

THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL MILIEU OF WESTMORELAND DAVIS

by

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Thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

Virginia Polytechnic Institute

in partial fulfillment for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

History

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June, 1968

Blacksburg, Virginia

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## CHAPTER ONE:

### ANCESTRY, POVERTY AND EDUCATION: 1859-1883

Even before the Civil War, America witnessed the development of a fluid society. In the South the yeoman farmer could achieve prominence by frugality as well as by speculation in land, crops and slaves. In the North small merchants could become manufacturing aristocrats through investment. In the virgin West one could accelerate the progress from poverty to affluence. To safeguard themselves, older aristocrats adopted the verbal weapon, "It takes three generations to make a gentleman." Yet if three generations was the only criterion, Westmoreland Davis was aristocratic at birth.

Davis's paternal grandfather, Thomas Porte Davis, was born in the fertile cotton country in the Marion District along the Pee Dee River of South Carolina. In contrast to the established, seventeenth century South Carolina families, the Davises were parvenues. In the early 1700's, four Davis brothers had emigrated from England to South Carolina via Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> Not a century later, the Davises had achieved prominence when Thomas Porte Davis became a State Representative and Senator.<sup>2</sup> After exhausting the land on his plantation near Stateburgh, Thomas Davis joined the movement to the West and established in

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Frederick Davis, A Genealogical Record of the Davis, Swann and Cabell Families of North Carolina and Virginia (n.p., n.p., 1934; hereinafter cited as Davis, Genealogical Record), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Temple Kirby, "Westmoreland Davis: A Virginia Planter, 1859-1942" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1965; hereinafter cited as Kirby, "Davis, Planter"), p. 1.

Mississippi a plantation which he christened Palmetto Home.<sup>3</sup>

Westmoreland Davis's maternal grandfather was Christopher Staats Morris of Gloucester County, Virginia. Morris's ancestors included Sir Thomas West, Second Lord De La Warr, a cousin by marriage of Queen Elizabeth.<sup>4</sup> When in later years Westmoreland Davis challenged the Byrd political organization in Virginia, several newspapers noted that the conflict was one of cousins, since Harry Flood Byrd was also a descendent of Sir Thomas West. Although he did not have an exaggerated notion of genealogy, Davis was not unmindful of the fact that he was one generation closer to Lord De La Warr than was Byrd.<sup>5</sup> Christopher Morris soon learned, as had Thomas Porte Davis, that land did not remain fertile forever. Thus he, too, migrated to Mississippi. In the meantime, he had married a Gloucester belle, Nancy Thurston, whose lineage was at least as eminent as his own. The Virginia Thurstons could trace their ancestry to a Thurston of Somersetshire, who, in 1066, had carried the standard of William the Conqueror.<sup>6</sup>

Both parents of Westmoreland Davis were born during the prosperous decades of the nineteenth century—Thomas Gordon Davis in 1828 and

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<sup>3</sup> Kirby, "Davis, Planter," p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Chart entitled "Sir Thomas West, 2nd Lord De La Warr," prepared by George C. Gregory of Richmond (ca. 1926), Morven Park Collection, Morven Park, Leesburg, Virginia; hereinafter cited as Morven Papers.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Sir John Bates Thurston to Ammie Davis, December 5, 1887, Westmoreland Davis Papers, University of Virginia Library; hereinafter cited as Davis Papers, UVa.

Annie Harwood Lewis Morris in 1835. Orphaned at sixteen, Annie Morris spent her formative years with her Richmond uncle, Richard Gregory Morris.<sup>7</sup> Her father's will had stipulated that Richard Morris and two unnamed Mississippians would be executors, and young Annie found herself "the wealthiest heiress in Virginia."<sup>8</sup> Following the custom of many plantation families, Thomas Davis and Annie Morris grew up respectively in urban Charleston and Richmond, whose social attractions included the heightened probability that each would find a suitable match. Nevertheless, the two met in the uncultured Southwest; and in 1855, they married in the Morris residence in Richmond.<sup>9</sup>

Although Thomas Gordon Davis was a lawyer, the romance of the plantation and a bride to care for must have drawn him to Mississippi. His decision to leave the family plantation near Stateburgh may indicate that he had an older brother who had inherited the South Carolina property. Annie Davis preferred to reside at Stateburgh, since the Mississippi delta was not only unhealthy but also unsophisticated. Thus Thomas Davis spent the cotton season between March and December in Mississippi and only the remaining months with Annie in Stateburgh. While separated, they corresponded almost daily until the husband's death in 1860.

In addition to his Mississippi inheritance of three plantations,

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<sup>7</sup> Kirby, "Davis, Planter," p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Annie H. L. Davis, Petition to the Senate and House of Delegates of Virginia, February 15, 1886; Davis Papers, UVa.

<sup>9</sup> Westmoreland Davis to Frances S. Morgan, September 21, 1931; ibid.

Davis supervised his wife's property, which necessitated constant travel. Mississippi in the 1850's was still primitive. Roads were few and the caprices of the rivers often reduced travel to a standstill. On one occasion not long after Davis arrived in Mississippi, a sudden rise of the Yazoo River stranded him in Yazoo City. Rather than await a passenger boat, Davis commandeered his plantation skiff when it reached dock, prevented the loading of supplies, and took it up river. Such was his haste that he himself steered the boat for "seven hours with a huge barrel of Irish potatoes between his legs,"<sup>10</sup> unmindful of the fear he caused among his Negro crew.

Like most planters, Davis was not always successful. At times he resembled the stereotyped planter who became a slave to New York prices and New Orleans factors. After only two years in Mississippi, Davis inquired of his lawyer, George B. Wilkinson, whether he could mortgage Annie Davis's property to cover his own debts.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, by 1859, he had recovered enough to hire one T. S. McCall as an overseer for \$500 per year.<sup>12</sup> By the time of the Civil War, Davis had increased his wife's estate alone to \$300,000.<sup>13</sup>

During her five years of marriage, Annie Davis was pregnant three

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Gordon Davis to Annie Davis, March 27, 1856; Davis Papers, UVa.

<sup>11</sup> George B. Wilkinson to Thomas Davis, May 11, 1857; ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Agreement between Thomas Davis and T. S. McCall, April 27, 1859; ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Annie H. L. Davis, Petition to the Senate and House of Delegates of Virginia, February 15, 1886; ibid.

times. During her husband's absence, he wrote of his concern for her health in letters which he interspersed with Jeffersonian advice: "Rise at half past seven . . . be ready when mother and sister propose to walk . . . exercise everyday in the open air . . . but do not neglect your music. . . ." <sup>14</sup>

The longest intervals that they spent together were on trips to Europe. On their 1859 trip, Annie gave birth to a son, Westmoreland Davis. There is some conjecture concerning where he was born. Tradition and several newspaper accounts place his birth on the high seas between Boston and Liverpool. <sup>15</sup> Despite this romantic account, Annie Davis's handwritten genealogical notebook states that Westmoreland Davis was "born in Paris 21st of Aug~~ust~~ust." <sup>16</sup>

In America again, the Davises went separate ways—Thomas to Palmetto Home in Mississippi and his wife with her infant to Stateburgh. The summer of 1860 brought tragedy for Annie when, in July, death claimed her husband and their first two children. <sup>17</sup> Annie Davis was left with only the infant boy, Westmoreland.

Scarcely a year later, the South was involved in the bloody Civil

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Gordon Davis to Annie Davis, November 25, (?); Davis Papers, UVa.

<sup>15</sup> Kirby, "Davis, Planter," p. 10; and newsclipping, July 1, 1918; Westmoreland Davis File, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Virginia; hereinafter cited as Davis File, VMI.

<sup>16</sup> Annie Davis's genealogical notebook; Davis Papers, UVa.

<sup>17</sup> Kirby, "Davis, Planter," p. 11.



War. A lady who lived in wartime Richmond wrote: "During the war the rebel capital became famous for the large number of beautiful ladies who belonged to the city, or who found within its friendly walls refuge and security."<sup>18</sup> Ammie Davis, who had once "belonged to the city," returned with her young son to Richard Morris's residence in the city's then fashionable section at the corner of Franklin and Adams Streets. Within an area of four blocks lived Samuel Preston Moore, Surgeon-General of the Confederacy, Joseph Mayo, the Mayor of Richmond, and both proprietors of the Tredegar Iron works—Charles Y. Morriss and Joseph R. Anderson.

1861 brought gaiety. Ammie probably joined the many ladies who rode in carriages to the fair grounds on Richmond's west side to view the troops. By 1863, however, Richmond was feeling the effects of the blockade. Prices rose and luxuries became scarce. By 1864, the antebellum banquets were conspicuously absent. In their place were Confederate tea, fat bacon, Indian peas and cornbread with sorghum-syrup. By 1865, Ammie Davis must have yearned hopelessly for new clothes: Calico had risen to \$35 per yard; French mohair dresses to \$1,000; ladies boots to \$250; kid gloves to \$175; and Irish linen to \$100 per yard.<sup>19</sup>

On Sunday, April 2, 1865, a messenger hastened down the aisle of St. Paul's Episcopal Church to inform President Jefferson Davis that

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<sup>18</sup> Sallie A. Putnam, Richmond During the War (New York: G. W. Carleton & Co., 1867; hereinafter cited as Putnam, Richmond), p. 342.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 315 and 345.

