. Poor in his own youth, he created the training ground for the new elite (often members of a frontier cousinhood) while he rose to prominence through his intellect rather than his family connection. And it was probable that the American Revolution, as much as the frontier, gave Priestly and his pupils their chance. His students repaid the best way possible—by becoming leaders all along the expanding frontier.

Turner's critics say he hung too much of his theory on "real estate" and never paid enough attention on the frontier "state of mind." It would be fascinating to get into Priestly's mind: that exuberant, irascible, independent, creative, experimenting, and flexible, eccentric lover of the Classics, and then perhaps we could understand his genius and his magic. When it comes to forging all encompassing and explanatory theories, perhaps we should remember that Turner "brought to his students" the "fascinating reality" that "local history was human history."


Finally, Turner also believed that the frontier experience forged the American intellect. The frontier, Turner believed, gave a "largeness of design and an optimism to American thought." He describes it as

That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of the mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic, but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal, that buoyancy and exuberance that comes with freedom. These are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier.

Frederick Jackson Turner was painting a picture of what he reasoned to be the impact of the frontier experience on the settlers' minds. But his brush strokes could even be broadened or made even more "elastic." He might as well have been describing Theodore Roosevelt, or Sam Houston, or Dr. and Mrs. Priestly, or indeed, many others among America's future leaders who were nurtured in local schools and churches and learned to cherish liberty—and to use it—at places like Timber Ridge.

Away, I'm Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement

James C. Kelly

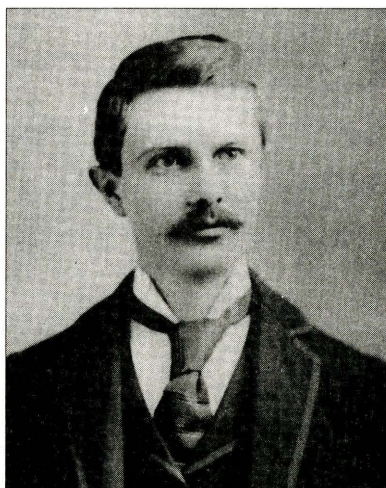
 O mark the centenary of the presentation of famous historian Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis," the Virginia Historical Society presented a major exhibition at its headquarters in Richmond (October 6, 1993–May 31, 1994) that was entitled, "Away, I'm Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement." The exhibition took as its starting point Turner's influential paper that challenged the then widely held idea that America's free institutions had originated in Europe and subsequently were exported to America. Turner argued that it was, rather, the availability of free land on the western frontiers and the opportunity it offered to throw off the shackles of European society that explained the rise of American democracy.

Although historians have since made many modifications in the "Frontier Thesis," Turner's attempt to show that American freedom was not an import but the home-grown product of the westward movement that has had tremendous influence on the way Americans see themselves, and the Virginia Historical Society decided to mount an exhibition that would take a new look at how the "Frontier Thesis" applied—or did not

James C. Kelly received his Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University. Assistant director for museums at the Virginia Historical Society, he was the speaker at the Rockbridge Historical Society's annual dinner meeting on January 24, 1994, at Lejeune Hall, VMI. Dr. Kelly presented a slide lecture describing the Virginia Historical Society's exhibition on Virginia and the Westward Movement. He, together with David Hackett Fischer of Brandeis University, organized this exhibit and wrote its catalog. A considerably condensed version of Dr. Kelly's slide presentation, along with excerpts from the catalog, appears here through the editorial efforts of Winifred Hadsel. All illustrations are from the catalog. The catalog was reissued as David Hackett-Fischer and James C. Kelly, *Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

apply—to Virginia’s experience. The exhibits included maps, letters, portraits and other works of art, together with a great many personal possessions of the hundreds of thousands of Virginians who moved across successive frontiers from the early 1600s until the Civil War.

The Virginia Historical Society’s exhibit was divided into three sections: the movement to Virginia, the movement within Virginia, and the movement beyond Virginia.



Frederick Jackson Turner

Movement to Virginia

The first settlement of English immigrants in Virginia (1607) clearly did not illustrate the “Turner Thesis.” Under the Virginia Company’s direction, the first settlers at Jamestown were subjected to arbitrary rule that the company insisted was necessary to survive the Indian attacks, diseases, and near-starvation. Most of the colonists were forced into gangs that worked in the fields, and brutal discipline prevailed. The lands of the adjacent Tidewater area, moreover, were quickly acquired by a few individuals. When Jamestown was on the frontier, in other words, it was not a free society in any sense.

After Virginia became a royal colony (1624) the strict hierarchical rule continued during the period of the Great Migration from England (mid-1600s). The key figure throughout this long period was Sir William Berkeley, the royal governor for nearly thirty years. Under Berkeley’s administration the colony was given a coherent social, economic, and political system that was in the hands of a landed elite. This elite prohibited religious dissent, rejected free schools and a free press, and depended on imported indentured servants for its work force. At least 75 percent of all the white people who came to Virginia in the colonial period were indentured servants.

The announcement by the U.S. Census Bureau in 1891 that it could no longer discern a frontier line prompted Turner, then a young instructor at the University of Wisconsin, to examine “The Significance of the Frontier on American History.” He presented his conclusions on July 12, 1893, at a special meeting of the American Historical Society in Chicago at the time of the Columbian Exposition celebrating the 400th anniversary of the European discovery of America.



Richard Lee’s Coat of Arms

The Lee family became the archetype of Governor Sir William Berkeley’s elite. The founder of the family in Virginia was Richard Lee (d. 1664), a younger son of an old Shropshire family. The Lees hung this wooden carving of Richard Lee’s arms above their front door, Cobbs Hall, Northumberland County, Virginia.

Governor Berkeley also made a special point of recruiting “distressed cavaliers” as immigrants to Virginia. These “cavaliers” belonged to families of aristocrats or gentry who felt, after the Puritans gained the upper hand in England during the mid-seventeenth century, that they had no satisfactory future in their home country. Once in Virginia, Governor Berkeley gave them large estates and high offices, and the group succeeded in ruling the colony for several generations.

The culture that Governor Berkeley and his elite created in seventeenth-century Virginia clearly reflected their origins and was only slightly adapted to the new environment. Their buildings and furniture, for example, were closely based on English models. Their great houses (with Sir William Berkeley’s “Green Spring” as the prototype) were built to look as much like large English country houses as possible, and the more modest hall-and-parlor “Virginia House” of the gentry was basically

a south-of-England structure. Their furniture was also derived from English models of the Restoration and Jacobean periods.

Various factors worked against the fulfillment of Governor Berkeley’s hopes for a “cavalier utopia.” One of them was the presence of the aboriginal people whom the Europeans called Indians. The Indians who lived in Virginia were themselves immigrants who had moved into the region after a west-to-east migration across North America. Long before they encountered the English they had built scores of permanent villages and developed agriculture as a supplement to short-range hunting. They had, moreover, organized themselves to withstand the kind of disastrous experience they had already had with the Spanish. Nevertheless, in their inevitable clash with the English over land ownership, the Indians were decimated, and not only by the superior weapons of the English but by

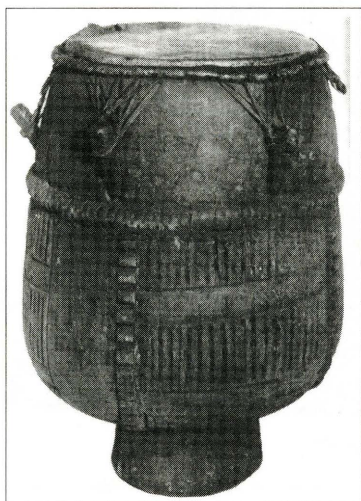
the various European diseases against which they had no immunity. The Indian population of Virginia fell from more than 20,000 in the early years of the seventeenth century to about 1,800 by 1669. Despite their virtual disappearance, the Indians contributed several of their crops to Virginia (tobacco, corn, and squash), and they added at least an element of diversity to the English culture of the colony.

Another challenge to Governor Berkeley's hierarchical and conservative order was the difficulty of recruiting a work force. Until the late seventeenth century, most laborers in Virginia were indentured servants who came from Europe. Only after this supply declined, in the early eighteenth century, did African slavery become a major factor in Virginia. After 1700, however, the slave population expanded rapidly from fewer than 20,000 in 1710, to 140,000 in 1760, and to nearly 300,000 in 1790. This new group of involuntary immigrants came from every part of West and Central Africa, and a few came from East Africa. But once in America the Africans, regardless of their specific origin, created a



19
Virginia Cupboard, c. 1660

One of the oldest surviving examples of Virginia-made furniture, this cupboard illustrates the almost pure transmission to Virginia of English taste. The wood, however, was the yellow pine of Virginia. Hence its maker drew on a local resource to preserve a culture carried from England.



Ashanti Drum in Virginia

This drum was acquired, in 1753, by Sir Hans Sloane, one of the founders of the British Museum, from a “Mr. Cleark of Virginia.” Sloane thought it was an Indian drum, but it was made by an Ashanti in West Africa. It is not known whether it was brought to Virginia by Africans or Europeans.

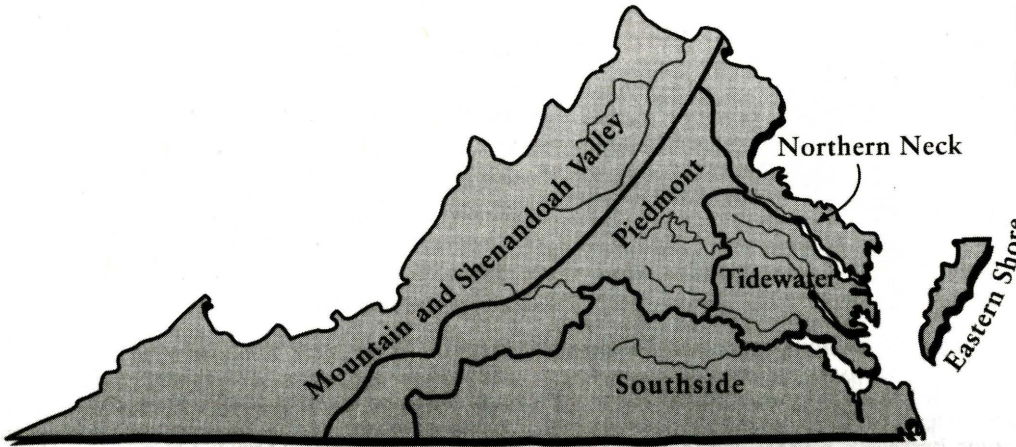
unique African-American culture that retained features from Africa but combined them with the many different elements to which it had been exposed. Some white Virginians found African-American culture alien and unattractive, but there is no doubt that the new culture profoundly affected the old European-based culture, particularly in social attitudes, music and language.

By the eighteenth century, Virginia was a colonial society that was a new-modeled American version of an old European ideal. It was hierarchical, conservative, and constraining. But it was also increasingly restless and diverse, and its dynamic elements led to the incessant migration of Virginians within the boundaries of their extensive colony.

Movement Within Virginia

For most settlers, the Atlantic crossing was only the beginning of their migration, and once in the New World they usually moved again. But in Virginia the pattern of migration was different, because it was so decisively shaped by wealth and social rank. By and large, it was the poor Virginians who moved repeatedly, always in search of land and greater prosperity. The ruling elite, on the other hand, tended to remain on their large holdings and disapproved of the incessant migrations of the poor. They were, however, completely unable to stop this movement, and, in fact, some of those who moved repeatedly were younger sons of the great landed families and members of the less well-off gentry.

One result of Virginia’s internal migrations was that the original centers of population lost most of their white labor force and came to rely on slaves. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Tidewater continued to be owned and managed by a small white minority, but most of its population was African-American. In a somewhat modified form, this same pattern emerged in the Northern Neck, the Eastern Shore, and even in Southside, where the region’s remoteness accounted for a slower development along the same lines.



The Regions of Virginia

This map was made for the exhibition in order to clarify references to migrations within Virginia.

Another result of the large internal migration was emergence by the mid-eighteenth century of the Piedmont, with its abundance of fertile lands and healthier climate, as the dominant region of Virginia. In this region the outstanding figure was Alexander Spotswood. He had arrived in America as the young and energetic but impecunious lieutenant of a royal governor who preferred to remain in England. He soon granted small portions of land on the upper Rappahannock to several of his clerks, and they promptly conveyed it back to him. He then settled servants and redemptioners on this property, and in time acquired large plantations with their fields, mills, and ironworks in the Western Piedmont and the Shenandoah Valley. Given his background, Spotswood abhorred absentee landlords and speculators, and he had a law passed (1713) that required all landowners in the new Piedmont counties to cultivate at least a small part of their land or forfeit their grants. This statute fostered rapid development, and by 1727 the line of settlement nearly reached the Blue Ridge.

Spotswood not only set policies that speeded up settlement of the Piedmont. He also encouraged exploration and development of the mountains and valleys that lay to the west. In 1716 he himself led an expedition to explore the country lying west of the Blue Ridge, and when he returned to Williamsburg is reported to have given a golden horseshoe to each member of his exploring party.

The popular account of Spotswood's exploration is undoubtedly more fiction than fact, but it encouraged the general belief in Virginia

that westward expansion had been initiated not by humble men in coon-skin caps but by the governing elite symbolized by Spotswood in his chaise and his gentlemen on horseback.

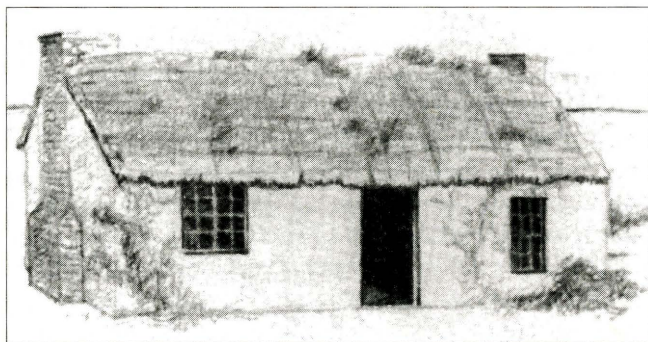
In fact, the expansion into the Great Valley of Virginia was due to a varied multitude of settlers who came not only from the Old Dominion but also from abroad. Their arrival was encouraged to a considerable extent by the religious toleration which had been imposed on Virginia's governing elite after England's Glorious Revolution of 1688 and then reaffirmed by the State of Virginia after the American Revolution. In accord with this policy of tolerating all Protestant sects and denominations, immigrants that included French Huguenots, English Quakers and Baptists, German religious groups of many kinds, and Presbyterians from the borders of England, the Lowlands of Scotland, and Northern Ireland streamed into the Valley of Virginia.