General Robert E. Lee's army was in retreat. For the Federals, "On to Richmond" had become a reality. The news spread quickly. Soon Richmond streets were full of citizens fleeing the city. Annie Davis and her five-year-old son were among the throng. It is possible that the young widow was worshipping in St. Paul's when the messenger interrupted and thus had advance warning. The Davises were Episcopalians, and St. Paul's, at the corner of 9th and Grace Streets, was only ten blocks from the Morris home. Fifty-three years later, when Westmoreland Davis became Governor of Virginia, he was a parishioner of St. Paul's.

If Annie looked back toward Richmond that night, she saw the sky aglow from the fire which destroyed over \$30,000,000 worth of property.<sup>20</sup> Fortunately for her, the conflagration advanced westward only to 8th Street, nine blocks from the Morris residence. By 6 a. m. the next morning, Federal troops had entered the city to extinguish the flames and to restore order.

To prevent further evacuation of the city from hampering communications, the Union commanders issued orders forbidding anyone from either leaving or entering the city without a pass. Thus, on April 8, Annie Davis applied for and received through Captain Loomis L. Langdon, acting commander of the 25th Corps's artillery, a pass to return with her belongings to Richmond.<sup>21</sup> Exactly where she and her son had spent

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<sup>20</sup> W. Asbury Christian, Richmond: Her Past and Present (Richmond: L. H. Jenkins, 1912), p. 262.

<sup>21</sup> Captain L. L. Langdon to Major A. H. Stevens, April 8, 1865; Davis Papers, UVa.

the six days from April 2 to April 8 is unknown. Neither is it known whether Richard Morris was with her or whether the old gentleman had been recruited into volunteer guards and was elsewhere. At any rate, Mrs. Davis and Westmoreland came through these harrowing experiences safely.

For the next four years, Annie Davis remained in Richmond. Although she toyed with the idea of removing to her Mississippi plantations, her qualms about safety amidst Mississippi's emancipated slaves kept her in Richmond.<sup>22</sup> Like many other Southerners during Reconstruction days, Annie went to live between 1869 and 1871 in Baltimore, Maryland—not so much because of fear as because of depressed spirits.<sup>23</sup> However, in order that her son receive a Virginia education, she enrolled him in school in Hanover County at Bear Island, the residence of Edward Gwathmey, a graduate of the University of Virginia. Young Davis already had acquired the fundamentals of his education from his mother, who taught school in Richmond after the war. By this time, family and friends called the young boy Morley, his "full name being rather formidable for a small boy."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Frederick J. Shaffer to Annie Davis, September 6, 1865; Davis Papers, UVa.

<sup>23</sup> Agnes H. Burgess to Annie Davis, April 12, 1869; *ibid.* See also inscription, Westmoreland Davis's stampbook (copyrighted 1871); Morven Papers.

<sup>24</sup> Westmoreland Davis to Frances S. Morgan, September 21, 1931; Davis Papers, UVa.

Meanwhile, in 1867, Richard Morris died in Richmond. The will of Annie's father had directed Richard Morris as executor to purchase at least \$50,000 in State of Virginia bonds for her, although the uncle had invested only \$40,000. He held the remaining \$10,000 for her, intermingled with his own cash and securities. In order to obtain legally any part of what rightfully was owing to her, Annie had no other choice but to sue the executors of the Morris estate for the remaining \$10,000. The war had reduced her to a state of "poverty" so far as ready cash was concerned.<sup>25</sup> In this family suit she retained for herself and her minor son the legal services of John Howard, who had been a special counsel for the Confederate government.<sup>26</sup> Annie Davis had probably known Howard's wife, who had come from Stateburgh. In Richmond the two families were close, and John Howard in his letters addressed young Davis as Morley. Finally in 1875, Howard obtained for the Davises the \$10,000.<sup>27</sup>

With uncertain prospects and slim resources, Westmoreland Davis entered the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia in September of 1873. At fourteen he was younger than most of the other freshmen. The entire corps of cadets numbered approximately 220, and companies A through D divided the cadets into about 50 men per company.

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<sup>25</sup> "Petition of Mrs. Annie H. L. Davis to the Senate and House of Delegates of Virginia" (dated February 15, 1886); Davis Papers, UVa.

<sup>26</sup> J. F. Crocker, In Memoriam: John Howard (n.p., n.p., n.d.); and newsclipping; ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Kirby, "Davis, Planter," p. 15.

By the early 1870's, VMI had recovered from its devastation during the Civil War. The Institute's alumni had to finance the rebuilding, since the Virginia General Assembly diverted much-needed funds in order to obtain federal land grant college aid in establishing an agricultural and engineering college in Blacksburg, Virginia.

The Davises' decision for Morley to attend VMI is not surprising. Although its antebellum reputation had been deservedly high, the pre-eminence accorded to military affairs in Virginia and the South between 1861 and 1865 gave to "the West Point of the South" a special status which was perpetuated as part of the mythology of the Lost Cause. Morley's father had once commanded a South Carolina militia regiment. More important than all these factors was the State scholarship for which a poor boy from each of Virginia's senatorial districts received room, board, uniforms and tuition worth about \$280 annually.<sup>28</sup> For Annie Davis to obtain for Morley the highly prized appointment attests to the lad's ability and to her own social status and influence.<sup>29</sup> That such a scholarship was indeed precious is demonstrated by the fact that VMI was forced to reduce its faculty salaries by twenty percent during the Panic of 1873.<sup>30</sup> Morley's entrance to VMI in 1873 was well-timed,

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<sup>28</sup> William Couper, One Hundred Years at VMI (4 vols.; Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1939; hereinafter cited as Couper, VMI), III, 229.

<sup>29</sup> Kirby "Davis, Planter," p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> Couper, VMI, III, 245.

for that very year the new Code of Virginia specified that State cadets could be no less than sixteen years of age.<sup>31</sup>

In early September of 1873, Davis boarded in Richmond a packet boat on the James River Canal, then by far the easiest and most pleasant means of travel to Lexington. Altogether, the trip to Lexington took from two to four days. Shifts of three horses every ten miles pulled the boat, sometimes to a speed of ten miles per hour.

Davis's first contact with his fellow cadets—for better or for worse—occurred aboard the packet boat, where VMI cadets had long been notorious for their conduct. Soon to be strictly disciplined for ten months, they were uproarious in singing and dancing on the deck.<sup>32</sup> The Institute's regulations were so specific concerning what each cadet should himself provide that young Davis must have travelled light in the anticipation of drawing most of his needs from the VMI commissary.<sup>33</sup> Yet with several cadets and their baggage, no doubt the packet boats were loaded to capacity.

<sup>31</sup> Code of Virginia, prepared by George W. Munford (Richmond: James E. Goode, 1873; hereinafter cited as Virginia Code), p. 273.

<sup>32</sup> Robert W. Massie, "Memorial Address," The Delta of Sigma Nu Fraternity, ed. Charles Edward Thomas *et. al.* (84 vols.; Indianapolis: n.p., 1889- —; hereinafter cited as Sigma Nu Delta), LIII, 282.

<sup>33</sup> Regulations required that each student provide 2 pair Monroe shoes, 1 tooth brush, 2 pair sheets, 6 towels, 12 shirt collars, 1 comb, 7 shirts, 1 clothes brush, 6 pair white drilling pants, 2 pillow cases, 4 pocket handkerchiefs, 1 pair blankets, 4 pairs drawers, 1 hair brush, 7 pairs cotton socks, 1 comfort for bed, 1 clothes bag, 1 mattress, 1 pillow, and 3 flannel shirts. "Virginia Military Institute Official Register: 1873," Virginia Military Institute Official Register: 1873-1882 (n.p., n.p., 1873-1882; hereinafter cited as VMI Register), p. 12.

Morley's first year at VMI was far from uneventful. That fall, a group of upper classmen revived the old rat system known as bucking.

By the system,

a sufficient number of 'old cadets,' to do the job well, would seize first one then another of the 'new cadets,' twist their arms in such a way as to bend their body over the table and strike them a blow with a bayonet scabbard on the part of the person thus exposed, for each letter in the victim's name. <sup>34</sup>

At his mother's suggestion, Morley adopted as his middle name Delaware to commemorate his remote ancestor, Lord De La Warr, and in order to distinguish him from the many Davises at the Institute. It was well for him that he did so after he was immune from bucking, for it must have been painful enough to endure seventeen whacks for his first and last names without having the extra eight letters stamped on his posterior.

Not long after the 1873-1874 session opened, VMI Commandant Colonel Scott Ship observed that Morley's class practiced diversions in the dormitories which were not in the finest VMI tradition. Thus he issued the following order: "'No article of citizens clothing, baseball bats, masks, foils [or] shotguns . . . will be allowed in the rooms.'" <sup>35</sup>

Davis's four years as a cadet furnished him with companionship and travel as well as an education. On October 26, 1874, Governor of Virginia James L. Kemper invited the entire corps to Richmond to march at the State Fair. Because of the depression, the cadets marched rather than rode to the depot at Goshen, Virginia, fifteen miles away. There,

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<sup>34</sup> Couper, VMI, III, 244.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 229.

the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad provided free transportation to Richmond, where the 200 cadets arrived the next day.<sup>36</sup> From the Shockoe Valley train station, they marched up Main Street for a review attended by Richmond's citizens, including, no doubt, the proud Annie Davis. At the Richmond armory, the Richmond Howitzers extended a twenty-one-gun salute. For Corporal Davis the days were full of parades and reviews at the fair grounds. The nights, however, were devoted to such pleasures as attending Richmond's theaters and music halls until the cadets repaired to the private homes where they lodged.

On October 30, the corps entrained for Lexington. Because the march from Lexington to Goshen four days previously had cost the cadets heavily in shoe leather, several stages met the train at the C & O depot to carry the cadets the fifteen miles to VMI. An average stage accommodated nine passengers inside and eleven on the roof. Since Davis was then a corporal, he had the choice of an inside seat. In case of inclement weather, the rats were relegated to the roof.<sup>37</sup>

Westmoreland Davis's second year was further heightened by his invitation to join Sigma Nu social fraternity, which, four years before, three students had founded at the Virginia Military Institute. A decade later, VMI's Board of Visitors outlawed all fraternities, but until the ban Sigma Nu vied with Alpha Tau Omega for the control of

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<sup>36</sup> Robert W. Massie, "Memorial Address," Sigma Nu Delta, LII, 280.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.



offices and cadet publications.<sup>38</sup> Westmoreland Davis's rank of first lieutenant in his senior year was by no means hindered by the Sigma Nu's influence, especially since his class standing was only twenty-fourth of forty.

During Morley's third year at VMI, Governor Kemper again invited the corps to Richmond, this time to assist at the unveiling of a statue of General T. J. Jackson. On October 23, the cadets left Lexington and followed the previous year's itinerary to Richmond. Fisticuffs on the train between two brother Sigma Nus must have partially darkened the trip for Davis.<sup>39</sup> Upon the corps' arrival, Commandant Ship posted a guard at the veiled statue, but the remainder of the corps enjoyed relative freedom. Because the corps was granted only three days of vacation during the entire session, Annie Davis welcomed these reunions with her son.

To the usual gratifications of a first-classman at VMI was added an extended visit to Philadelphia. Between October 8 and 18, 1876, the cadets were guests at the Centennial Exposition, where the corps's daily dress parade soon became "one of the most popular attractions."<sup>40</sup> Davis was in the forefront as first lieutenant and co-commander of C Company. The corps gained special acclaim when it provided a review for

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<sup>38</sup> Kirby, "Davis, Planter," p. 18. For the foundation of Alpha Tau Omega in 1865 by several Newmarket veterans, see Couper, VMI, III, 245-46.

<sup>39</sup> Robert W. Massie, "Memorial Address," Sigma Nu Delta, LIII, 280.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 281.

both Governor Cheney of New Hampshire and Speaker of the House of Representatives Samuel J. Randall.<sup>41</sup>

On October 18, the corps entrained for Virginia. A mistake in Baltimore brought misery to Davis and his fellow students. A Mr. Ford, the proprietor of Ford's Hotel in Baltimore, planned an elegant dinner for the 200 men. He wired the Commandant in Philadelphia inquiring what time he could expect the corps. The reply was, "Have supper for seven."<sup>42</sup> Ford misunderstood the seven for people and not time. Thus at Baltimore's Calvert Street Station, the corps "hustled out of the cars, fell in line promptly, were marched to Ford's Hotel, lined up in front of the building, stood at attention for a long time and then marched back to the station, loaded in the cars and started back to Virginia."<sup>43</sup>

At Goshen the next morning, VMI's quartermaster, Robert White, awaited the exhausted cadets with only cold sandwiches and coffee. As the disgruntled young men disembarked, ate, and started for Lexington, they punctuated their march with the refrain: "Hang Bob White on a Sour Apple Tree as We Go Marching On."<sup>44</sup>

Young Davis's academic record at VMI suggests that he enjoyed the Commandant's forbidden "baseball bats, masks, foils, shotguns" and the

<sup>41</sup> Couper, VMI, III, 252.

<sup>42</sup> Robert W. Massie, "Memorial Address," Sigma Nu Delta, LIII, 281.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

yearly trips more than devoting himself to his studies. His final standing for his four years was twenty-eighth of thirty-two, only four from the very bottom of the list and a sad reflection upon his lifelong admiration of General Robert E. Lee. Although only in his third year did he ever stand above the bottom third of his class, he nonetheless showed an analytical mind and ability as an orator. His best grades were in military engineering, chemistry, physiology, rhetoric and logic. In his languages, Davis did only fairly. His standing of twenty-ninth of thirty-two in drawing suggests clumsiness with a pencil. This would lead one to believe that his handwriting even then was as illegible as it was in later years.<sup>45</sup> Neither was young Davis especially astute in his military courses. In ordnance and gunnery, he stood thirty-second of thirty-two.<sup>46</sup>

By July, 1877, Davis had completed his work at the Virginia Military Institute. The first week in July brought graduation, and with it remorse at having to leave the college family that four years of discipline had molded. Yet VMI's commencement exercises contained so many activities that the graduates had little time for sorrow. Graduation day began with polishing everything from brass to rifle barrels. At mid-morning the four companies formed on the parade ground to hear the Commandant read the order announcing the standing of each graduate (an

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<sup>45</sup> Kirby "Davis, Planter," p. 256.

<sup>46</sup> "Virginia Military Institute Official Register: 1877," VMI Register, pp. 18-19.

event which must have brought little pleasure to Morley) and the promotions for the coming year.<sup>47</sup> The corps then marched across the adjoining campus of Washington and Lee University to the Presbyterian Church, then the largest auditorium in Lexington. There, the cadets stacked arms, entered and occupied the pews reserved for them in the center. Following the exercises, the corps reformed outside and marched back to the barracks, where the cadets remained in formation to sing over and over "Auld Lang Syne."<sup>48</sup>

The first part of the evening contained pyrotechnic displays improvised illegally by the students. The grand finale—the grand ball—began at 10 p. m. in the mess hall which the first classmen themselves had decorated. At 1 a. m. the supper room opened for refreshments. Then several hours later, the rising sun ended the ball and traditionally graduated the first classmen.<sup>49</sup>

For two years after graduation, Westmoreland Davis taught school in the Commonwealth. Actually, he had no other choice; the Code of Virginia made teaching for two years for State Cadets mandatory.<sup>50</sup> At eighteen, Davis was still dependent upon his mother, who secured for him a letter of recommendation from Professor George Frederick Holmes of the University of Virginia to use in obtaining a suitable position.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Couper, VMI, III, 230.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Virginia Code, p. 274.

<sup>51</sup> Kirby, "Davis, Planter," p. 20.

In the late 1870's, Davis took a position as a freight clerk on the Richmond and Allegheny Railroad. He quickly became friends with Heth Lorton, who later became the station master in Lynchburg. The two corresponded in later years, and in 1885, Lorton helped Davis finance his law study in New York.<sup>52</sup> Davis made other friendships when Company C of Virginia's 1st Volunteer Militia Regiment elected him its captain. For so ambitious a young man, a military career on remote outposts of the Far West, while overawing dispirited Indians, held no appeal. Yet the ideal of the citizen-soldier and the love of military panoply was by now ingrained, and Davis maintained strict discipline in this "family clique-ridden militia unit."<sup>53</sup>

Although she enjoyed Richmond society, Annie Davis did not relinquish her fondness for South Carolina. In 1880, she considered moving there, for she inquired of a friend if suitable accommodations were available for Morley in Stateburgh,<sup>54</sup> where it was possible that he might enjoy a good chance of achieving prominence in the land of his fathers. However, the response from South Carolina was not sufficient to encourage their removal, and the Davises remained in Richmond.

In 1882, Annie Davis moved to Washington, while her son considered making Charlottesville his permanent home. By 1883, Davis had decided

<sup>52</sup> Heth Lorton to Westmoreland Davis, October 6, 1886; Davis Papers, UVa.

<sup>53</sup> Kirby, "Davis, Planter," p. 20.

<sup>54</sup> Agnes H. Burgess to Annie Davis, January 25, 1880; Davis Papers, UVa.

upon a legal career and enrolled in the University of Virginia in courses designed to supplement the largely engineering ones he had had at VMI. Besides, it is possible that his standing at VMI was not sufficiently high to gain admission to one of the better law schools.

Exactly where Davis lived in Charlottesville is unknown. Since he was a postgraduate, it is possible that he received both room and board in one of the fashionable rooming houses near the University grounds. Living costs of approximately \$162 per year in these houses were not too staggering for a man of Davis's limited means.<sup>55</sup>

Davis stayed busy during his year in Charlottesville by taking courses in economics, English literature, history, philosophy, and three fields of law. Davis studied literature and history under Professor James M. Garnett. For his lectures in law, Morley heard Stephen O. Southall, who, although his students did not consider him a great lecturer, was noted "for a ready and sparkling wit. . . ."<sup>56</sup> Where Southall failed as an instructor, Professor Noah K. Davis of philosophy more than succeeded. One writer has observed that Professor Davis's "knowledge was profound and his aptitude for imparting it so persuasive and attractive that . . . his students frequently lingered with him in the classroom after the lecture had closed."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Philip Alexander Bruce, History of the University of Virginia: 1819-1919 (5 vols.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1920-1922), IV, 72.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 38.