Chief among these newcomers were the Scotch-Irish, who in a period of only sixty years (1715-75) accounted for a quarter of a million settlers in the backcountry. About half of these immigrants were descendants of Scottish and English settlers in northern Ireland. The other half came from the Lowlands of Scotland and the north of England. They were ethnically mixed, but all shared the violent history of the British borderlands, and their folkways proved well-matched to the conditions in the mountains and hollows of Virginia.

The Scotch-Irish housed themselves in the same kind of structures they had known in their homeland. These houses were small, impermanent cabins with a few small windows, open fireplaces, and dirt floors, easily built and just as easily reconstructed. In their original setting these dwellings had been made mostly of stone or turf, but in Virginia they were built of logs and caulked with clay.

The furnishings used by the Scotch-Irish were also austere and, unlike the simple wood furniture of their German neighbors in the Valley of Virginia, were not given any painted decoration.

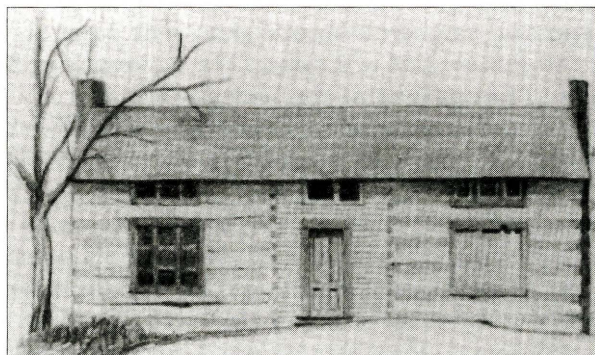
As the exhibition's second section emphasized, Virginia not only expanded geographically and demographically by the time of the Revolution but developed a far more diverse and open social order than it had had at any time since its founding. The political significance of this development was that it gave rise to ideas of freedom that reenforced the notions of liberty derived from English political theory. The thinking of Virginia's Revolutionary generation is thus seen to have been shaped not only by the American frontier environment, nor only by imported political ideas, but by the interplay of the two during the great migrations that took place during the late eighteenth century within the extensive boundaries of the Old Dominion.



Irish Stone Cottage

Backcountry Virginia
Log Cabin

Modern Drawings
by Jennifer Brody



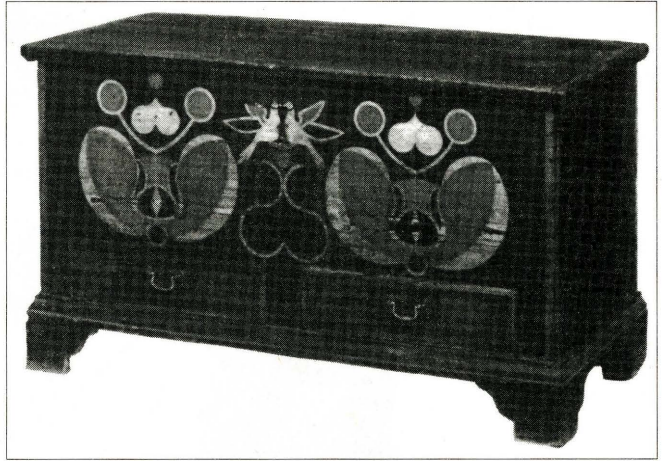
Movement Beyond Virginia

The third part of the story told by the exhibition concerned the migration of Virginians beyond the borders of the Old Dominion. This migration had begun in the eighteenth century but reached its peak between the Revolution and the Civil War and carried Virginians in many directions.

The overall pattern of this migration changed over time. The census of 1850 (the first to record place of birth as well as current residence) showed the largest number of emigrant Virginians were then found in Ohio, with Kentucky and Tennessee coming next.

By 1860 the pattern was slightly different, with the notable change being a sharp increase in the settlement of Virginians beyond the Mississippi. The leading state was still Ohio, but it was followed by Missouri, and some Virginians had by then moved to Texas, California, and several northern cities.

The pattern just described includes only the free population, black and white. But at the same time that free Virginians were moving beyond the borders of the Old Dominion, enslaved black Virginians

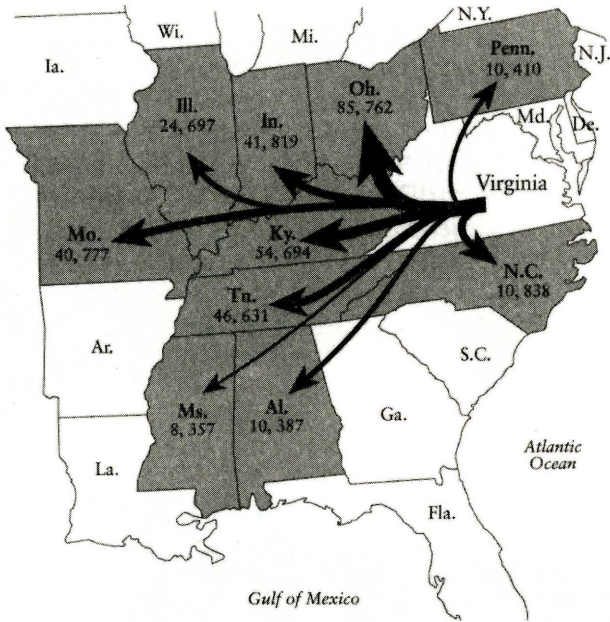


Valley of Virginia Furniture

Top: German Blanket Chest, c. 1800, Wythe County, Virginia

Bottom: Scotch-Irish Senility Cradle, c. 1820, Rockbridge County, Virginia

were also leaving for various destinations. A large number of these slaves were taken by slave traders who had bought them from Virginians (who no longer found slavery profitable on their crop-exhausted lands) and sold them to areas to the west and south (where cotton and rice were grown). Others were taken by their Virginia masters into frontier regions where slavery existed. Altogether the magnitude of black emigration from Virginia by the time of the Civil War was larger than the immigration from Africa to British America had been.



Virginians in Other States, 1850

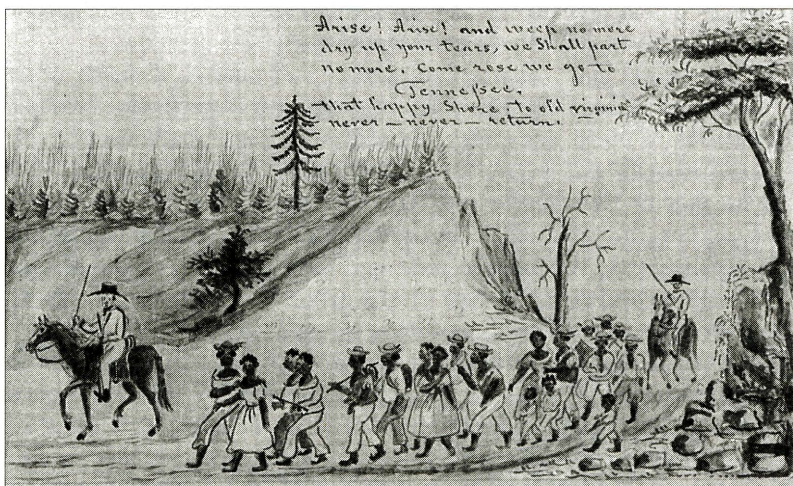
An important factor contributing to the westward movement of free Virginians during the first half of the nineteenth century was the great change that had taken place by that time in the thinking about the west. Before the Revolution "The West" scarcely existed in the sense we understand it today. "Frontier" commonly meant a boundary between two countries, and "backcountry" was used to refer to regions beyond established settlements. These usages began to change soon after American independence as the former colonists came to think of themselves as facing, not the Europe of their origin, but the west of their own country and their future destinations. In an intellectual sense, these changed perceptions marked the beginning of "The American West" and "The Frontier."

But undoubtedly the most important factor encouraging the westward movement from Virginia was a growing sense that Virginia's economy (based largely on soil-depleting tobacco and corn) was declining and the Old Dominion's days of glory were over. By 1829, when elected delegates met to revise the state's constitution, the agrarian, professional, and entrepreneurial elites, along with cultural talent and the yeoman class, had all migrated in large numbers to the south and west. The chief motivating power in nearly all cases had been economic: the migrants had concluded that prosperity was beyond their reach in Virginia.



“Leaving the Old Homestead”

James F. Wilkins, c. 1853. Scene of a young family leaving for a new home in the west.



“Slave Trader, Sold to Tennessee”

Lewis Miller's 1853 "Sketchbook of Landscapes in the State of Virginia." An exodus of slaves led by a slave trader.

Those who saw opportunities beyond Virginia's borders did so partly because of the well-publicized explorations and settlements in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio, and later in Missouri and Texas. For example, Daniel Boone's pioneering role in Kentucky was widely depicted, not as that of a rugged and primitive backwoodsman but as an advance agent of civilization.

Virginia-born John Sevier, who made his reputation as a leader of men on the Tennessee frontier, was another living legend who inspired Virginians.

Above all, the westward movement was encouraged by the dramatic opening up of vast new areas, notably those of the Louisiana Purchase (1803). To Virginians, who had always been land-hungry, the acquisition of a region that doubled the area of the United States in a single transaction was most welcome. Even before the Louisiana Purchase, Virginians had begun to settle on lands in this area. The Louisiana Expedition, headed by Virginians Meriweather Lewis and William Clark (1804-6) did much to encourage further settlements. During the decade after this historic expedition, Virginians poured into the recently explored areas, particularly into what is now Missouri.

Wagons and flatboats were the major forms of transportation Virginians used in moving to Ohio, Kentucky, and Missouri. Many drove wagons to points on the Monongahela and Kanawha rivers and then boarded flatboats that took them down the Ohio River and the Mississippi. Flatboats were only for going downstream because they were very difficult to take upstream for any great distance. At their ultimate destination they were generally broken up and sold for lumber.

By the 1830s, the westward migration had taken a number of intrepid Virginians across the Mexican frontier and into Texas. Two of the most famous of these were Sam Houston and Big Foot Wallace.

Sam Houston was born near Lexington (1793) and taken by his widowed mother to East Tennessee. The Houstons traveled west with two Conestoga wagons, one of the favored vehicles for western migration. In the Houston party, the people rode on horseback or walked alongside the big wagons and at night slept on the ground or at an inn, for the Conestagos were reserved for transporting household goods.

Houston became an important figure as he grew up and, after serving as Governor of Tennessee, went to Texas (1832), where he became the successful commander-in-chief of the Texas armies fighting for Texas independence. He was elected President of the new Republic of Texas, and after Texas entered the Union became a U.S. Senator. Subsequently he was elected Governor of Texas (1859-61), but was deposed for refusing to take the Confederate oath of allegiance.



“The Immigration of Daniel Boone”

Virginia-born George Caleb Bingham’s 1851 painting showed Boone not in a coonskin cap but in a broad-brimmed beaver hat that hinted at Quaker origins. This painting was reproduced in a popular lithograph.

Big Foot Wallace was also born near Lexington (1817) and moved to Texas in 1836 to avenge a brother and a cousin who had allegedly been shot by Mexican soldiers. In Texas he became a prototype of the cowboy and was popularly known as “The King of the Lariat.” During the Mexican War, Wallace served with the Texas Rangers, but one modern study concludes that he is a folk hero who belongs more to social than to military history. Several stories, all probably apocryphal, explain the origin of his nickname. By one account he exonerated himself from a charge of theft by placing his foot on the somewhat larger footprint found near the scene of the crime and proving that it had been made by a Waco Indian chief named Big Foot.

Virginia’s Legacy in the West

Most Virginians who were part of the westward movement were not seeking a new lifestyle but were trying to preserve their traditional way of life by transplanting it in new environments capable of supporting it.



“The Jolly Flatboatmen”

Bingham's 1846 painting became well-known in lithographed form and created a classical image of frontier transportation.

Hence Virginia's institutions were carried into many of the areas that Virginians helped to settle.

One Virginian practice that was transported to Kentucky, Tennessee, and the military district in Ohio was the “metes-and-bounds” system of marking land ownership. Under this system anyone acquiring a right to land on the frontier by grant or purchase could select what he regarded as the best land and locate its corners by choosing man-made or natural reference points (“metes”). The “bounds” then became the lines connecting the “metes,” and by stepping off these bounds it was possible to estimate whether the tract was of the acreage to which one was entitled. In more distant frontier areas, however, lands were laid out under congressional direction and took the form of neat rectangles on a grid.



The “I” House, with rear addition

This early nineteenth century example was built in Lawrence County, Ohio. The term “I” house was coined in the 1930s by Fred Kniffen, who traced the prototype of Louisiana folk houses to three states whose names began with the letter “I”: Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa. The “I” house has since been identified as a standard house form in Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, and Alabama as well.

Various educational institutions in Virginia served as models throughout the west and south. For example, the Virginia Military Institute, established in Lexington in 1839, served as the model for the Kentucky Military Institute (in Franklin County) and the Western Military Institute (in Scott County). VMI was also emulated by many of the other military schools that proliferated throughout the southwestern states in the mid-nineteenth century. Phi Beta Kappa (founded at William and Mary College) and the honor system (at the University of Virginia) were also widely adopted beyond Virginia’s boundaries.

In religious institutions there was a similar trend. Both the Episcopal Church (successor to the Anglican Church of the colonial period) and the forms and practices of Tidewater Methodism spread to the west. So also did the camp meetings of the Scotch-Irish.