After completing his postgraduate study at the University of Virginia, Davis decided that he could remain in the Commonwealth no longer. No doubt, the stigma of having brought suit against his family plagued him just as much in Charlottesville as in Richmond. By this time, he probably had become aware through his railroad job of the potent economic power wielded in Virginia by Northern industrialists. Thus, he went to complete his education and win for himself power and wealth outside a Virginia which was unsympathetic to his ambitions and pride.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### FROM F. F. V. TO URBAN ARISTOCRAT

Following the example of so many other Southerners after the Civil War, Westmoreland Davis went to New York City to achieve fame and fortune. Outstanding Virginia migrants then in New York included Roger Pryor and Thomas Fortune Ryan. In 1884, Pryor, a former Confederate general, was a successful New York lawyer; while Ryan combined law with financial promotion. Davis watched the former become a justice on the New York Supreme Court; the latter, a magnate in the city's transit authorities, in the Equitable Insurance Company, and in the American Tobacco Company. Such transplanted Southerners so impressed Henry Adams and Henry James that those writers in at least one contemporary novel apiece endowed Southern men with dignity and honesty in an era when the absence of both was conspicuous.<sup>58</sup> In fact, one could almost substitute Westmoreland Davis for John Carrington in Adams's Democracy or Basil Ransom in James's The Bostonians, who had seen the war destroy his Virginia wealth and who had gone to New York to practice law "with fifty dollars in his pocket and a gnawing hunger in his heart."<sup>59</sup>

In 1884, Davis enrolled as a law student at Columbia University. Achieving a law degree at Columbia required two years of exhaustive

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<sup>58</sup> C. Vann Woodward, The Burden of Southern History ("Vintage Books"; New York: Random House, 1961), pp. 117-34.

<sup>59</sup> Henry James, The Bostonians ("The Modern Library"; New York: Random House, 1956), p. 13. Davis's entrance into New York "in a somewhat critical pecuniary state" and "without friends or means" certainly matches Ransom's condition of poverty. Newsclipping, July 1, 1918; Davis File, VMI.



study. The aspiring student chose between either attending morning or afternoon classes, so that part of the daylight could be spent either in library study or in employment to defray expenses. The free summers were aids to those students fortunate enough to locate employment in New York's many legal firms.

Davis studied at Columbia under one of the nation's best legal professors, Theodore William Dwight, who, in 1858, had taken charge of the law school. Then, as well as for many subsequent years, Dwight was the law school. Until Dwight introduced his novel method of instruction, law students had merely read the law under established lawyers and appeared before the bar when they believed themselves prepared. Dwight introduced at Columbia a method which he described as "'Socratic, illustrative and expository.'" He acquainted the student with the general principles; taught him their application; and referred him to pertinent cases for independent study. The system, in short, worked from general principles to specific cases.<sup>60</sup>

When, in 1890, the Columbia Trustees substituted for Dwight's method the Harvard Case System, several Columbia Law alumni appealed to Dwight's former students for aid in preserving the status quo. Whether or not Davis contributed is unknown, but the response was sufficiently good that the alumni established the New York Law School to perpet-

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<sup>60</sup> H. W. Howard Knott, "Theodore William Dwight," Dictionary of American Biography, ed. Allen Johnson et. al. (20 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928-1936; hereinafter cited as DAB), V, 572.

uate the Dwight method.<sup>61</sup> That Davis was not a conspicuously generous donor to Columbia University in later years was perhaps in part a consequence of its treatment of his former professor.

Aside from Dwight, there was teaching in the law school during Davis's attendance a young lawyer destined for great fame, Charles Evans Hughes. Almost four months before Davis matriculated, Hughes was graduated a bachelor of laws with highest honors. Columbia's practice was to reward the outstanding senior of each class with an annual salary of \$500 for three years if he would remain at Columbia to teach.<sup>62</sup> Young Hughes declined the offer because of the onerous demands it would place on his time; but he agreed to preside as an inquiring referee over the moot court and also give twice-weekly quizzes for approximately 200 students. During the 1885-1886 session, Hughes taught common-law pleading as well. Remarkably, Davis never referred to Hughes in his correspondence, although the latter conducted both of the two weekly quizzes in Columbia's law program while Davis was there. While the quizzes were not mandatory, it is inconceivable that Davis would have spent two years at Columbia without attending any of them.

Davis and Hughes were also connected peripherally. In 1883, Hughes began working during the summer for the legal firm of Chamberlain, Carter and Hornblower, a firm which had previously included Sherburne B.

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<sup>61</sup> "Theodore William Dwight," The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography (49 vols.; New York: James T. White Co., 1891-1966), VI, 349.

<sup>62</sup> Merlo J. Pusey, Charles Evans Hughes (2 vols.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1951; hereinafter cited as Pusey, Hughes), I, 70.

Eaton and Eugene H. Lewis. The latter two had withdrawn to form Eaton & Lewis with offices in the Equitable Building at 120 Broadway and had gained eminence when Eaton became the counsel for Thomas Alva Edison. In the year of Davis's graduation from Columbia, Eaton & Lewis offered Hughes a position which he refused. Not long afterwards, Westmoreland Davis was working for the firm. Had Hughes accepted, the possibility exists that Davis would have had to look elsewhere for employment.

Davis's two years at Columbia were far from easy financially. "An unheated garret became his home, and the expenses of school and daily life necessitated his finding a clerical job with a legal firm."<sup>63</sup> In the Oliver Twist tradition, Davis worked late and often slept in the warm office. A visit home in 1885 prompted a family friend to remark: "If he lives, I predict that he will rise to the top of his profession and leave an impress on his age. He is ambitious, but I fear he studies too hard or too late at night. He looks very delicate."<sup>64</sup>

On May 26, 1886, the Columbia Law School graduated 109 men, among them Westmoreland Davis. The commencement was held in the four-story Academy of Music, quite fittingly since the program was interspersed with musical selections between speakers from the works of Rossini, Mendelssohn, Brahms and Johann Strauss.<sup>65</sup> The processional was Men-

<sup>63</sup> Kirby, "Davis, Planter," p. 25.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>65</sup> Newsclipping on the graduation of the Columbia Law School (ca. May 27, 1886), and "Order of Exercises" for the graduation; Columbian Collection, Columbia University Library, New York, New York; hereinafter cited as Columbian Collection.

delssohn's "Athalie." Led by the President of Columbia, Frederick A. P. Barnard, the 109 graduates filed down the center aisle to their seats. After the prayer by Chaplain Cornelius R. Duffie and a musical selection, Theodore Dwight delivered his address to the class. This was the aging Dwight's twenty-seventh address to graduates, and in four years he would retire.

One newspaper account of the exercises ranked Dwight's address as more significant than that of the guest speaker, Daniel Chamberlain.<sup>66</sup> Dwight addressed himself to "the dangers of law and order threatened by the rampant radicalism now abroad in the land."<sup>67</sup> The topic appears odd, since Dwight then espoused reforms championed by the Progressives a decade later. He had been instrumental in securing penal reform for the State and municipal reform for the city after Samuel Tilden broke the Tweed Ring. For all his ardor for humanitarian and political reform, Dwight was thoroughly conservative on economic matters. It was against the economic radicalism that he spoke.

Dwight began by denouncing the radicalism of Henry George and John Most. George's recent Progress and Poverty (1879) had indicted Social Darwinism and the industrial society and had proposed his famous "single tax" on land. In 1886, George was a candidate for the Mayoralty of New York in opposition to both the industrialist Abram S. Hewitt and the

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<sup>66</sup> Newsclipping on the graduation of the Columbia Law School (ca. May 27, 1886); Columbiana Collection.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

patrician reformer Theodore Roosevelt. Although Hewitt won handily, it is significant that George polled 3,000 votes more than Roosevelt.<sup>68</sup>

An equally easy target for Dwight was the socialist, John Most, whose newspaper Die Freiheit was even printed in red, and who was then lodged in a New York jail for inciting a riot. After denouncing Most, Dwight turned to the Knights of Labor, whom he dubbed "bastard knights" who employed the "un-American thing called the boycott to molest" society.<sup>69</sup> As in his diatribe against the German-American Most, Dwight anticipated the nativistic strains of Progressivism by the use of "un-American." In his denunciation of both George and Most, Dwight probably found an attentive ear in Westmoreland Davis. Radical proposals to alter or abolish the capitalist system under which ambitious and able men could thrive, or to tax the landed society which a young lawyer would defend and seek to join, could only evoke incredulous disdain from a man like Westmoreland Davis.