The kinds of houses Virginians had built in the Old Dominion were also carried westward. Log cabins were constructed throughout the midwest and south, from Ohio to Alabama. In some places, frame construction replaced logs, but the simple one- or two-room plan remained unchanged. The typical Virginia farmhouse, built either of wood or brick, also appeared throughout the upper south and midwest and

became identified by historians in the 1930s as the "I" house. In its typical form it was one room deep, two rooms long, and two stories high, but in its most developed form it had a two-story portico that had been inspired by plantation houses.


The one-and-a-half-room Tidewater cottage (in brick or wood) was another type of Virginia house that was easily adapted to the frontier conditions and hot climate of Alabama, while the mansion or large plantation house of Virginia was widely imitated in both the midwest and south. It was the architecture of Thomas Jefferson, however, that proved most exportable. His designs for faculty residences at the University of Virginia, as well as his own "Monticello" influenced buildings all over the United States.

The main conclusion suggested by the exhibition was that the history of Virginians and the Western Movement does not support one of the main tenets of Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis": that old European cultures broke down in the American environment and a new culture sprang out of the material conditions found on the western frontier. Neither did the exhibition's hundreds of displays confirm the competing "germ theory": that the cultural values of the first group that set up a self-perpetuating society proved crucial in determining Virginia's later social and cultural geography.

The exhibition suggested a third model for understanding Virginia and the Westward Movement: that the patterns of culture developed in Virginia during the first two hundred years of its history (on the basis of the diverse immigration of that period) were carried to frontier areas in the south and west and there mixed with the cultures that a wide array of still other immigrants had brought with them. It was, therefore, the process of migration (in which Virginians were very active) that proved most significant in shaping the America that came out of the westward movement.

The Families Who Have Lived at Clifton

Elizabeth Harralson

HEN I first thought of researching the history of Clifton and writing a paper about it, I had hoped to discover when it was built, who built it, who added on to it, and details about its architectural design. However, hours of research in the Rockbridge and Augusta County courthouses, the VMI Alumni File collection, and the Washington and Lee University Special Collections have turned up copious amounts of material about the people who lived in Clifton, but nothing of the builder. Consequently, this essay will concentrate on the three families in whose hands the property was held for 200 of the 245 years since it was first purchased from Benjamin Borden—the Alexander, the Johnston, and Houston-Harlow families.

Among the early settlers in Borden's Grant were the redoubtable Alexander brothers, Robert and Archibald, who had emigrated from near Londonderry in 1737 to near Philadelphia, where they lived for about ten years. They came to Augusta County in 1747, Robert to settle in the Beverly Manor area and Archibald to purchase over nine hundred acres along Irish Creek on South River.¹ Robert founded Augusta Academy, partly to educate his ten or eleven children. Augusta Academy was the first classical school west of the Blue Ridge and probably continued

1. Family Genealogy belonging to Houston Alexander Close.

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for some years to be the only one.² Robert Alexander conducted the school from 1749 until the early 1760s. This was the origin of the peripatetic little school which became Liberty Hall Academy, and after a crucial gift from George Washington, Washington College.

Robert Alexander's brother, Archibald, or "Ursbel," is a legendary figure in Rockbridge County history. Born at Manor Cunningham, County Donegal, Ireland, February 4, 1708, he emigrated to Pennsylvania and then to Virginia by 1747. His first wife was his first cousin, Margaret Parks, and they lived on South River where Irish Creek flows into it. In July or August of 1753, Margaret died of dysentery, leaving Archibald with seven small children.³ How he coped, history does not say, but we know that in 1757, he accompanied Andrew Lewis on the Big Sandy expedition against the Indian towns on the Scioto River in present-day Ohio. The men suffered terrible hardships from inclement weather and inadequate rations,⁴ and for this service, he and the other officers each received a right to own several thousand acres of land in Kentucky.⁵ In that same year, 1757, he married Jane McClure, and they had eight children.

Archibald was an important civil servant, serving as the first Sheriff of Rockbridge County and putting up a £1000 bond to do so.⁶ After Benjamin Borden, Jr., died in 1753, the complicated business of land titles succeeded to his widow, Magdalen. Feeling the need for advice, she associated herself with Archibald Alexander. Hence, many of the later deeds for land in Borden's Grant bear the signature of both Magdalen Borden and Archibald Alexander. His good judgment helped her over many a difficult situation.⁷ He was one of Rockbridge County's first justices, an important road surveyor and builder, one of the tax collectors for all of Borden's Grant, an Elder in the Timber Ridge Presbyterian Church, and a trustee of Augusta Academy. He died in 1789 or 90 at

2. Edmund Pendleton Tompkins, *Rockbridge County, Virginia: An Informal History* (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1952), p. 68.

3. Jane Reid Venable, *Book of Antiquities*, Andrew Reid Genealogy, Rockbridge Historical Society collection, Special Collections, Leyburn Library, Washington and Lee University.

4. Oren F. Morton, *A History of Rockbridge County, Virginia* (Staunton, Va.: n.p., 1920), p. 244.

5. Houston Close's Alexander Family Genealogy.

6. Morton, *History of Rockbridge County*, p. 81.

7. Tompkins, *Rockbridge County*, pp. 67-68.

his home on South River.⁸ Archibald's fifteen children produced seventy-nine grandchildren, so he could be considered the patriarch of much of Rockbridge County.

For the purposes of this essay, however, I wish to concentrate on his oldest son, William, and on William's son, John. Catherine Gilliam, in her Rockbridge Historical Society presentation on Jordan's Point in 1977, noted that William Alexander was one of the most important figures in Rockbridge County history in the second half of the eighteenth century. He was born on March 22, 1738, in Chester County, Pennsylvania, and moved with his parents to Borden's Grant in 1747. He married Agnes Ann Reid on February 4, 1767. She was the daughter of Andrew Reid of Nelson County and the sister of Andrew Reid, the first clerk of Rockbridge County. They had ten children⁹ and lived on Archibald's farm on South River, farming, especially hemp,¹⁰ until 1775. They then moved to North River, and William purchased Clifton from Richard and John Randalls in February 1776.

In the Augusta County courthouse, Deed Book I shows that the property where Clifton is now located was sold by Benjamin Borden to James Randalls in 1747. Richard and John must have been sons, brothers, or nephews who sold it to William Alexander twenty-nine years later. It is unclear whether William ever lived at Clifton, but he did live someplace on North River. In 1778, he purchased a piece of land where Woods Creek meets North River, presumably part of Jordan's Point. There he built a house and store, where the burgeoning family lived until 1789, when he built the structure now known as the Alexander-Withrow house, to which he moved both store and residence.¹¹

William Alexander was an Elder at Monmouth and later at Lexington Presbyterian Church, and a trustee of Liberty Hall Academy from 1782 until his death in 1797. Family genealogies record, "He was an active energetic man of business with liberal and enlarged views." He saw a business opportunity when the town of Lexington was created and the lots marked off. He purchased six of the half-acre tracts, and owned all of the block on the west side of Main Street in which the Alexander-

8. Morton, *History of Rockbridge County*, pp. 54-57, 81; Houston Close's Alexander Family Genealogy.

9. Houston Close's Family Genealogy.

10. Morton, *History of Rockbridge County*, p. 461.

11. Catharine M. Gilliam, "Jordan's Point-Lexington, Virginia: A Site History," *Proceedings of the Rockbridge Historical Society* 10 (1975-79): 111-12.

Withrow House is located.¹² He was a wealthy man; the Rockbridge Courthouse records indicate that in 1783 he was paying taxes on 1,051 acres of land, nine slaves, eighteen horses, and thirty-five head of cattle. He died on May 2, 1797, at age fifty-nine. His widow, Agnes Ann, or "Nancy," as she is named in his will, survived him for many years, living until 1825.¹³

The third of William and Agnes Ann Reid Alexander's sons was John Alexander, born at North River on March 28, 1776. He was a farmer and a military man. In fact, through all Alexander records he is referred to as Major John in order to differentiate him from his uncle. Major John Alexander is the first Alexander of whom it is documented that he lived at Clifton.¹⁴ William left John the land in his will, which stated: "I give and bequeath to my son John the land I purchased of Richard and John Reynolds [the deed says Randalls] lying on the North side of the North River and bounded by the River, Mill Creek, William Ramseys, John Thompsons and James Caruthers lands with its appurtenances to my son John or his heirs or assigns forever."¹⁵

What were those appurtenances? Did they include the house we know as Clifton? Was there an earlier dwelling which burned or was demolished and replaced with the current two-story brick house? When we purchased the house, we received papers which Houston Harlow had collected in which he speculated that the present house was built in 1770, or at least in the last years of the eighteenth century. Royster Lyle and Pamela Simpson think it is more likely to have been built sometime between 1810 and 1820, based on interior woodwork and joists. Charlottesville architect Thomas W. C. Craven agreed, though he disagreed about which was the oldest section of the house and what was added later.

What we do know about John Alexander is that he inherited the farm on William's death on May 2, 1797, and that John was twenty-one years old at that time. He qualified as a lieutenant in the 8th Regiment, Virginia Militia, on September 28, 1799, and as Commissioner of Tax Revenue for the Southeastern District of Rockbridge County on October 18, 1799. He must have been busy, because he is said to have graduated from Washington College in 1803.¹⁶

12. Tompkins, *Rockbridge County*, pp. 42-43.

13. Venable, Alexander genealogy.

14. Houston Close's Alexander genealogy.

15. Rockbridge County Will Book 2, p. 14.

16. Houston Close's Alexander genealogy.

The following description of Major John Alexander was written by Dr. William Henry Ruffner, who remembered the Alexander brothers from his childhood.

Something of the man excited in me that hero-worshipping spirit which seems to belong to all boys. He was the only one of his family, so far as I know, who had the soldierly bearing and taste. He had the look and movement of the soldier, with also the tenderness of the bravest. As he walked the street, his robust frame, bluff, honest countenance, bold step and military carriage excited my boyish admiration; and this admiration became enthusiasm, when on general muster day with the regiment in line on Main St., stretching from the courthouse nearly to the head of town and fronting west, Major Alexander, mounted on his magnificent charger, Pompey, would ride in front of the line with red sash and drawn sword. The Major was no mere holiday soldier; he had acquired his title in the army of 1812. At the time I speak of, he was inspector of the Brigade, which took him into a number of counties, whither he traveled with a mounted drummer and fifer, to be used in drilling the officers in each county, for three days before the general muster. His visit was the great event of the year. He was himself so grand, and like Cadmus, he seemed to call up from the unknown a host of armed men. But the Major had social and pastoral qualities equal to his military. He would hail even the small boy on the road with a loud cheery salutation and he kissed the old ladies whom he loved when they were all young, and passed lightly, though not slightly, over their more beautiful daughters. He was honestly affectionate with his friends, and genial with all. Good sense, courage and cheerfulness were his daily characteristics. He, of course, was a church member—who ever saw an Alexander of this family, who was not a church member? And he was an elder who served faithfully for 47 years. In business, though always honest, he was careful, and he required full duty of his slaves. He had large property, many different interests, and a large household, with a wide circle of visiting friends, and a ready invitation for the stranger. It required all of his fine practical judgment and untiring energy to manage his business successfully. His “Clifton” farm was one of the best, and my impression is that he was considered one of the best farmers in the county. He raised big crops, and kept his land improving. His watchword was “clover.” The contents of the barnyard went to the poor spots, and he kept the land turning under the plow. Like his father, his brother, and his son, the Major was a College trustee from 1812 until his death. His vigorous constitution enabled him to continue his activity without abatement until he was stricken down by apoplexy at the age of 77. He trained his own colts until the last. He considered himself the best rider on the farm and no doubt he was—up to the time of his death.¹⁷

17. William Henry Ruffner, *Washington and Lee Historical Papers*, vol. 4, W&L Special Collections.

He married his first wife, Elizabeth Lyle, who was his first cousin on his father's side. Their marriage bond is dated October 27, 1803, but the exact date of their wedding is not recorded.^{17a} She bore two children, Julia Ann Alexander, who was born in 1806 and died in May 1818, and William Lyle Alexander. William Lyle graduated from Washington College and moved to Alleghany County where he operated an iron furnace named Clifton Forge, after his home place. Elizabeth Lyle died May 10, 1808, at age twenty-three. Major John then married another first cousin and another Elizabeth on November 14, 1815. Elizabeth Reid, daughter of Andrew Reid and Magdalen McDonald, bore eight children and outlived Major John by seventeen years.¹⁸

I could find no documentation for when Clifton was built. My theory is that when Major John returned from the War of 1812, he built most of the house as we know it for his second wife and the burgeoning family. When Major John died, all his effects were inventoried and recorded in the Will Book along with the results of the sale of the household goods and slaves. Elizabeth Alexander bought most of the household effects and continued to live at Clifton with at least two of her grown children, Bettie and Arch Alexander. In 1862, John McDowell Alexander, one of her sons, broke up the farm and sold off all but 17.5 acres. Elizabeth purchased the house and the 17.5 acres, but the amount of the sale was not included in the deed.¹⁹

Major John Alexander died on November 10, 1853, of apoplexy "in full vigor of his faculties, physical and intellectual, aged 77," according to the Alexander family genealogy. Elizabeth Alexander died on August 4, 1870, at age eighty-two.

Clifton's proximity to the river meant that its occupants were profoundly affected by changes in modes of transportation, floods, and freezes. In the 1740s, when Borden's Grant was being settled, transportation was exceedingly difficult, and it remained one of the knottiest problems for residents of this area until 1881, when rail service was begun.

The Great Valley Road is an ancient Indian trail, widened sufficiently to allow wagons and coaches to pass. In winter and spring, the mud made roads almost impassable, and in all seasons, loose stones, ledges, mudholes, and gullies cut by frequent rains made them perilous.

17a. Marriage bond of John Alexander and Elizabeth Lyle, October 27, 1803, Rockbridge County Clerk of Circuit Court, Lexington, Va.

18. Houston Close's Alexander genealogy.

19. Rockbridge County Deed Book II, p. 185.

It was not until the second decade of the twentieth century, when automobiles came into popular use, that real highways, properly built, paved, and systematically maintained, came into being. In 1919, a local newspaper complained that only eight miles had been surfaced between Lexington and Staunton.²⁰

From 1810 until 1852, the North River was navigable by bateaux from Rockbridge County to the Tidewater. A canal with a series of locks was opened to East Lexington in 1852. Although freight moved on the canal from 1852, it was not until November 15, 1860, that the first passenger-carrying packet-boat reached Lexington, establishing a regular service between the village and Richmond. Although subject to blockages by floods and freezes, the canal furnished the most important mode of transportation until the arrival of the railroad in 1881.²¹ Bateaux and packets regularly passed in front of Clifton on their way to the wharfs located westward a quarter mile up the river.

The Alexander who benefitted most from the completion of the canal was John Alexander's son Arch, who became a merchant like his grandfather, William Alexander. Three large merchant warehouses were built at Jordan's Point soon after the canal was finished—Campbell & Company, A. Alexander's, and A. M. Lusk & Company. These stores sold for cash or would trade household or farm products for produce, which could be shipped on the canal. The advertisement in the December 4, 1862, *Lexington Gazette* for A. Alexander's is typical of the time.

Attention Farmers—

I am buying flour, wheat, and all kinds of country produce, for which I will pay the market rates. I also wish to buy a large quantity of flax seed for which I will pay a good price. I also have for sale at my Lumber House all kinds of groceries that can be obtained such as sugar, rice, etc. Cotton cloth, Osaburgs, Calico.

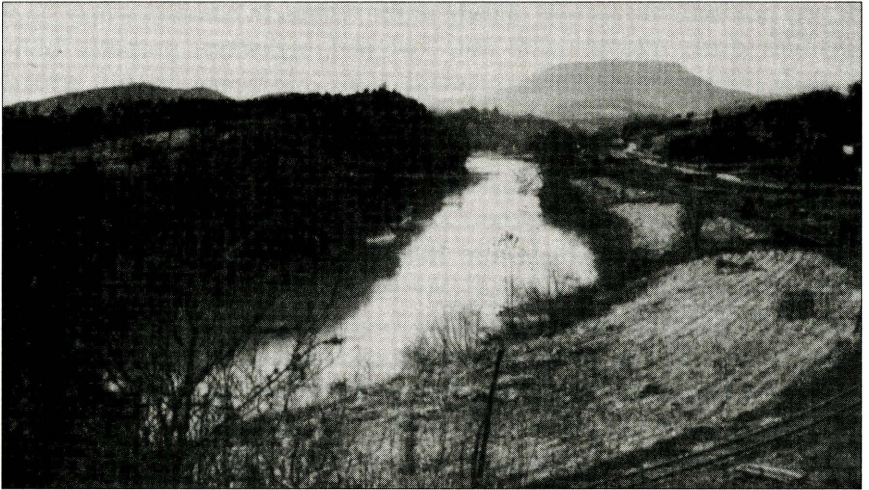
A. Alexander, Jordan's Point.²²

Arch did not own his building on Jordan's Point, but rented from Calvin McCorkle, who ran a competitive business to Arch's with Andrew Lusk. Campbell and Alexander jointly operated a canal boat, the *Rockbridge*, which made weekly trips between Jordan's point and Lynchburg. A month after the McCorkle-Lusk business began operating

20. E. P. Tompkins, Rockbridge Historical Society papers, undated.

21. Ollinger Crenshaw, *General Lee's College* (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 71.

22. Gilliam, "Jordan's Point," p. 123.



Michael Miley photo of the North River, House Mountain, and Clifton (extreme right). (Courtesy Special Collections, W&L.)

at the Point, Arch moved his business across the river. He relocated his warehouse to the north side of the river, approximately three hundred yards below the covered bridge. In advertisements at the time of his move, Alexander pointed out that, by doing business with him, Augusta County farmers who brought their goods to be shipped on the canal, would save the cost of the toll bridge, which was operated by McCorkle. Alexander continued to operate his business, later known as Clifton Warehouse, in competition with the Jordan's Point businesses until September 1876.²³ It was from Alexander's warehouse that the flood of 1870 washed away the handsome casket which was to be used for the burial of General Lee. This was recovered by a young man named Chittum from the island where it had lodged.²⁴

The much anticipated railroad spur to Lexington was completed on October 14, 1881. The spur was a branch of the Chesapeake & Ohio, which came through Buena Vista. The train came to Lexington along what is now the Chessie Trail, turned up the "Y" as it approached East Lexington, and then backed past Clifton's front yard, across the railroad bridge, up the hill behind VMI, behind Washington and Lee, and into the train station. This great advance in transportation and improvement in both freight and passenger service must have been greeted with

23. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

24. E. P. Tompkins, scrapbooks in Special Collections, W&L.

mixed feelings by the then inhabitants of Clifton; the noise and vibrations of the trains, plus the intrusion on their privacy, must have seemed a great price to pay for “progress.”

On November 15, 1866, the Board of Trustees of Washington College voted to hire as professor of history and English, Colonel William Preston Johnston of Louisville, Kentucky.²⁵ Colonel Johnston was the son of General Albert Sidney Johnston, a legend and icon of the Confederacy, who was killed at Shiloh and became a martyr for the Southern cause.

William Preston Johnston, a practicing attorney, had volunteered to serve in the Confederate Army, but after contracting pneumonia and typhoid, he was forced to withdraw from front-line duty; he served as President Jefferson Davis’s aide-de-camp for the duration of the war.



William Preston Johnston as a young lawyer of twenty-three in Louisville, Kentucky.

At the war’s end, he returned to his Louisville law practice, but found that the stigma of a Confederate background in this border area was too great to overcome, and he was unable to support his family. Robert E. Lee had served as a lieutenant colonel in the cavalry regiment that Johnston’s father had commanded many years before the Civil War. Lee promoted the idea of having Johnston on the faculty of Washington College, and Johnston was extremely grateful for the opportunity to make a new beginning.

In a letter to Caroline Peters in Louisville, Mrs. Lee wrote on February 15, 1867:

Col. Johnston has just arrived here with a family of six children and a very lovely wife from your town. They came on 30 miles in a stage without windows and a hole in the bottom one of the coldest nights this winter but seem to have borne it very well. We shall find them a great acquisition to our society.²⁶

The Johnstons were unable to find a house to rent, and had to stay at a hotel in town. General Lee wrote in a letter to General James Chesnut on May 17, 1867:

25. Washington and Lee University Trustees papers, July-December, 1866.

26. Mary Randolph Custis Lee letters to Peters, Special Collections, W&L.

We have now three of the professors of Washington College who can obtain no other quarters than furnished by the Hotel. One of these, Col. William Preston Johnston whom you know, has with him his wife and six little children. Houses may be purchased, for people here as elsewhere are obliged to part with property to save life, but there are none for rent.²⁷

On July 2, 1867, Johnston and his family solved their housing problem by purchasing Clifton, with its accompanying 17.5 acres, from Mrs. Elizabeth Alexander, widow of Major John, for \$4,773.25.²⁸

Johnston's mother, Henrietta Preston, had a Lexington connection. Her uncle was Thomas Lewis Preston of Lexington and her cousin was J. T. L. Preston of VMI.²⁹ William Preston Johnston was born in 1831. His mother died before he was five years old, and he and his younger sister were left in the care of his maternal aunt when his father went to Texas to try to make his fortune in ranching. Fortunately for the children, Henrietta Preston Johnston left property to her children which supported their education.³⁰

With the exception of three happy months in 1847, spent visiting his father in Texas, William was raised by his mother's Kentucky relatives, and he saw little of his father. In 1850, at age nineteen, William took the advice of his uncle, William Preston, and went to New Haven, Connecticut, to prepare himself for the entrance examinations at Yale College. He arrived in New Haven in November and devoted several months to intensive study under tutors in preparation. On May 10, 1851, William entered Yale in the third term of the junior year. Although he was the last man to enter the class, which graduated in the following spring, he quickly gave evidence of his ability as a student.³¹ The Commencement Program for 1852 lists his name as a member of Skull and Bones, a prestigious senior society; Kappa Sigma Epsilon; Delta Kappa Epsilon; and Calliope, an orating society.³²

After graduating from Yale, Johnston returned to Louisville, where he entered University of Louisville Law School. In March 1853, he

27. General Robert E. Lee letters, R. E. Lee papers, Special Collections, W&L.

28. Rockbridge County Deed Book JJ, p. 350.

29. George West Diehl, *Rockbridge County, Virginia, Notebook*, ed. A. Maxim Coppage (Utica, Ky.: McDowell Publications, 1982), pp. 70-71.

30. Arthur Marvin Shaw, *William Preston Johnston, A Transitional Figure of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943), p. 17.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-37.

32. Tucker-Johnston Family Scrapbook, Special Collections, W&L.

received his law diploma, and four months later was back in New Haven to marry Rosa Duncan, the daughter of a widow.³³

He was still benefiting from his inheritance, which his mother had left him, and he and his family were able to live comfortably in Louisville for the next eight years while he established a law practice, wrote poetry, and oversaw his property. Unfortunately, the Civil War would sweep away his fortune, and when he came to Lexington, he was completely dependent upon his salary from Washington College.

On January 10, 1855, the Johnston's first child, Mary, was born. Following the birth, Rosa was never again in good health. The cause of her frailty is not known.³⁴ Between 1856 and 1864, three more daughters and a son were born to Rosa and William. In addition, war broke out. Rosa and her mother took the children south, where they resided in a number of places during the four years of war.³⁵

As Jefferson Davis's aide-de-camp, Johnston was a capable, trusted, and loyal officer. An enthusiastic friend declared that Johnston “had often to be the mediator between his strong and imperious chief and the many subordinates who were both able and jealous.”³⁶ He was entrusted with many difficult and dangerous missions, which carried him to battle areas throughout the South. He often accompanied the President on his trips to scenes of action and to conferences with his generals, and handled matters of detail that required executive attention.³⁷

On August 8, 1866, the Johnstons' sixth and last child was born. Johnston's financial needs were acute. General Lee's offer of a faculty position at Washington College was accepted gratefully and enthusiastically. His connection with Washington College was the beginning of a period of education service which lasted continuously until his death more than thirty years later.³⁸

What was life like for the Johnston family while they lived at Clifton for a dozen years? The earliest years that Johnston spent in Lexington were doubtless the happiest for him and his family, for under the presidency of General Robert E. Lee, the college enjoyed a period of comparative prosperity.³⁹ Johnston wrote years afterward of Clifton, “There

33. Shaw., *William Preston Johnston*, p. 44.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 57

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 67–68.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 72–74.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

are many who will recall with a friendly sigh this picturesque home." It was one of the scenes of gay social festivity concerning which General Lee wrote his daughter when she was visiting in Richmond. "Gaiety continues," he informed her. "Last night there was a cadet hop. Night before, a party at Col. Johnston's." Here the Johnstons often enjoyed visits from General Lee often to watch the crews, Albert Sidney and Harry Lee, work out on the river in front of the house.⁴⁰ The names of the two clubs were taken, presumably by the students themselves, from the distinguished fathers of Colonel Johnston and General Lee.

Rowing was a popular sport at Washington College, and took form as a competitive activity during Lee's presidency. Ollinger Crenshaw quoted a paragraph from the *Lexington Gazette* of May 12, 1869, describing a race of a mile and a half over a course extending from Clifton to the bend of the river and return:

The balmy day and the interest in the contest allured many fair ladies from the city to grace and witness the scene. . . . Under the wide-spreading sycamore at "Clifton" were Gen. R. E. Lee (on horseback), Col. McDonald of VMI, Professors White and Johnston of Washington College, Col. Ross and others. Several "turnouts" with ladies and children collected near this spot, among them the fine, stately "team" of Prof. White, drawing his family carriage. Higher up the stream were Gen. Smith of the VMI, Prof. Nelson of the College, and Capt. David E. Moore. Captains Henderson and Brooke, of the VMI, and Prof. Walker of the College, were in skiffs.⁴¹

Following that race, the trustees gave official encouragement to the sport by appropriating \$400 for the college boat club. The club had owned one of the boats in the race; the other was privately owned but manned by students. Early in 1870, the faculty ordered two boats, and two rival clubs were formed. An annual regatta between the Harry Lee and Albert Sidney clubs developed as a regular feature of commencement. The town turned out to witness the races. On Thursday, June 23, 1881, the *Lexington Gazette and Citizen* reported, "On Monday evening the Boat Race between the Harry Lee and Albert Sidney Clubs came off at the usual race course opposite Clifton, the residence of Col. Wm. Preston Johnston."

John Seymour Letcher reported that the location of the race was moved upstream by the turn of the century, so that the race started two hundred yards up river from Furr's Mill and finished about one hundred

40. *Ibid.* p. 112.

41. Crenshaw, *General Lee's College*, p. 213.

yards up river from the covered bridge. Letcher says that in his grade at school there were twin boys, Albert Sidney Hinty and Harry Lee Hinty, so named because they had been born on "Boat Race Day."⁴²

One of the best-known stories of Lee visiting at Clifton occurred in 1869. Douglas Southall Freeman relates that in that fall, General Lee had driven his carriage down the river road with Mrs. Rooney Lee and the General's little grandson, to call on the William Preston Johnstons. As the General was driving the mare, Lucy Long, up the steep grade in front of the house, she stumbled and fell as if dead. Lee jumped out, began to unfasten her harness and soon discovered that she had been choked by a tight collar. The General was acutely distressed and reproached himself hotly for having permitted such a thing to happen. He caressed the animal telling her he was ashamed of himself for mistreating her in this way after her fidelity to him.⁴³

As Lee lay dying at the Washington College president's house in October 1870, William Preston Johnston sat with him and recorded the events in an account he wrote afterward. It is Johnston who is the source of the words, "Tell Hill he must come up!" and "Strike the Tent!"⁴⁴ A 1990 *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* article impeaches this account, based on medical evidence of Lee's illness, but Johnston's is the only contemporary description of Lee's last days.⁴⁵

Johnston was employed as a full professor until June 1872, when he took a leave of absence to devote full attention to the biography of his father, Albert Sidney Johnston. A year was not enough time to complete the work, and he formally resigned in June 1874 in order to finish it. He taught part-time until 1880 in the College and the Law School.