In the presentation of awards following Dwight's address, the main essay prize went to Paul D. Cravath, who later became a law partner of Charles Evans Hughes. As it had been at VMI with Davis, so it was at Columbia; he merely received his diploma. Yet by 1921, the year of his retirement as Governor of Virginia, Davis had outshone all his former

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<sup>68</sup> William Henry Harbaugh, Power and Responsibility: The Life and Times of Theodore Roosevelt (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1961), p. 68.

<sup>69</sup> Newsclipping on the graduation of the Columbia Law School (ca. May 27, 1886); Columbiana Collection.

classmates. From the 1886 class, Davis was the only governor and senatorial candidate. Moreover, the class produced only two congressmen and one Federal judge. Of the 109 graduates, only eight had earned listings with Davis in Who's Who In America.<sup>70</sup> Of the 1886 prize winners, the listing included only Cravath.

The main address followed the presentation of awards and Strauss's "Gypsy Baron." The guest speaker was Daniel Chamberlain, whose background probably made his address unpleasant for Davis. During the Civil War, Chamberlain had served as a lieutenant in the 54th Massachusetts Volunteers, an all-Negro unit. Immediately after the war, he carpet-bagged to South Carolina, where he tried cotton planting. Although South Carolina's "Bourbons" supported him from time to time in his attempts to establish honest government for the State, in 1876, Chamberlain opposed for the governor's mansion Wade Hampton, whose antebellum position in the Southern aristocracy resembled that of Thomas Gordon Davis.<sup>71</sup> Yet it was for Dwight alone to touch on controversial issues. Chamberlain addressed himself to the development of American law and the impossibility of its codification.

After Chamberlain's address and the benediction, the 109 graduates

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<sup>70</sup> Who's Who In America, ed. Albert N. Marquis et. al. (35 vols.; Chicago: A. N. Marquis & Co., 1899-1967; hereinafter cited as Who's Who In America). See also Catalogue of Officers and Graduates of Columbia University (XV edition; New York: n.p., 1912), pp. 478-80.

<sup>71</sup> Francis Pendleton Gaines, "Daniel H. Chamberlain," DAB, III, 595.

marched from the Academy of Music to Meyerbeer's "L'Africaine." If Davis found satisfaction in Dwight's address and in receiving his diploma, he probably received satisfaction from little else. The program as well as the newspaper account spelled his last name "Davies," and the program even butchered Delaware into "Delawan."<sup>72</sup>

Westmoreland Davis remained in New York in the firm of Eaton & Lewis. Since New York was then exhibiting the greatest growth of any Eastern metropolis, a young lawyer could find no better place to settle. New York was to America what France had been to Europe in centuries past: it either originated or approved America's styles and tastes. In architecture, music, dress and the arts—all new forms had to receive a New York blessing. In architecture Richard M. Hunt and the firm of McKim, Mead and White set the styles. The former's genius lay in the French Renaissance; the latter's in the Italian Renaissance. Fifth Avenue displayed its genius in such buildings as the Metropolitan and University clubs and in such residences as the Astor and Gerry mansions. Working closely with the architects were such illustrious sculptors as Augustus Saint-Gaudens, whose eighteen-foot Diana adorned the pinnacle of Stanford White's Madison Square Garden. This era in New York also saw the beginning of the great art collections of such moguls as J. Pierpont

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<sup>72</sup> Newsclipping on the graduation of the Columbia Law School (ca. May 27, 1886), and "Order of Exercises" for the graduation; Columbiana Collection.

Morgan.<sup>73</sup>

While New York was a city of palatial gardens and mansions, it was also a city of filthy tenements and back alleys. While it was the city of Delmonico's and over 1,000 hotels, it was also the city where 140,000 families lived unemployed. Interestingly, however, New York's élite had changed little in its estimation of many people who did work. One critic described New York waiters as "avaricious and ill-mannered . . .

[treating] all patrons alike . . . [in] expectation of the largest possible tip. . . ." <sup>74</sup> In New York the rich lived handsomely. Rapid transportation guaranteed a daily supply of fresh fruits and vegetables to those able to afford it. Yet in New York, meals were more the exception than the rule for tenement dwellers.

New York's wealthy found city living in the summer months intolerable. Thus, fashionable suburbs appeared which provided either seasonal retirement or year-around living. In 1887, to escape the summer heat and to improve himself socially, Westmoreland Davis, then twenty-eight years old, acquired land about forty miles from New York in the newest and most exclusive suburb, Tuxedo Park. That he bought at Tuxedo Park rather than elsewhere was a measure of his ambition to achieve for himself the best of what his era afforded. On new ground, Davis, new to

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<sup>73</sup> Martha J. Lamb and Mrs. Burton Harrison, History of the City of New York: Its Origin, Rise and Progress (3 vols.; New York: The A. S. Barnes Co., 1877-1896; hereinafter cited as Lamb and Harrison, History of New York City), III, 857 and 791-92.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 847.



New York, could best meet socially established New Yorkers of wealth and prominence in circumstances not dissimilar from Virginia. Besides, even critics of the plutocracy complimented Tuxedo Park's "slim girls in gauzy skirts and long corset-like bodices [who] circle[d] about in the arms of men. . . ." <sup>75</sup>

Tuxedo Park owed everything to Pierre Lorillard, III. In the early 1880's, this noted equestrian and yachtsman established the park as a game preserve on about 6,000 acres of Orange County land which his family had owned since 1812. Tuxedo Lake, near the tract's center, had long contained black bass; to complete the angler's paradise, Lorillard constructed a trout hatchery, which seventeen years later, Westmoreland Davis emulated at Morven Park in northern Virginia.

In 1885, Lorillard converted the game preserve into a residential corporation, whose members had the privilege of fishing and hunting in the preserve. This soon evelved into one of the nation's first country clubs. The members adopted the name Tuxedo Park. <sup>76</sup> To insure daily commuting between New York City, Lorillard built a picturesque railroad station where the Erie road touched the property. By December, 1886,

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<sup>75</sup> Dixon Wecter, The Saga of American Society (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937; hereinafter cited as Wecter, Saga of American Society), pp. 272-73.

<sup>76</sup> The name, Tuxedo, is derived from the Indian name for the lake near the tract's center—Ptuck-sepo. Ibid., 272.

Lorillard had constructed thirteen cottages, some of which he had sold and others which he was renting. In 1887, when Davis joined the Gilded Age pioneers of Tuxedo Park, only ten families were living at the park during the winter. Among these were descendants of such Knickerbocker families as the Van Burens and Livingstons. Another was the wealthy bachelor, James Breese, who some years later gave a celebrated bachelor's banquet whose table was adorned with a huge Jack Horner pie as the centerpiece. During the festivities the pie opened and there emerged a young woman "covered only by the ceiling."<sup>77</sup>

Contemporaneously with his joining the Tuxedo Corporation in 1887, Davis purchased Lot 113 for his residence and Lot I for his stables and carriage house, an aggregate of about 79,000 square feet.<sup>78</sup> This property was located on a steeply sloping hill commanding fine vistas of the lake at its foot and of the opposite shore. Although it was to be a small acreage compared with later developments of the corporation, the initial conception of Tuxedo Park called more for a pied-a-terre than for a great mansion.

Exactly when Davis constructed Bagatelle, his house at Tuxedo Park, is unknown. However, in order to enjoy the cool Orange County summers, he probably built it soon after purchasing the land. That he intended Bagatelle as a summer retreat and not a permanent residence

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<sup>77</sup> Lloyd Morris, Incredible New York: High Life and Low Life of the Last Hundred Years (New York: Random House, 1951; hereinafter cited as Morris, Incredible New York), p. 249.

<sup>78</sup> Record Book of Land Sales at Tuxedo Park: 1885-1967; Tuxedo Park Collection, Tuxedo Park Corporation, Tuxedo Park, New York.

is obvious. The dwelling contains many windows that would make summer breezes pleasant but winter winds distressing. For summer evening relaxation, there is a long verandah that extends the entire length of the lake side.<sup>79</sup>

Architecturally, Bagatelle is a good example of the so-called Queen Anne Revival. A blending of shingle and clapboard decorated with carved fret-work wooden panels reaches two and a half stories high at the entrance front, which then had a little court of gravels and cobblestones between it and the road which meanders through the Park. Davis manifested his individualism in selecting the cottage's design, for none of his neighbors' cottages is similar architecturally.<sup>80</sup> Inside Bagatelle the rooms conformed to the cottage ideal only in their size. Darkened oak columns, whose capitals were picked out in bright colors, separated cozy parlors whose walls were decorated with superb Brabant tapestries hung from ceiling to floor, serving something of their original purpose in reducing drafts. The Davises hung their family portraits over the tapestries, giving an odd juxtaposition of antebellum Americans and Romans of the Punic War. The floors were sometimes covered with three thicknesses: a great Oriental rug with smaller rugs scattered upon it and pelts of fur thrown at random. To supplement

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<sup>79</sup> Observations made by the writer at Tuxedo Park, New York, December, 13, 1967.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., and Harper's Weekly (62 vols.; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857-1916; hereinafter cited as Harper's Weekly), XXX, No. 1565 (December 18, 1886), 827.

the fireplaces, there were pierced footed braziers. All in all, the effect was sumptuous in the extreme for all that it was cluttered. It is likely that Westmoreland Davis and his future wife, Marguerite, inherited these elegant furnishings from her family rather than purchasing them, for the couple later not only used them to furnish their country mansion in Virginia, but featured them long after the furnishings had fallen from popularity.