This was a time of great financial worry for him because of his reduced income. In the summer of 1876, Johnston mortgaged Clifton to the University; and from that time until a much more prosperous period years later, he was not free of debt. In this trying period, Mrs. Johnston supported her husband's endeavors fully, and the trials of the family served to strengthen their domestic bond. The girls were enthusiastic

42. John S. Letcher, *Only Yesterday in Lexington* (Verona, Va.: McClure Press, 1974), pp. 22-25.

43. Douglas Southall Freeman, *R. E. Lee*, 4 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), 4: 439-40.

44. Shaw, *William Preston Johnston*, p. 106.

45. Marvin P. Rozear et al., "R. E. Lee's Stroke," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 98 (April 1990): 291-308.

participants in local social events, and young Albert, the only son, spent much time hunting in the mountains.⁴⁶

In the autumn of 1877, when the fortunes of the family were at their lowest ebb, the second daughter, Henrietta, married Henry St. George Tucker, a rising young lawyer who afterward served in Congress for several terms. So difficult was the Johnsons' financial situation, only the insistence of the prospective bridegroom and the heroic management by Mrs. Johnston prevented a postponement of the wedding date. Mrs. Johnston wrote her sister-in-law Henrietta that

the wedding took place in the fall "before the Tucker family left for Washington." During the preparations Will looked worried that he could do so little for her but I told him if he only knew how satisfied she was with everything he would not be so troubled. . . . The girls took charge of the house and decorated beautifully with flowers. We did all we could to make Clifton look pretty for the occasion and Aunt Emily and I did our best for the supper and everyone says it was a great success. After getting Henny ready the rest of us will have to be very quiet for awhile.⁴⁷

Soon after the wedding, Mrs. Johnston again wrote her sister-in-law in Louisville:

Will is doing final work upon his book and in a few days will complete it. I can't tell you how thankful I am. . . . He will leave for New York as soon as he has gotten through with it, and I have written to Hetty [a cousin of the Johnstons] to have a place for him at her house while he is there. . . . She sent an urgent invitation for me to come too and make her a little visit. She little understands the Johnston finances or she would not dream of such a thing.⁴⁸

In 1878, Johnston's biography of his father was published. This work represented the labor of six years, and the published volume ran to more than seven hundred pages of closely documented material. Considering its proportions, the immense labor involved, and the difficulties under which it was written, it was a remarkable achievement, but the sacrifices entailed by its accomplishment left the author with a huge debt.⁴⁹

The book did not sell as well as Johnston apparently expected, nor in anything near the proportion which his sacrificial efforts in producing

46. Shaw, *William Preston Johnston*, pp. 112–13.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 113–14.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

it would justify. It may be assumed that the book was not one which appealed to many Northern readers, and the South, where the interest in such works was naturally strongest, was a poor market for books.⁵⁰ The slow sales may have discouraged Johnston, but the reviews of the press throughout the country were favorable. It was reviewed in the *New York Herald, Sun, World, and Post*, the *Chicago Times*, and the *Cincinnati Commercial*, and all praised its balance, narrative interest, and literary quality.⁵¹ The work continued to be praised even after Johnston's death.

Colonel Johnston sought to relieve his financial problems by a number of expedients. He sold to the U.S. government his official papers relating to his Confederate service; he was appointed to help raise an endowment for Washington and Lee University; and he resumed the practice of law. All of these, added to whatever royalties he may have received from his book, were insufficient.⁵² In 1879, he borrowed again from the Trustees on the mortgage on Clifton, and the property was sold to satisfy the debts against it on October 1, 1883, about three years after the Johnstons had left Lexington.⁵³

In 1880, Johnston assumed the presidency of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge.⁵⁴ The school had been closed during the second half of the Civil War, and in the postwar years suffered, as most Southern institutions did, from acute economic and political afflictions. After three years, Johnston was offered the job as president of a new institution, which was to be founded in New Orleans due to the generous gift of Paul Tulane. His family was as relieved as he.⁵⁵

Better times lay ahead. The salary that he received was substantial, and it relieved him of the financial strains under which he had operated ever since he decided to join the Confederacy. The problems of the new University were less difficult than those of either Washington and Lee or Louisiana State University, for Paul Tulane's generosity gave the school comparative financial strength, and the presence of loyal and influential friends on its Board lightened Johnston's task of directing it. The successful establishment of Tulane University exerted an important influ-

50. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 131.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 127–28.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

ence upon Southern education and crowned Johnston's labors with distinction.⁵⁶

Johnston was very successful in fundraising. He persuaded Mrs. Josephine Louise Newcomb, a wealthy widow, to establish a college for women as a memorial to her deceased daughter, to be a part of Tulane University.⁵⁷ The first class of Sophie Newcomb students graduated in 1891.

But not all was happy for Johnston personally. In 1885, he experienced both the loss of his only son, Albert Sidney Johnston II, and his wife, Rosa Duncan Johnston. Twenty-four-year-old Albert died of typhoid in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where he was employed by one of Johnston's Yale classmates. Rosa died in October while visiting in Lexington at Col Alto, the home of her daughter Henrietta. Her body was taken to Louisville where it was buried in the family plot beside her son. William and Rosa had been married for more than thirty-two years.⁵⁸

While his unmarried daughters, Mary, Margaret, and Caroline, were on a winter visit in Louisville more than two years after Mrs. Johnston's death, their father told them of his intention to remarry. On April 25, 1888, Johnston married Margaret Henshaw Avery, a member of a prominent Louisiana family. Miss Avery was a woman of intelligence, active in civic affairs, and interested in the literary, cultural, moral, and religious development of New Orleans. She was for many years a member of the Louisiana Historical Society, and the author of a book on the Acadians of Louisiana. The groom was fifty-seven years old and the bride was forty. She had been named guardian of her brother's children when they were orphaned, and she took this responsibility seriously, not allowing herself the option of marriage until the Avery children were on their own. Her marriage to Johnston was very congenial, as they shared many interests and enthusiasms, and her energy gave his home the hospitable atmosphere which Rosa's poor health in the latter years had not permitted.⁵⁹

In 1892, William Preston Johnston was named to the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution.⁶⁰ He kept up an active corre-

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 190-91.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 206.

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 206-12.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 252-54.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

spondence with former Yale classmates and enjoyed attending his forty-fifth Class Reunion in 1897.⁶¹

During his last year at Tulane, the session of 1898–99, Johnston’s health failed rapidly. Much of the time he was confined to his bed; but even in this condition, he still gave his attention to the management of the University.⁶² After Commencement exercises in June, he went north to Pennsylvania for a visit with one of his daughters. When his strength continued to fail, he was moved to Henrietta’s home, Col Alto, in Lexington. The family went to the Virginia Hot Springs the latter part of June, where, for a short time, he seemed stronger and displayed remarkable cheerfulness. However, his constitution had been frail since the first year of his war service in the winter of 1861–62. On July 16, 1899, he died at Col Alto, the home of his daughter “Hennie,” whose marriage to Henry St. George Tucker had caused so much excitement in the Johnston family during one of the lean and trying years at Lexington. Johnston’s body was taken by train to Louisville, and after a funeral at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, was buried in Cave Hill Cemetery.⁶³

When William Preston and Rosa Johnston left Lexington, Washington and Lee University had guaranteed loans to the Johnstons with Clifton as collateral. The house was sold on October 1, 1883, for \$4,000.00 to John J. Gillock to satisfy the debt on the mortgage.⁶⁴ Apparently, Mr. Gillock defaulted on his payments, because the house was auctioned on October 8, 1887, to B. L. Partlow for \$2,790. Mr. Partlow immediately sold the property to the Lexington Development Company for \$6,000.⁶⁵ Robert K. Godwin headed Lexington Development Company and intended, according to Lyle and Simpson, to build new streets and houses on both sides of Mulberry Hill and Liberty Hall and on the property at Clifton. The scheme was abandoned in 1892 as a result of the company’s bankruptcy.⁶⁶ Deed Book 79 documents a chancery suit against the Lexington Development Company by B. L. Partlow, and the property was again brought to public auction, where Robert K. Godwin

61. Ibid, p. 267.

62. Ibid., p. 271.

63. Ibid., p. 272.

64. Rockbridge County Deed Book VV, p. 393.

65. Rockbridge County Deed Book 70, p. 238.

66. Royster Lyle, Jr., and Pamela Hemenway Simpson, *The Architecture of Historic Lexington* (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1977), p. 42.

bought it for \$1,730.⁶⁷ On February 24, 1895, Robert Godwin's brother-in-law, Charles M. Figgat, who was cashier of the bank where Godwin was a clerk, boarded the train for Cincinnati, taking with him over \$145,000 of the bank's capital stock and deposits. Godwin was arrested and convicted for making false entries as clerk of the bank. He served a sentence in Richmond, while Figgat reportedly died some years later in Colorado, unapprehended.⁶⁸

In Deed Book 85 it is recorded that on April 17, 1897, F. W. Houston and Mrs. Grace A. Houston purchased Clifton for \$2,600. Finley Willson Houston was the quartermaster at Virginia Military Institute. He had been born on September 10, 1852, near Brownsburg, Virginia. His father was George W. Houston, a Brownsburg native, and his mother was Annette Louise Willson, who was born near Fairfield. He attended school in Fairfield and then Dr. Pinkerton's Classical School for Boys, preparatory to entering Washington and Lee. He had finished at Pinkerton's, when he was injured by a horse, costing him the sight in one eye. His daughter, Annette, later said of him:

That accident ended his education, and that is the reason Father was a business man instead of a professional man. He would have made a skillful doctor, a good lawyer, even a successful politician. He was always calm and he had wonderful judgment. He was adept at handling a force of workmen.⁶⁹

On October 26, 1875, at age twenty-three, he married Grace A. Alexander, oldest daughter of Dr. John and Anna E. Alexander. Grace's great-grandfather was Archibald Alexander, and, therefore, she was connected to the Alexander family, who had owned Clifton from 1797 until 1867.

For ten years, Finley Houston worked as deputy sheriff, deputy county treasurer, and notary public for Rockbridge County. On January 1, 1885, he became the quartermaster at VMI under General Francis H. Smith. His duties were varied, and the responsibility was so great that he was required to post a \$1,000 bond. He ordered and inventoried all supplies for the Mess Hall and Barracks, was responsible for keeping buildings and grounds maintained, and oversaw any renovations to buildings. In the file at VMI is correspondence to Superintendent Scott Shipp,

67. Rockbridge County Deed Book 79, pp. 418–419.

68. Simpson and Lyle, *Architecture of Historic Lexington*, pp. 90–91.

69. Shirley Kreasan Strout, "Journey to Virginia," *Themis of Zeta Tau Alpha*, Winter 1957, pp. 97.

June 20, 1892, requesting the services of a horse for his personal use and justifying it by saying that he made many trips to town, the depots, the mill, and sometimes to the country to secure supplies. He served as overseer of the building of Jackson Memorial Hall, ordering all the supplies and being responsible for those supplies not being stolen during construction. He also served as paymaster for Superintendent Scott Shipp. He resigned the position effective January 1, 1902, having served exactly seventeen years as quartermaster.⁷⁰

He then became associated with the *Lexington Gazette* as president of the publishing company. He also engaged actively in the growth and shipment of watercress, produced in quantity in the waters of Colliers and Buffalo Creeks. The cress was shipped by train all over the East Coast.⁷¹

He outlived his wife, Grace, by nineteen years. She died August 8, 1907. They had four daughters, three of whom survived to adulthood—Anna Bruce, Annette Willson, Agnes Grace (who died at age 2), and Mary Alexander Houston. The children were born at Red House, Grace's family home.⁷² Bruce was born in 1877, Annette in 1878, and Mary in 1882.⁷³ They were educated at Miss Jennie Letcher's private school and then at Ann Smith Academy. The two older girls transferred to Lexington High School for their last two years.⁷⁴

After the birth of her second child, Grace A. Houston became a semi-invalid. Unable to keep house, she stayed at Red House much of the time, returning to Mt. Pleasant, the Houston home, at intervals. When Finley became the VMI quartermaster, one of his benefits was a house on post. Grace came to Lexington with him at that time and the domestic management was done by servants. Annette later remembered that her mother never complained of her poor health. The three girls were much entertained by their father who taught them to shoot, ride, and fish. Bruce and Mary enjoyed riding, while Annette, or "Nettie," was taught to drive a carriage, as she was anemic and thought to be not strong enough to ride a horse. All three were taught to use a rifle and a pistol. Mary was a fine rifle shot by the age of twelve, and often went

70. Finley W. Houston files, VMI Archives.

71. *Ibid.*, information from questionnaire completed by F. W. Houston

72. Strout, "Journey to Virginia," p. 97.

73. Mary White Robinson (daughter of Mary Alexander Houston White) letter to Elizabeth Harralson.

74. Strout, "Journey to Virginia," p. 100.



Anna Bruce Houston. (Harralson collection.)



Mary and Annette Houston, 1899. (Harralson collection.)

hunting with her father. Annette was especially good with a pistol. They enjoyed fishing from a flat-bottomed boat in the summer and skating on the river in the winter when the ice was thick enough. All three of the girls took music lessons, but none of them learned to cook, as the Houstons always had a cook and their mother did not encourage them to help.⁷⁵

Major Houston bought Clifton in 1897, but rented it out until he and the family moved there in the late summer of 1899, when Bruce was twenty-two, Annette twenty, and Mary seventeen.⁷⁶ Anna Bruce went off to college at Farmville, where she was one of the founders of the Zeta Tau Alpha sorority. She was quite active in this sorority, both as a student and as an alumna. She edited the national magazine and served as a national officer in various capacities. Much of the information about Bruce and her sisters comes from an article in the publication *Themis of Zeta Tau Alpha*, published in the winter issue of 1957, featuring Bruce.