Westmoreland Davis became acquainted through the Tuxedo Club with many prominent New Yorkers. The club's president during Davis's membership was Pierre Lorillard III. Vice-presidents included William Waldorf Astor and George L. Rives.<sup>81</sup> Waldorf Astor was the son of John Jacob Astor III, whose death in 1890 left the son with \$100,000,000. Waldorf Astor shared Davis's alma mater, Columbia Law School. The other vice-president, George L. Rives, shared common ground with Davis in ancestry, schooling and interests. A grandson of William Cabell Rives, the antebellum Virginia diplomat and United States Senator, Rives was graduated from Columbia Law School three years before Davis entered. Both Rives and Davis also shared a strong interest in the study of history.<sup>82</sup>

William Kent, the club's secretary, was probably William Kent the mechanical engineer who, in 1882, was a manager for Babcock and Wilcox and who later became an inventor, a writer, and a consultant to

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<sup>81</sup> Officers, Members, Constitution and Rules of the Tuxedo Club, (n.p., n.p., n.d.; New-York Historical Society, New York, New York).

<sup>82</sup> W. J. Ghent, "William Waldorf Astor," DAB, I, 402, and William R. Shepherd, "George L. Rives," DAB, XV, 634.

engineering firms in New York.<sup>83</sup> The significance of Davis's acquaintances representing both the arts and the sciences possibly became apparent at Morven Park several years later. Over the entrance into Morven's great hall Davis placed a piece of statuary depicting a uniting of wisdom (the arts) and industry (the sciences).

Financing for Davis's expansion into Tuxedo Park came from both his lucrative law practice and his speculation in New York and Washington real estate. Although Davis began his New York career in the firm of Eaton and Lewis, he soon severed these connections to form Gibson and Davis with a William J. Gibson. His office, however, remained in the skyscraper at 120 Broadway where Eaton and Lewis was located.

Perhaps his greatest source of income came from land speculation. Davis's \$2,200 bank balance only eight months after his graduation from Columbia certainly implies a source of revenue independent of law.<sup>84</sup> To top this, an undated memorandum attached to the bank statement reveals that Davis had recently spent \$8,000 for land.<sup>85</sup> To a young man whose residence scarcely a year before had been an unheated flat, success came quickly. It was again the influence of Amie Davis which accounted for her son's speculation. With the aid of former Secretary of the Treasury, John Sherman, she obtained in 1882 a clerical position in Washington.

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<sup>83</sup> Carl W. Mitman, "William Kent," DAB, X, 348.

<sup>84</sup> Westmoreland Davis to W. M. Hill (?), February 23, 1887, Davis Papers, UVa.

<sup>85</sup> Memorandum entitled Parker and Townsend in Account with Mrs. C. A. Stanley, ibid.

She and Sherman somehow became close friends, and Annie even sent him flowers on his birthday.<sup>86</sup> The result of their friendship was that Sherman gave young Davis what financial backing he needed.<sup>87</sup> Having made the first steps to material success, the young lawyer could now consider matrimony.

Westmoreland Davis first met Marguerite Inman when her cousin, Walker Curry, invited him to the Inman residence at Branford, Connecticut, for an interview with Mrs. William H. Inman, who was looking for a reliable young lawyer to handle her husband's estate. The interview proved quite successful: Davis won both the job and the daughter. In London in 1892, he married twenty-two year-old Marguerite.<sup>88</sup>

Originally from Georgia, the Inmans had been prominent in New York for two decades. William H. Inman and his brother, John H. Inman, had migrated to New York just after the Civil War, when each could boast only "a tattered rebel uniform for his sole possession in the whole world."<sup>89</sup> The brothers established in New York a cotton brokerage firm with James Swann. As the Inmans became wealthy, they invested heavily in the "New South."<sup>90</sup> Raised in the South's Democratic party, the Inmans remained

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<sup>86</sup> John Sherman to Annie Davis, (?)(?), 1895, Davis Papers, UVA.

<sup>87</sup> Memorandum signed by Mrs. C. A. Stanley, October 19, 1889, *ibid.* Mrs. Stanley was a receiver for John Sherman.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Mrs. Alice Proffitt, October 17, 1967, Morven Park, Leesburg, Virginia.

<sup>89</sup> The New York Times, August 3, 1887, p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> Confederate Veteran (40 vols.; Nashville: n.p., 1893-1932), IV, No. 12, (December, 1896), 418.

Democrats in New York, where they corresponded often with President Grover Cleveland. During the depression in 1895, John H. Inman even publically defended President Cleveland's stand for sound money.<sup>91</sup>

Both brothers soon became millionaires, and each owned a majestic mansion. Located on 5th Avenue between 68th and 69th Streets, the residence of John Inman contained not only a huge skylight in the main hall but also a bowling alley and a billiard room. True to the era's eclectic tastes, each room exhibited a different motif. The parlor, for instance, was furnished in the style of Louis XV.<sup>92</sup> It is probable that much of Inman's parlor found its way to Virginia in either spirit or reality, for in later years Westmoreland and Marguerite Davis furnished their parlor at Morven Park in the same style. William Inman maintained a modest residence in New York City at 11 West 56th Street and a mansion, Castle Rock, in Branford, Connecticut. Aside from these, he was the proprietor of a plantation in Bulloch County, Georgia, a house in Atlanta, a farm in Ringgold, Georgia, and property at Hobe Sound, Florida.

Marguerite Inman Davis had two sisters and a brothers. One sister, Willie Lee Inman, was born in Atlanta in 1864 on the night that Sherman burned the city.<sup>93</sup> The brother, Robert Walker Inman, provided an excellent entree for his brother-in-law into New York society, since

<sup>91</sup> The New York Times, August 3, 1887, p. 5.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., February 4, 1894, p. 20.

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Mrs. Alice Proffitt, October 17, 1967, Morven Park, Leesburg, Virginia.

Inman was a member of the New York Yacht Club, the Larchmont Yacht Club, the New York Club and the Manhattan Club.<sup>94</sup> Aside from his inherited position in Inman, Swann & Company, Robert Inman was also the president of the East River Silk Company. Although ten years separated Robert Inman from Marguerite Davis, the two were very close; and she was the only sister for whom Inman named one of his four yachts.<sup>95</sup>

Scarcely three years after Westmoreland and Marguerite Davis married, Robert Inman died in a maritime accident whose details were seized upon by the yellow journalism of the day to suggest that Robert's inheritance from his father had not included the trait of chivalry. When, on August 26, 1895, he took a party of two ladies and one gentleman yachting on his Adelaide near Coney Island, a collision with the steamship Perseus occurred. Robert Inman jumped overboard, leaving his guests to their fate. The yacht sustained the collision, but a blow from the steamer's paddle wheel killed Inman.<sup>96</sup> From her brother's estate, Marguerite Davis ultimately acquired a number of furnishings, including his silver yachting trophies and library.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>94</sup> New York Social Register (New York: New York Social Register Association, 1887- --), VI, No. 5 (February, 1892), 22.

<sup>95</sup> The New York Times, August 28, 1895, p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., August 27, 1895, p. 1, August 28, 1895, p. 1 and August 30, 1895, p. 3.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Mrs. Alice Proffitt, October 17, 1967, Morven Park, Leesburg, Virginia, and observations made by the writer in the library at Morven Park, Leesburg, Virginia.



Robert Inman's death only slightly lessened the Davises' entree. Five years later, the New York Social Register listed five of Marguerite Davis's first cousins, of whom the most prominent, Hugh M. Inman, belonged to the Metropolitan Club, better known to New Yorkers as the "Millionaire's Club." However, it was not until 1903 that the Westmoreland Davises gained a social registry listing.

By 1893, several blocks on 5th Avenue extending north from 50th Street had become a lane of mansions. At 5th and 56th was the French Renaissance chateau of William Kissam Vanderbilt. Nearby was a chateau owned by Waldorf Astor. One block north reigned Colis P. Huntington; and across 5th Avenue from him lived Cornelius Vanderbilt.<sup>98</sup> Not yet to 50th Street, and yet not far behind, were Westmoreland Davis and his bride in the Waldorf Hotel during their first year of married life. Davis's choice of the Waldorf is understandable. With an Inman for a wife, he could really do no less than to lodge at the best hotel in the city. That the grand hotel of the 1890's was very much a respectable social center for the nabobs of the day is illustrated by the fact that Clarence Mackay, heir of the Comstock Lode fortune, maintained a suite at the Waldorf. Besides pleasant society, there were the business connections that living at the Waldorf could provide.

In dining, the Davises had their choice of the hotel's three dining rooms. The largest, the Palm Room, demanded formal attire. Not only

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<sup>98</sup> Morris, Incredible New York, p. 205.

were its waiters fluent in three languages, but the head chef alone had an annual salary of \$10,000. Only slightly less posh were the Empire and Rose Rooms, where the Davises probably dined more frequently.<sup>99</sup>

The fact that Westmoreland and Marguerite Davis resided at the Waldorf for almost a whole year was possibly necessitated by their renovation of Bagatelle at Tuxedo Park to serve as more than a summer retreat. In 1894, the couple decided to divide their time between Tuxedo Park and New York City. By maintaining a suite at the Waldorf, the Davises could attend the theatre and the opera. By retreating to Tuxedo Park, they could recapture the essence of the country gentleman and his lady, safely away from the daily aggravations of city life.

By 1894, Tuxedo Park had become a quiet and self-sufficient suburb. The town of Tuxedo near the Park had constructed saloons to entice the Park's coachmen. In 1894, to the coachmen's disgust, the Park ruled the saloons off-limits. Also annoying had been the excessive prices the local merchants at Tuxedo had charged for food. To remedy this, the Park established the Tuxedo Stores Company.<sup>100</sup> Thus, when the Davises resided at Tuxedo Park, Westmoreland could choose as little or as much contact with the outside world as he desired.

Most of all, Tuxedo Park had become a summer playground for its residents and their guests. Indoor recreation included cards, billiards

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<sup>99</sup> Morris, Incredible New York, p. 236.

<sup>100</sup> The New York Times, April 15, 1894, p. 22.

and dancing. Outdoor recreation included golf, hunting, fishing, boating, tennis, polo and riding. As one of America's first country clubs, Tuxedo Park could boast one of the country's first golf courses. Davis, however, was no golfer. Indeed, to a man whose passion was work, methodically following a small ball must have seemed ridiculous. Whenever he could divorce himself from his work, Davis would vacation with the other residents. The mornings were customarily spent outdoors. Then, "on weekday afternoons and on Saturday nights, the cottagers assemble <sup>d</sup> at the clubhouse, where, mingling with the members and guests there, they enjoy <sup>ed</sup> in the afternoon their tea, and on Saturday evenings a somewhat formal dinner. . . ." <sup>1</sup> House parties consumed any remaining moments.

The climax of Tuxedo Park's summer season and the opening of New York City's winter season was the Tuxedo Club's Autumn Ball. The clubhouse where the ball was held covered almost two acres. The main floor, complete with parlor, reading room, writing room, main dining room and cafe, contained a combination ballroom-theater. The room was circular, seventy-five feet in diameter, and had a mosaic floor of inlaid hard woods. <sup>2</sup> The room's ceiling was a huge dome "supported by large beams which curve <sup>d</sup> to the apex, decorated in blue and gold." <sup>3</sup> A chandelier hung from each beam.

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<sup>1</sup> The New York Times Illustrated Magazine, August 8, 1897, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Harper's Weekly, XXX, No. 1565 (December 18, 1886), 827.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

The club customarily held its Autumn Ball during the last week in October. It was usual to have 400 in attendance, and the members often felt the august presence of J. Pierpont Morgan and E. H. Harriman.<sup>4</sup> The dance committee usually decorated the ballroom with autumn leaves and vines. Favors for the dancers were elaborate, judging from those given at the 1899 ball: "gold watch chains, guards, and bangle bracelets, triplicate shaving mirrors, dainty silk parasols . . . and, most appropriately, dolls dressed to represent Admirals Schley and Sampson . . . and meerschaum pipes having the face of Admiral Dewey. . . ." <sup>5</sup>

The festivities of the first part of the evening included house parties. At 11 p. m. the ball began with the cotillion starting after midnight. Two orchestras played alternately throughout the evening. Life in the country must have intensified the vitality of the Tuxedo vacationers, for one New York paper concluded that the dances "had a life and 'snap' that dances in town rarely possess."<sup>6</sup>

The Autumn Balls also provided innovations in dress. At the 1886 ball, as one New York paper reported, "'Young Griswold Lorillard appeared in a tailless dress coat and waistcoat of scarlet satin, looking for all the world like a royal footman. There were several others of the abbreviated coats worn, which suggested to the onlookers

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<sup>4</sup> The New York Times, November 4, 1893, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., October 29, 1899, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., November 1, 1896, p. 10.

that the boys ought to have been put in strait-jackets long ago."<sup>7</sup> Despite the unfavorable review, the short jacket soon gained popularity, and the "Tuxedo" became the fashionable attire for informal dining and house parties.

For the Davises, recreation in New York meant horses. Raised in the Southern tradition, Davis devoted an entire lot at Tuxedo Park to his stables. Davis early joined the Orange County Hunt Club, presided over by E. H. Harriman.<sup>8</sup> Westmoreland and Marguerite Davis quickly became favorite subjects for photographers of socially prominent equestrian events. The New York Press featured both Davises mounted and jumping a fence in Orange County.<sup>9</sup> Davis sported a handsome moustache and side whiskers. Facial hair was so fashionable then that the expression became current, "Kissing a man without a moustache [is] like eating an egg without salt."<sup>10</sup> The paper concluded that Virginia mounts were the best, and cited Marguerite Davis's O. K. as one of them.<sup>11</sup> Rider and Driver featured Marguerite Davis on its cover with her "recently imported English Phaeton" pulled by "her stylish ponies Motion and

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<sup>7</sup> Wecter, Saga of American Society, p. 273.

<sup>8</sup> The New York Press, December 14, 1902, clipping; Davis Papers, UVa.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Wecter, Saga of American Society, p. 175.

<sup>11</sup> The New York Press, December 14, 1902, clipping; Davis Papers, UVa.

Notion. . . ."12 Aside from the Orange County hunt, the Davises also enjoyed the Tuxedo Park horse shows held on the Park's polo field.

While living in New York, Davis did maintain his Virginia friendships, resulting in many tempting invitations. In 1896, the Richmond banker, William M. Habliston, invited Davis, Wall-Street magnate August Belmont, and seven other gentlemen to travel with him from Richmond to Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, then to Petersburg, and back to Richmond. Aside from a mere vacation, the purpose of the trip was to study the Civil War battlefields in the Petersburg area. The party traveled in luxury, for the Richmond railroad magnate, John Skelton Williams, president then of the Georgia and Alabama and later of the Seaboard Air Line, provided his private railway car for the trip.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The Rider and Driver (121 vols.; New York: Rider and Driver Publishing Co., 1890- —; hereinafter cited as Rider and Driver), XX, No. 22 (January 19, 1901), cover.

<sup>13</sup> W. M. Habliston to Westmoreland Davis, May 6, 1896, Davis Papers, UVa.

CHAPTER THREE:  
A FITTING HABITATION

In 1902, Westmoreland and Marguerite Davis tired of the bustle and materialistic world of New York City. They were on the lookout for a great house to serve as their principal residence in Virginia when, in March, they came to Fauquier County for a season of hunting. For two weeks the Warrenton Hunt Club held a series of drag hunts. In one of these pursuits of the aniseed bag, Marguerite and Westmoreland Davis were two of the five riders who finished; and in another, Westmoreland Davis on Lady Godolphin was among ten of the original thirty-six riders who finished at all.<sup>14</sup> While in Warrenton, the couple inspected and soon afterwards purchased the 2,000-acre Morven Park estate in adjacent Loudoun County.

The great country house represented the ideal setting for wealthy Americans. Like Soames Forsythe in John Galsworthy's The Forsythe Saga, even the most recently arrived financier of the city yearned for a country seat. Perhaps because the countryside ennobled the once-crass and abrasive, today's man reviews with nostalgia the first decade of the twentieth century. It is true that there were then far-off little wars, but the burgeoning prosperity and progressive reform of the epoch bred a conviction, not merely of a millenium (which connotes both a high time and a morrow of depression), but of a continuing millenium.

Indeed, man was then wringing from nature secrets of the primordial

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<sup>14</sup> Rider and Driver, March 29, 1902, xerox, New-York Historical Society, New York City.

world, the mastery of which promised an increasingly abundant life. Just as the robber barons of the preceding decade had fancied themselves spiritual heirs of the merchant princes of the Renaissance, so the scientific and material advances of the early 1900's saw comparison between Edison and Leonardo as the realization of their respective cultural ideals.

The roseate Edwardian years, 1900-1914, depended almost as much on cash as they did on the mood la belle époque. The absence in America of an income tax and the lightness of inheritance taxes gave to this new Renaissance a semblance of permanence—a steady flow of Protean dividends and a steady supply of faithful servants, both so necessary to support the great country estate.

As America had expanded, so had Morven Park. In a century of intermittent construction since the 1780's, its dwelling had grown from two rooms and one hall to an edifice of thirty rooms and ten halls. Not long after the American Revolution, Thomas Swann, an Alexandria lawyer, purchased several hundred acres of land near Leesburg, Virginia. Later, from admiration of his friend Commodore Robert F. Stockton's estate, Morven, near Princeton, New Jersey, Swann inquired if Stockton would object if he gave his own estate the same name. Pleased by the compliment, Stockton suggested that the extensive acreage and the setting of Swann's estate would justify the suffix "Park."<sup>15</sup> The Swanns had been for several generations Virginians living in the Tidewater

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<sup>15</sup> Newsclipping, Morven Papers.



south of the James River. Thomas Swann himself had moved to the Virginia port city of Alexandria. Besides being an investment, Morven Park became for him a summer home, happily distant from the smells and fevers of Alexandria.