The Houston girls married three Washington and Lee men, all of whom boarded at the Blue Hotel, which the girls passed

75. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

going to or coming from school. Bruce married William Emrys Davis of Lexington, Kentucky, and settled there with him. She died of a heart attack on September 10, 1943, at age fifty-six.⁷⁷

The second daughter, Annette, married Benjamin F. Harlow, Jr., on September 7, 1905, at Clifton. Ben Harlow graduated in 1898 from Washington and Lee University with an M.A. degree and then moved to Roswell, New Mexico, where he was secretary and treasurer of the



F. W. Houston, 1918. (Harralson collection.)

Roswell Printing Company.⁷⁸ In 1916, Major Houston had a heart attack and asked Ben and Annette to return to Lexington to take over the running the *Gazette*, the cress business, and the care of Clifton. Ben and Annette Harlow had one son, Finley Houston Harlow, who was born in Roswell, New Mexico, in 1913. His two daughters, Martha and Eliza Gatewood, are well-remembered here in Lexington and were generous in sharing information with me.

Finley and Grace's third daughter was Mary Alexander Houston, who married A. Frederick White of Lewis-

77. Obituary, *Lexington Gazette*, September 30, 1943.

78. Newspaper write-up in VMI file of Benjamin F. Harlow.



F. W. Houston's cress ponds, 1910. (Harralson collection.)

burg, West Virginia. He became General Superintendent of American Steel and Wire Company of Donora, Pennsylvania, a subsidiary of U.S. Steel. Mary Alexander Houston White died in childbirth in 1916, but the child survived and is Mary White Robinson of Georgetown, Kentucky, another invaluable source of information. Mary Houston was an avid amateur photographer, and many of the images that we have of Clifton were taken by her between 1897 and 1900.

When Annette Houston Harlow died in 1960, she left Clifton to her son, Finley Houston Harlow, and his wife Martha.⁷⁹ He was a VMI graduate in the Class of 1935 and a close friend of Hunter McClung. Shortly after graduation, Houston Harlow and Martha McKee were married at "Spring Farm," her family home.⁸⁰ Mr. Harlow taught at Lexington High School until World War II, when he served in the Army as a major. In 1946, he took over the management of the *Lexington Gazette* from his father.⁸¹

Houston and Martha Harlow inherited a deteriorating house in 1960. There was no indoor plumbing and very little electricity. Using the services of architect Henry Ravenhorst, they did careful major renovation—installing central heating for the first time, two bathrooms, removing all the old lathe and plaster and replacing it with wire lathe and plaster, replacing all the windows, and generally making it livable.

According to a letter that Eliza Gatewood Harlow Warren wrote to me in 1984, her parents loved living at Clifton, enjoyed opening it for Garden Week, and entertaining there. The younger daughter, Martha Houston Harlow Stronach, was married there in the library. Houston Harlow died of cancer at age fifty-eight in January 1972. Martha Harlow continued to live at Clifton until August 1, 1977, when she sold the property to Paul and Nancy Leonhard.⁸² Mrs. Harlow died in 1980.

The Leonhards opened a day care center at Clifton that Nancy called "Yellow Brick Road." The center began in the basement, but it only met there for one year, as the state has rather stringent health regulations for day care centers, and the exposed pipes and wiring, and occasional friendly resident black snakes did not meet those standards. Yellow Brick Road moved to the undercroft of R. E. Lee Memorial Episcopal Church in the summer of 1978.⁸³

79. Rockbridge County Deed Book 265, p. 91.

80. Newspaper write-up in F. H. Harlow's VMI File.

81. Obituary, *News-Gazette*, January, 1972.

82. Rockbridge County Deed Book 364, p. 298.

83. Minutes of the Vestry, R. E. Lee Memorial Episcopal Church, September 11, 1978.



Clifton, 1992. (Harralson collection.)

John Harralson and I came to Lexington in August 1976, after two years of Air Force duty in Turkey. We purchased one of the Godwin's Row houses on Jackson Avenue. One evening in 1982, we were at a dinner party with the Leonhards. Nancy was talking about how much time she was spending driving the children to and from their activities, and that they were hoping to find a house in town. John jokingly said that we should trade houses, and in fact, we did. We became the owners of Clifton on July 8, 1982.⁸⁴

We employed Thomas W. C. Craven of Charlottesville as our architect. He sensitively and skillfully helped us remove one staircase and put in another, remodel the two existing bathrooms and find room for a third, and designed the Greek Revival portico to replace the Victorian front porch. There are no photos, drawings, paintings, engravings, or images of any sort of Clifton before the Victorian porch was put on. Mr. Craven studied Stono, now Turman House at Jordan's Point, and several of the Seven Hills houses, and designed our two-story portico. In 1989, with the advice of architect Jay Dalglish, we added a breakfast room on

84. Rockbridge County Deed Book 397, p. 671.

the back of the kitchen and remodeled the kitchen. In 1992, a screened porch was added to the back. Otherwise, the exterior of Clifton remains much as it did when William Preston Johnston and his family purchased Clifton from Elizabeth Alexander in 1867.

While we are not related by blood or marriage to the Alexanders, the Johnstons, or the Houston-Harlows, we are related in one significant way. We have all occupied and loved the remarkable house known as Clifton. From the very beginning, the fact that this house had been enjoyed and regarded as a special house for over 175 years made a great impression on us. We feel that we are temporary stewards of this house. As E. L. Miller said, as he finished seating a steel I-beam in the basement, replacing the rotting summer beam, "There, that ought to be here in another two hundred years!" It gives me pleasure to think of another family happily occupying Clifton in the twenty-second century.

In 1994, Clifton was placed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

Master and Slave at Buffalo Forge

Charles B. Dew

AFTER finishing my work on Richmond's Tredegar Iron Works¹—the South's largest manufacturing facility and a major employer of slave labor—I thought I would write a broad-based study of slave ironworkers in the antebellum and Civil War South. When I was a visiting professor at the University of Virginia in 1970–71, I began research on my new project in the collections at Alderman Library. One of the most valuable collections there was the Weaver-Brady papers, which contain detailed information on slave ironworkers at William Weaver's Buffalo Forge and Etna Furnace, about seventeen miles south of Buffalo Forge in Botetourt County. This collection contains materials from the period in the late 1850s and 1860s when Weaver's son-in-law, Daniel C. E. Brady—grandfather of the Historical Society's Pat Brady—was managing the business.

In the usual way of historians, I searched for pertinent records in many other repositories—in North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama. At the Duke University Library I discovered another group of William Weaver papers. When I discovered a third cache of Weaver-

1. Charles B. Dew, *Ironmaker to the Confederacy: Joseph R. Anderson and the Tredegar Iron Works*, rev. ed. (Richmond: Library of Virginia, 1999).

Charles B. Dew, Ph.D., teaches southern history at Williams College in Massachusetts, where he is Van Alan Clark Professor of History. His presentation to the Society was made on July 25, 1994, in the front yard of Mary and Pat Brady's Buffalo Forge. He had just published *Bond of Iron: Master and Slave and Buffalo Forge* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994).

Brady materials at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin,² I knew it was time to rethink my entire project. The McCormick Collection also includes the papers of Lexington attorney James D. Davidson, who was Weaver's lawyer and closest friend. Brady's two-volume "Home Journal" contained the daily record of work done by slaves at Buffalo Forge from October 1, 1860, until June 30, 1865.³ Davidson's papers contained numerous references to slave labor at Weaver's ironworks. I began to hope that I might be able to take an in-depth look at how the slave system functioned at a single manufacturing enterprise.

Thus I came to Rockbridge County, where I found a gold mine of records on Weaver and his slaves. Fortunately for me, Weaver was a notorious litigator, and his numerous lawsuits generated many official papers, most of which have survived. The Clerk of the Rockbridge County Court then was Harry Wright, who was happy to show me the extensive chancery court records in the courthouse; he also suggested that I needed to talk to Pat and Mary Brady, who still owned Buffalo Forge. Pat introduced me to his brother, Tom, who had an immense knowledge of nineteenth-century forge and furnace sites in Virginia and of the technology they used. He also had inherited William Weaver's desk full of documents, which Tom Brady made available to me. One item from the desk was a thin volume labeled "Names, births &c: of Negroes"—the slave birth and death register kept at Buffalo Forge. Another fortunate survival of this period I discovered at the National Archives: in the papers of the Lexington office of the Freedmen's Bureau was one of the few marriage registers to survive. Thus I had a record in the Reconstruction era of marriage registrations for most of the former Buffalo Forge slaves and some information on their children. Taken together, the records I had available made it possible to construct the genealogies of many of the Buffalo Forge slave families. My tentative plans born in Madison, Wisconsin, were confirmed, and I set out to write the history of master and slave at Buffalo Forge.

2. The Society in Madison initially seemed to me to be a most unlikely place to find antebellum and Civil War records of Valley of Virginia ironmaking and slavery, but as many Rockbridge Historical Society members know, the documents are in the McCormick Collection that was assembled many years ago by the McCormick Historical Association in Chicago, because Cyrus Hall McCormick, the inventor of the Virginia reaper, got his start in and around Rockbridge County. The McCormick family gave the collection to Wisconsin in 1951.

3. I later found the 1858–60 Home Journal volume at Alderman Library, where it had been mislabeled.

At the time William Weaver died on March 25, 1863,⁴ the seventy-seven-year-old Pennsylvania native had lived forty years in the Valley and had been one of the richest men in the entire region, the largest slaveholder in Rockbridge County, and owner of twelve thousand acres in and around the county. He had been born on March 8, 1781, to a family of German farmers at Flourtown, near Philadelphia. He was reared on the farm and in the strict Dunker sect, although William seems never to have joined the church formally. William was not content to be a farmer, however, and he took up a number of occupations—merchant, miller, textile manufacturer—and did well in all of them, accumulating enough capital by 1811 to try to buy into the iron business. This effort failed—his bid for the property was too low—but he made the acquaintance of another entrepreneur, a Philadelphia merchant named Thomas Mayburry, who had contacts in Virginia.

Weaver and Mayburry met again in 1814 and discovered their mutual interests in becoming the owners of an iron works. Mayburry had already been to Rockbridge County in 1809 and had looked over property owned by William Wilson, who owned Union Forge (which Weaver would later rename Buffalo Forge) and two charcoal blast furnaces named Etna and Retreat, plus six thousand-odd acres of ore and woodland seventeen miles away in Botetourt County. Wilson was eager to sell, but Mayburry saw problems: Etna Furnace was in serious disrepair and Retreat had an inadequate water supply. (Water turned the wheel that pumped the large bellows that forced air into the furnace.) At intervals, Wilson sent letters to Mayburry encouraging him to buy his properties, and in July 1814, Weaver and Mayburry, encouraged by the inflated prices iron was commanding as a result of the War of 1812, decided to visit Wilson and see if there was any potential for making some quick money.

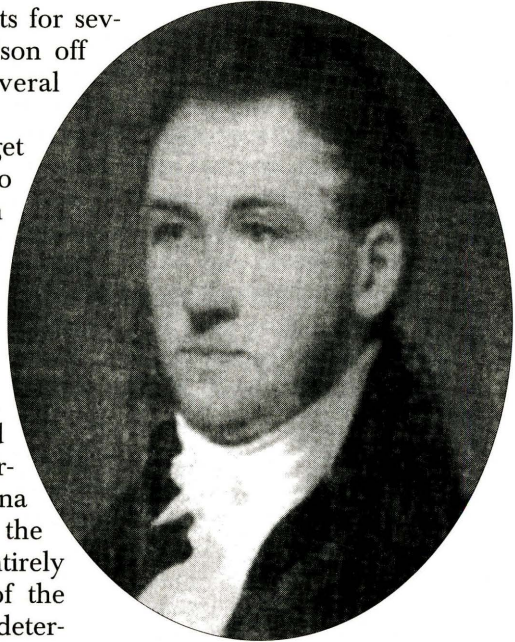
When Weaver and Mayburry visited the Rockbridge properties in July 1814, Weaver was enthusiastic—despite the fact that the current owner’s creditors had had him thrown into prison for debt—and convinced himself that the asking price of \$27,500 greatly undervalued the properties. The partnership of Mayburry & Weaver was formed and signed an agreement on July 30, 1814, to buy Wilson’s property for \$5,000 down and four annual payments of \$5,625 beginning January 1, 1815. Fortunately for the cash-strapped partners, Wilson had difficulty establishing a clear title to the forge property, and this enabled Weaver

4. He and his wife are buried in the graveyard at Falling Spring Presbyterian Church, about a mile from Buffalo Forge. We know very little about his marriage (1830-50) to Eliza Newkirk Woodman, but it seems not to have been a happy union, and there were no children.

to postpone the annual payments for several years and then to buy Wilson off with partial payments for several more years.

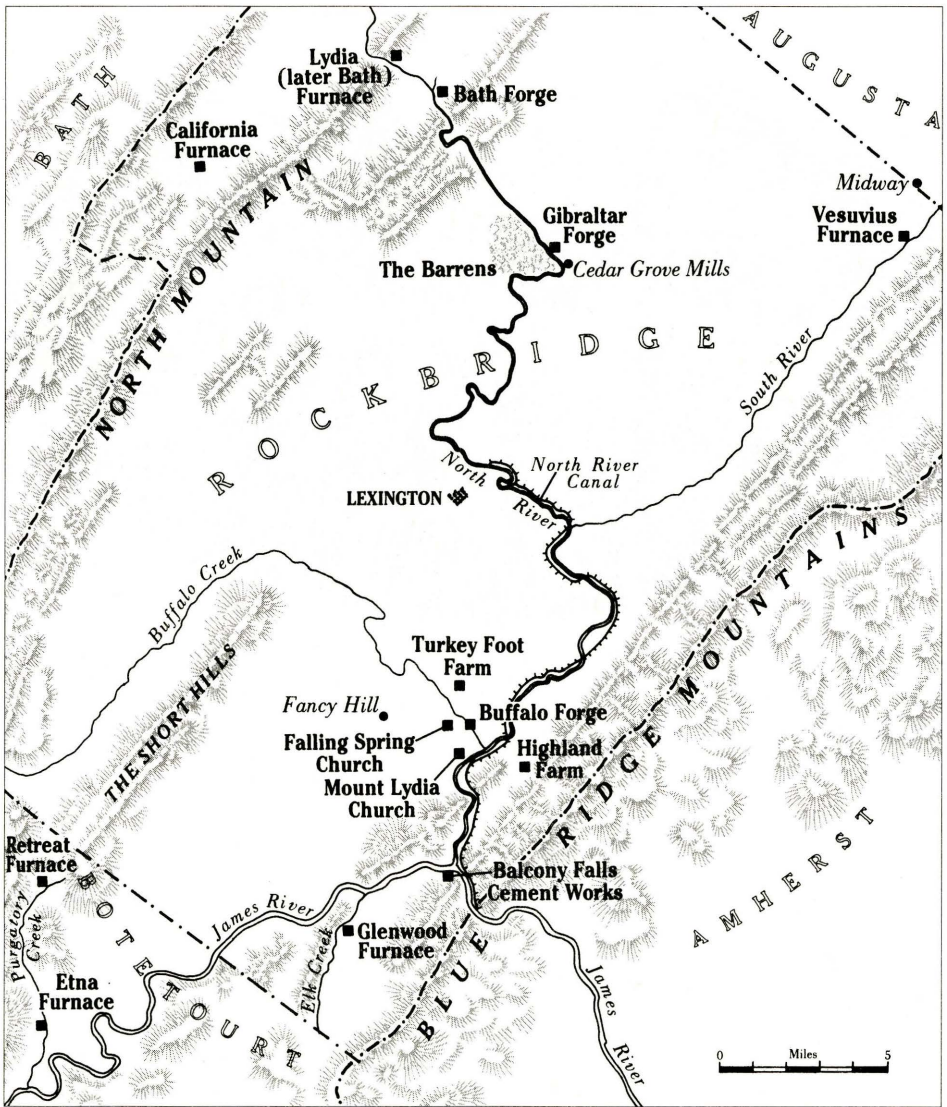
The new owners needed to get the furnaces operating quickly to meet their payment schedule. On February 1, 1815, Weaver put Retreat Furnace into blast and discovered that the water supply was indeed inadequate; he produced twenty-eight tons of pig iron and lost several thousand dollars. More thousands would be needed to conquer the water-supply problem and repair Etna Furnace. Equally serious was the labor shortage. Weaver was entirely unimpressed with the quality of the local white workforce and soon determined to run his enterprises with slave labor alone. But Mayburry was not quite the moneyed capitalist that Weaver had thought, and he could not put up his share of cash to purchase slaves. In the short term, it was cheaper to rent slaves, and a well-established hiring market existed for surplus slave labor in the counties east of the Blue Ridge. Weaver had some success in hiring slaves for the 1815 season.

In July 1815, after only six months in Virginia, Weaver had to return to Pennsylvania for family reasons (his parents were in failing health, among other things), and Mayburry was left in charge of the Virginia properties. Weaver expected his absence to be brief, but it lasted eight years. Nevertheless, Weaver did not neglect his investment. In October 1815, he purchased his first slaves: eleven people for a total of \$3,200 from John Wilson, son of the former owner. The slaves consisted of a skilled ironworker, his wife, and their four boys, and a "breeding woman" named Mary and her four daughters. Weaver carefully, and without Mayburry's knowledge, had the bill of sale made out to him personally rather than to the firm of Mayburry & Weaver, so when the firm dissolved in 1825, he retained the key part of the partnership's labor force. In the years ahead, his "Wilson negroes" and their children would prove to be the nucleus around which Weaver would build his extraordinarily able crew of black ironworkers.



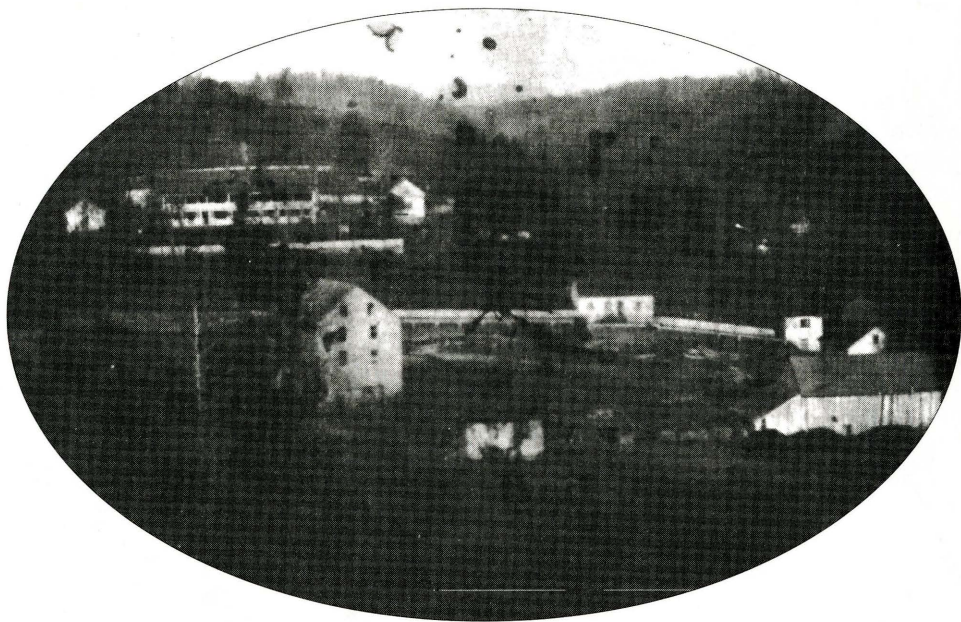
Painting of William Weaver of Pennsylvania. Painter and date unknown.

“Master and Slave at Buffalo Forge”



Places related to William Weaver's enterprises. (from *Bond of Iron*, p. 5).

Slaves did most of the jobs associated with running a furnace—exceptions were the founder, who supervised the day-to-day operations, a clerk or two, and the manager: these were usually white men. At least twenty slaves were needed to keep a blast furnace going day and night for up to nine months, and generally gangs of fifty to a hundred were required. Slaves served as founder's assistants; as fillers, the men who

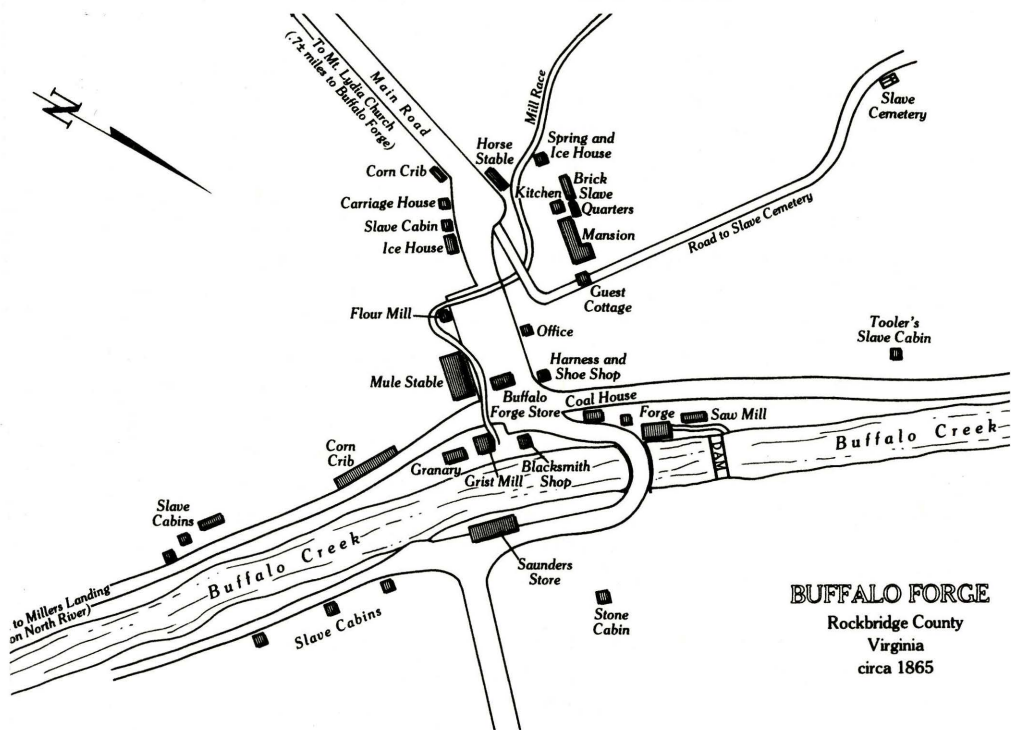


Ambrotype of Buffalo Forge taken in November 1860 by D. H. Placker, an itinerant photographer. Weaver's house dominates the left background; the flour mill is the multi-story structure in the left center; the stable is on the far right; the harness shop is the small two-story structure just above the left end of the stable; and the Buffalo Forge store is between the harness shop and the stable.

kept the furnace loaded with alternating, carefully measured layers of ore, limestone, and charcoal; as guttermen, who drew off the molten iron into the casting beds; as miners and ore pounders, who dug and blasted the ore and limestone flux and prepared them for the furnace; as choppers, who felled the trees and cut cord after cord of hardwood for the coaling pits; as colliers, who converted this wood into the thousands of bushels of charcoal required for a successful blast; as teamsters, who were skilled enough to handle the large teams and heavy wagons needed to haul charcoal, ore, and limestone over primitive roads to the furnace; and as carpenters, pattern makers, blacksmiths, and general laborers.

The Mayburry & Weaver enterprise experienced constant labor shortages and financial problems. Weaver's more successful businesses in Pennsylvania helped to subsidize the Virginia operation, and this doubtless encouraged Weaver to stay near his northern properties. Mayburry continually predicted troubles, and it appeared to Weaver that his partner seemed to have a knack for making gloomy predictions come

“Master and Slave at Buffalo Forge”



true. Weaver sent four different managers from the North to Union Forge between late 1814 and the summer of 1821, but none proved satisfactory. By the end of 1821, Weaver's investment in the enterprise was nearly \$40,000. William Wilson, the former owner, filed suit for the \$6,000 he was still owed, and in 1822 the court ruled in his favor. Luckily for Weaver, Wilson soon died, and his heirs were easier to deal with.

In July 1823, Weaver came back to Virginia to see if he could salvage his investments. By the end of 1824, Weaver was convinced that his partner was lazy, dishonest, and incompetent, so he methodically set about dissolving the partnership (which Mayburry opposed, as it gained him nothing). The future of over two dozen black lives were at stake in the struggle for control of the partnership's slave labor force. The partnership was dissolved in February 1825, but their continuing struggle over money landed them in the tangled maze of Virginia's chancery courts and was only resolved when the former partners agreed to an out-of-court settlement in 1836. Meanwhile, Mayburry continued in the iron business. Having lost control of Etna, he later acquired Gibraltar Forge and built a new forge on land he purchased on South River near the Augusta County line; he named the new works Vesuvius.

For the “Wilson negroes,” the 1836 settlement was a tragedy. Mary’s family, which had been living with Mayburry’s family at Etna Furnace for years, was divided between the two men. Mary and her three youngest children—John, who was twenty, Hamilton, thirteen, and Ellen, eleven—remained with Mayburry, who moved away. Her daughters Sally and Louisa and their thirteen children went with Weaver. Certainly this division brought deep sorrow to the slaves involved. Subsequent events were to show, however, that Mary and the children who remained with her were not forgotten by those family members who went to Buffalo Forge in January 1837. Every generation of children born to her descendants there had a girl named Mary, and there were quite a few Johns, Hamiltons, and Ellens as well. If the names given to these children tell us anything at all about the slaves at Buffalo Forge, it is that they bitterly resented the destruction of their family, and by exercising an element of their previous and limited autonomy—the right to name their own children—they acknowledged and preserved the memory of a tragic moment in their family’s history.

In 1825, before he began to dissolve his partnership with Mayburry, Weaver received reliable intelligence that the price of iron was likely to rise steeply out of the depressed state it had occupied for the past decade. In September he purchased Lydia Furnace on the Big Calf Pasture River and renamed it Bath, reflecting its proximity to a local spa known as Rockbridge Baths. As the owner of the only furnace in blast in Rockbridge County, Weaver made considerable money on his monopoly of iron for local purchasers and from sales to Richmond. In his first three years in the Valley manufacturing iron on his own account, Weaver made in the vicinity of \$30,000. He paid off his debts, expanded his facilities, and increased his slave labor force.

Initially, Weaver’s reputation among slaves, while difficult to document, seems to have been as a decent man who treated his workers well. But conditions at the isolated Bath works had deteriorated badly in 1828 and 1829, and slaves there ran away more frequently and he had difficulty hiring slaves to work there. Management changes and capital expenditures put the Bath works back into reasonable shape by 1831, although given the choice, slaves still preferred working at Buffalo Forge over Bath. Management of Bath works proved to be a thorn in Weaver’s side for years. Weaver secured complete control of the works by 1838, but litigation continued until 1855.

At Buffalo Forge, much of Weaver’s time was occupied by labor problems: assembling a crew of slave artisans and motivating them to work with speed and care. He had an excellent nucleus of slave artisans

at Buffalo Forge, but until their children grew up and were trained, or until he could buy additional black forgesmen, Weaver was forced to use free white, free black, and hired slave labor to supplement his own skilled workers. Weaver's early crews were, in fact, about as thoroughly integrated as any work force at any industrial establishment in the Old South. While the mix of free and slave workers created no apparent friction, this was not a situation Weaver particularly liked. He always felt vulnerable depending on white workers who had freedom of movement and ready access to liquor. Hiring skilled slaves was also a risky proposition, as there was no guarantee that their owners would hire them to Weaver in subsequent years—such slaves were in great demand by other ironworks—or that the slaves themselves would wish to return to Buffalo Forge. A single slave artisan could make a critical difference in forge operations.

By late 1827, Weaver had purchased enough selected slaves to fulfill his goal of having a full complement of slave forge workers. Nevertheless, Weaver was still vulnerable to labor shortages, and he was constantly on the lookout for scarce trained forgesmen. Skilled artisans even had a bit of power. In 1828, Weaver purchased Billy Goochland from an Amherst County man. Goochland himself delivered to Buffalo Forge his master's letter of willingness to sell. While Weaver had the right to satisfy himself about Goochland's qualities, the slave was looking over Weaver and Buffalo Forge himself. Few slaves in the antebellum South had the right to veto a proposed sale, but Goochland did and may well have exercised it. For whatever reason, he did not join Weaver's work force. Ben Gilmore, a strong sixty-seven-year-old when Weaver purchased him in Campbell County in 1830, was given permission to go back across the Blue Ridge to look for a place where he could live and work while he attempted to earn enough money to buy his own freedom.

The master of Buffalo Forge went to elaborate lengths to try to ensure that the quality of his slave hands was exceptional. In considering a purchase, he began with a careful examination of the slave's work habits and personal qualities. Weaver also looked for slaves who were willing to apprentice to one of his refiners or hammermen and who demonstrated a talent for ironmaking. He believed that family connections—uncles, cousins, older brothers—were good predictors of such talent.

By the end of 1840, Weaver had managed to replace with slaves all his white workers in key Buffalo Forge positions. From then on, he relied largely upon recruits from the ironworking slave families at Buffalo Forge to replace forgesmen who were growing too old or were becoming too infirm to stay at their jobs. By 1860, Weaver owned sixty-six slaves, twenty-eight of them adult men, and his core forge crew had all grown to manhood at Buffalo Forge.

Motivating slaves was a key problem. As owner, Weaver naturally had considerable coercive power, but any attempt to rely on the whip to achieve satisfactory levels of production would quickly have ended his career as a Virginia ironmaker. Whipping might not only damage a valuable slave, but leave him seething with anger and possibly retaliating with sabotage. There is no indication that Weaver ever whipped one of his slave forge workers during his forty years in Virginia. Sale of the slave was possible, of course, in extreme circumstances, but skilled workers were not easily or quickly replaced.

The alternative to force was positive incentives, so from his earliest days in Virginia, Weaver paid slaves who did extra work. Each artisan had a specific daily or weekly task to perform; for anything they turned out over this required amount, he compensated them in cash or goods from his store at Buffalo Forge. This “overwork” system was a common practice in slave-manned manufacturing establishments throughout the antebellum South. Pay for slave overwork was identical to the pay given free artisans for doing the same job.⁵ For example, the customary quota of bar iron throughout the Valley was 1,120 pounds of bar iron per day for a two-handed forge (i.e., with a master hammerman and his underhand). The two men split the six dollars per ton of bar iron drawn over that amount. Similarly the daily task of a wood chopper was 1.5 cords or 9 cords per six-day week. Slave choppers in the early 1830s were paid at the going rate of 33.5 cents per cord (40 cents by the late 1830s) for all the wood they cut above their weekly quotas. Slaves who performed common labor on Sundays, holidays, or at night were paid the standard wage of 50 cents per day.

The overwork system embraced almost every conceivable job around Weaver’s ironmaking installations. Colliers could stand watch over the charcoal pits during their time off; ore bank hands could mine and wash extra ore; teamsters could haul iron exceptionally long distances or work on Sundays; slaves could weave and sell the standardized charcoal baskets used to charge both blast furnaces and forge fires with their fuel. Weaver paid slaves who used their own time to cut the flexible wooden hoops used to band his flour barrels (the price was 25 cents per hundred “hoop poles,” as they were called). Other slaves earned money by going into the woods during their off hours and felling trees for Weaver’s sawmill (the price was 12.5 cents for each “saw log”). Several hired teamsters who did not return home for the customary Christmas break were paid \$5 yearly in the late 1830s for working dur-

5. The amounts and values of overwork were kept in ledgers by the forge clerk. At Buffalo Forge these ledgers were called “Negro Books,” which are in the Weaver-Brady Papers at the University of Virginia Library.

ing the holidays. Some slaves received what amounted to a regular wage for performing their jobs satisfactorily. A hireling named Isaac, for example, was paid \$1.50 per month in 1830 for serving as the forge “stocktaker”; his responsibility was to keep the forge supplied with iron and charcoal. A slave named Allen Collier was given the same amount monthly for superintending the production of charcoal at the Buffalo Forge coaling grounds. Weaver also extended the opportunity for overwork to his agricultural hands. Special situations frequently provided the slaves with a chance to earn overwork: fighting fires, pumping water out of flooded mines, rebuilding roads, or cutting ice for Weaver’s icehouse.

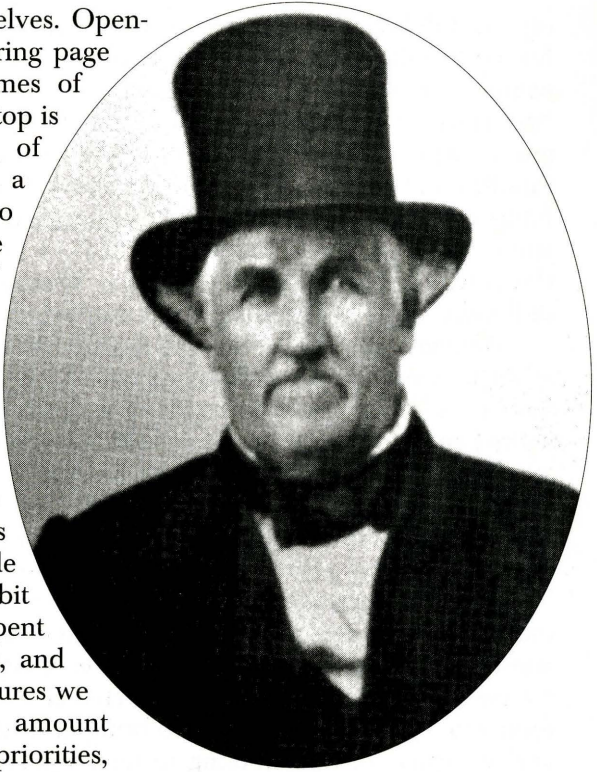
Weaver’s use of the overwork system was so extensive and so nearly all-embracing that it is difficult to see how it was anything other than a conscious design on his part to try to make his slaves, both those he owned and those he hired, more willing workers. His intent, clearly, was to give his slaves a stake, however modest, in the success of his operations, to try to motivate them to work for, rather than against, his interests. His goal was to make his slaves disciplined and productive laborers without having to resort constantly to the use of physical coercion.

The overwork system also served the needs of the slaves, for they took the system and used it to enhance the quality of their own lives in ways that Weaver probably could never imagine. The slave master, of course, was obliged to provide his chattel with the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter, but to bring modest luxury to their tables, to add an article of fine clothing to their wardrobes, to improve the furnishings in their cabins, Weaver’s slaves turned in overwhelming numbers to the overwork system. Along the way, one suspects, the slaves gained self-respect. They could chose to do extra work or they could take their time off as leisure. Even in the simple act of accepting or rejecting the overwork system, slaves were achieving, in at least one small phase of their existence, some measure of choice.

Traditional practice allowed slaves to choose whether they would take overwork payments in cash or in goods from the ironmaster’s store. If they chose cash, they could use the money to shop at other country stores, and this seems to have afforded the slaves a measure of protection against price gouging by the local storekeeper. If the slaves chose payments in merchandise, they could draw on their overwork immediately for things like coffee, sugar, tobacco, molasses, cloth, or articles of clothing. Conspicuous by its absence from the list of slave purchases was whiskey, which Weaver tried, not always successfully, to keep out of their hands.

One of the most significant things about the overwork accounts is the way in which they suggest how a sizable number of Weaver’s slaves took advantage of the system to carve out something of a private and

individual life for themselves. Opening these ledgers and turing page after page with the names of slaves written across the top is very much a process of opening a window into a hidden past. The “Negro Books” afford a rare glimpse into the lives of antebellum southern slaves because they tell us what slaves chose to do with the resources they themselves controlled. They worked exceedingly hard to accumulate the sums recorded on the credit side of these ledgers. The debit side reveals how they spent these precious resources, and by tracing their expenditures we can learn a surprising amount about their values and priorities, about what was important to them and, frequently, to their families.



William Weaver in November 1860.

An ambrotype by D. H. Placker.

One example is Phill Easton, one of Buffalo Forge’s master refiners. His account opened on April 1, 1830, with a transfer of \$65.27 to his credit from an earlier ledger (which has not survived) against a debit of only \$40.34. Phill regularly bypassed Weaver’s annual clothing allotment for both himself and his wife, Betsy, and for each year that he did so he was credited with \$15 as payment in lieu of clothing. Easton raised a calf every year, which he sold to Weaver for \$2 (1830–34) or \$3 (after 1834) or \$5 (1850s), and he made extra tonnages of iron over his weekly quota. By these means, Phill regularly put between \$20 and \$30 in overwork credit on Weaver’s books each year during the 1830s. His balance on February 29, 1840, was \$100.28 1/2. Other slaves had similar debits and credits and some were constantly in debt.

The overwork system was but one technique Weaver employed to make Buffalo Forge a profitable enterprise, but it was critically important in maintaining a high-quality work force. Weaver generally got what he wanted from his slaves—a sufficient quality of high-quality iron produced

at a cost that allowed him to earn a profit on his sizable investment in Virginia. Weaver could have been a slaveowner without the extensive use of the overwork system, but he could not have been the successful ironmaster that he was without it. The slaves gained much less from the bargain, but they did earn recognition and limited reward, and considerable protection for themselves and their families against sale and abuse, and they secured the chance to do something tangible to improve their own lives and the lives of those they loved. Considering the limits imposed by the always degrading and frequently brutal system of slavery, these were not insignificant achievements.

William Weaver was a driven man, ceaselessly pursuing wealth and success; his personality included a hard-edged, almost ruthless quality. But his emphasis at Buffalo Forge was on stability, not innovation—in part because of the constraints of his slave labor system—and he largely ignored the technological innovations that were transforming the iron industry in the North. The maximum capacity of a facility like Buffalo Forge was around two hundred tons of bar iron per year—a small percentage of what one of the new (in the late 1850s) rolling mills could produce. Weaver’s forge entered the Civil War—and Weaver demonstrated his thorough conversion to a Virginian in word and deed—with technology little changed since the Revolutionary War.

At the time of Weaver’s death in late March 1863, Buffalo Forge was producing at maximum capacity and selling its iron to the Confederate government at forty times the price it commanded before secession. The end of the Confederacy sounded the death knell of the slavery system; on Friday, May 26, 1865, slavery officially ended at Buffalo Forge as a result of a U.S. military declaration. Iron production struggled on under the new conditions, but the bars drawn in November 1868 were the last. Buffalo Forge was never again put in operation. Former masters and former slaves went their varied ways as a result of the war, and a new era began in Rockbridge County and the South.

Society Meetings, 1990–94

1990:

January 22: Pamela H. Simpson, "Ugly and Ordinary or Popular and Successful? The History of Lexington's Early Artificial Stone Buildings." Evans Dining Hall, W&L.

April 23: Robert J. Driver, Jr., "Lexington and Rockbridge County in the Civil War." Mary Moody Northen Auditorium, Leyburn Library, W&L.

July 23: Robert F. Hunter, "Stonewall's Church: The First Two Centuries." Lexington Presbyterian Church Auditorium.

October 22: Mary P. Coulling, "'Poetess of the South': Margaret Junkin Preston." Turman Rare Book Room, Preston Library, VMI.

1991:

January 28: Charles F. Bryan, Jr., "V—for Virginia: The Commonwealth at War." Evans Dining Hall, W&L.

April 22: Patricia Gibson, "Buena Vista: The Bud Not Yet Blossomed." Main Hall Ballroom, Southern Seminary [now Southern Virginia College].

July 22: Catharine Gilliam on historic preservation. Stono mansion [now Turman House] grounds, VMI.

October 28: Lewis Tyree, Jr., "An Inventor's perspective on the Invention of the Virginia Reaper." Mary Moody Northen Auditorium, Leyburn Library, W&L.

1992:

January 27: Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr., "Preservation in the Great Depression: The WPA Virginia Historical Inventory Project and Rockbridge County." Evans Dining Hall, W&L.

April 20: I. Taylor Sanders III, "Buckle Down Winsocki: Washington and Lee During World War II." Mary Moody Northen Auditorium, Leyburn Library, W&L.

July 20: No formal program; guided tours of Buffalo Springs Herb Farm on Rt. 606 west of Raphine.

October 26: Vernon Eagle, "The Wolfgang vs. the Courthouse Clique: Post-Reconstruction Politics in Rockbridge County and the Disputed Election of 1881." Mary Moody Northen Auditorium, Leyburn Library, W&L.

1993:

January 25: James M. Morgan, Jr., "The Virginia Military Institute and World War II." Evans Dining Hall, W&L.

April 26: Winifred Hadsel, "How Rockbridge County's Roads Got Their Names." Pogue Auditorium, George C. Marshall Library.

July 26: I. Taylor Sanders II, "TR." Timber Ridge Presbyterian Church grounds and sanctuary.

October 25: Turk McCleskey, "The Strange Career of Ned Tarr: The Free Black as Freeholder on Virginia's Colonial Frontier." Randolph Street United Methodist Church sanctuary, Lexington.

1994:

January 24: James Kelly, "Away, I'm Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement." Lejeune Hall Ballroom, VMI.

April 25: Elizabeth Harralson, "The Families Who Have Lived at Clifton." Nichols Engineering Building Auditorium, VMI.

July 25: Charles B. Dew, "Master and Slave at Buffalo Forge," Yard of Mary and Pat Brady's house, Buffalo Forge.

October 31: Keith E. Gibson, "The Rockbridge Historical Society: Past, Present, and Future." Turman Rare Book Room, Preston Library, VMI.

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