The first section of the existing mansion at Morven Park was a small, two-story farmhouse, built of the local field stone characteristic of central Maryland, western Pennsylvania and northern Virginia.<sup>16</sup> The next structure was more impressive. Built entirely of handmade brick, it was a Palladian complex constructed sometime before 1832. It consisted of a two-story middle house with two wings approximately three-quarters as large as, and each about ten yards from, the central edifice, while the original dwelling served either as a kitchen or as a storage house.

In the late eighteenth century, the classic temple architecture, recorded by Andreas Palladio and introduced to America in 1785 by Thomas Jefferson in his design of the Virginia State Capitol from the Maison Carrée at Nîmes, France, had been confined largely to public buildings. The 1790's witnessed some domestic construction incorporating in varying degree many classic motifs, which had been transmitted through the architectural books of Palladio and his posthumous British disciples of the mid-eighteenth century. In the early nineteenth century, America began her search for a cultural identity. Builders copying from such

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<sup>16</sup> Robert Raley, "An Architectural Survey Report of Morven Park" (ca. 1965, Morven Papers; hereinafter cited as Raley, "Architectural Survey," Morven Papers), p. 2.

British architectural books as James Stuart's and Nicholas Revett's Antiquities of Athens (1767) adopted for America as its civic architecture the classical mode of the Greek Republic.

Following reconstruction of the official buildings at Washington, the subtle changes from Roman to Greek emphasis was thought more appropriate because the latter emphasis was more republican. George Washington Parke Custis's construction of Arlington House, as well as less satisfactory examples such as Nicholas Biddle's Andalusia, epitomized the adaption of the Greek civic temple to domestic use. Whether Americans consciously thought that the Greek temple symbolized liberty, local self-government and an arcadian laissez-faire is moot, but these views have been attributed to Thomas Swann's contemporaries, usually with the implication that Southerners found architectural comfort in the dichotomies of slavery and the Declaration of Independence, of sectionalism and the Union.

A fine stone stable about 100 yards from the main house complemented the Palladian complex constituting the residence at Morven Park. Both the fenestration and the details of the outside wall of one section suggest a construction date of approximately 1790-1820.<sup>17</sup> Since the construction of stables presupposes the existence of an elaborate residence, the period 1790-1820 may also apply to the middle house.

In 1832, Thomas Swann secured a loan of \$12,000 to make extensive alterations, two of which were major. One of these was to add a four-

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<sup>17</sup> Anthony N. B. Garvan, "Initial Report for the Westmoreland Davis Memorial Foundation on Morven Park, July, 1964," Morven Papers, p. 2.

column Doric portico to convert the mansion to the Greek Revival style.<sup>18</sup> A prominent architect has concluded of the dwelling's portico: "The similarity of its design to that simply called 'Doric Portico at Athens' illustrated in Volume I of Antiquities of Athens is unmistakable. The columns of both porticos are 24 feet in height; and both designs employed the acroterium above the pediment."<sup>19</sup> The second of the major alterations was to devote the entire first floor of the middle house to a great hall as Davis was to know it when he first visited Loudoun County in 1902. By 1832, Morven Park's facade had become that of a Greek temple like those which dotted the countryside from New Orleans to Maine.

When in residence, the Swanns reserved the first floor of the middle house for entertainment and dwelt in the second floor's three rooms, the north wing's two rooms and the south wing's four rooms. These three self-contained apartments were designed less to conform to the Palladian concept of the piano nobile than to accommodate Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Swann, sons Thomas, Wilson and Robert, daughter Mary, son-in-law Thomas L. Mercer, daughter-in-law Elizabeth and any guests.

Thomas Swann II was undoubtedly ambitious to give Morven Park the greater refinements which were consonant with his evolving position as an antebellum magnate. Eight years before he inherited Morven Park and with it, forty-nine slaves, from Thomas Swann I, who died in 1840,

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<sup>18</sup> Raley, "Architectural Survey," Morven Papers, Drawing No. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

twenty-eight-year-old Thomas Swann II married Mrs. Elizabeth Gilmor Sherlock of Baltimore.<sup>20</sup> Already a substantial stockholder, in 1848 he became president of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which, ever since John Quincy Adams presided at the ceremonies dedicating its entry into Washington, had been the nation's leading railway.<sup>21</sup> In his long career, Thomas Swann II was also to serve as Mayor of Baltimore (1856-1860), Governor of Maryland (1864-1868) and as a U. S. Congressman (1868-1878).<sup>22</sup> Although he lived only intermittently at Morven Park, he, too, made impressive alterations. Inasmuch as Thomas Swann I had made quite adequate provisions for his other children, the three separate structures at Morven Park had lost their raison d'être and constituted a meaningless inconvenience to Thomas Swann II, one of whose first acts was to join the two wings to the central edifice.<sup>23</sup>

In 1853, the eminent landscape gardener, Frederick Law Olmsted, recorded his impressions of a northern Virginia plantation whose resemblance to Morven Park is so striking that it could only have been Morven Park. The anti-slavery New Yorker made careful note of the "large wooden portico" of the "old family mansion . . . remodeled in the Grecian style . . .," but he was inattentive to the newer details with

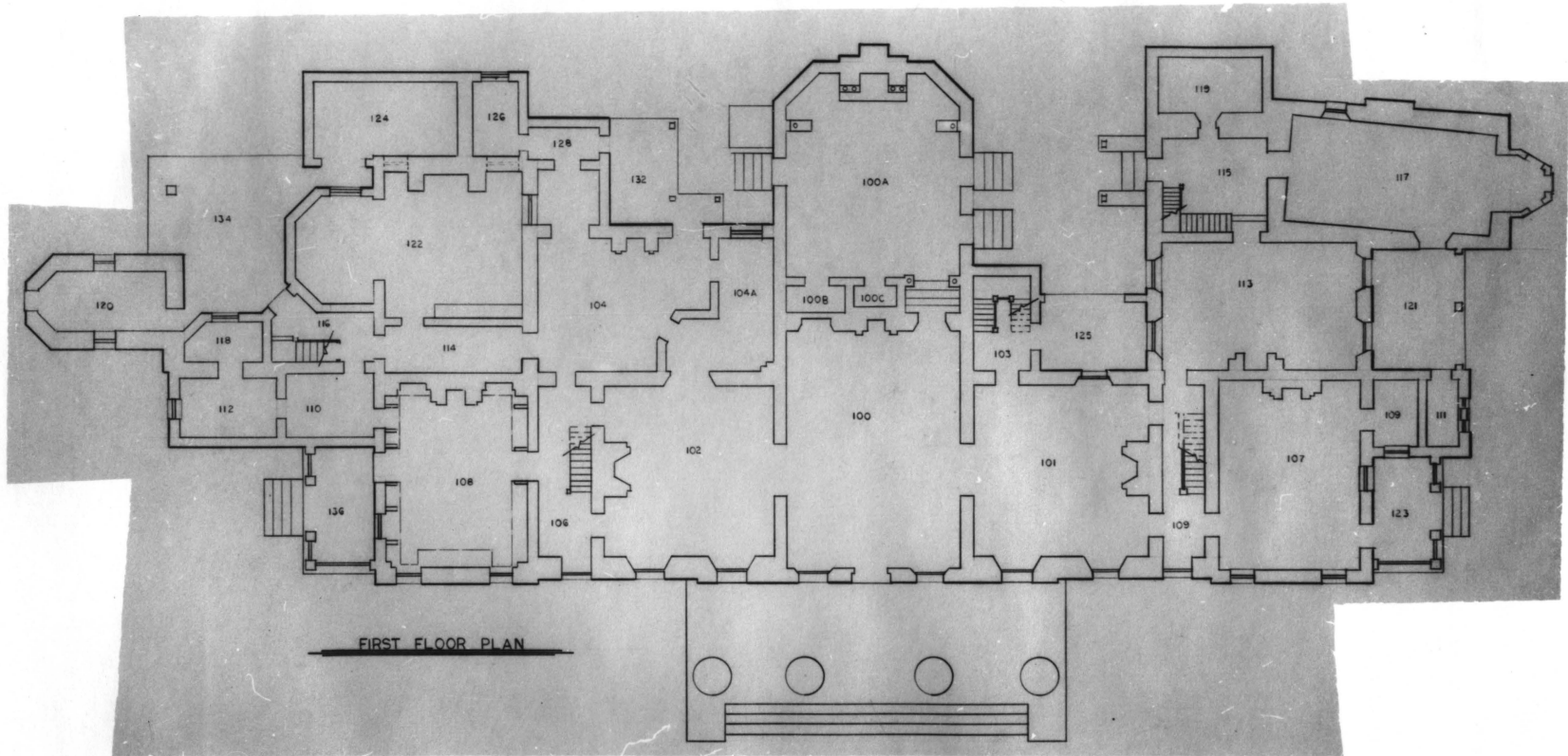
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<sup>20</sup> Thomas Swann I, Last Will and Testament, November 4, 1839, Loudoun County Will Book Z (1839-1841), pp. 144-146.

<sup>21</sup> For Swann's connection with the B & O, see Edward Hungerford, The Story of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad ( 2 vols.; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), I, 244-319.

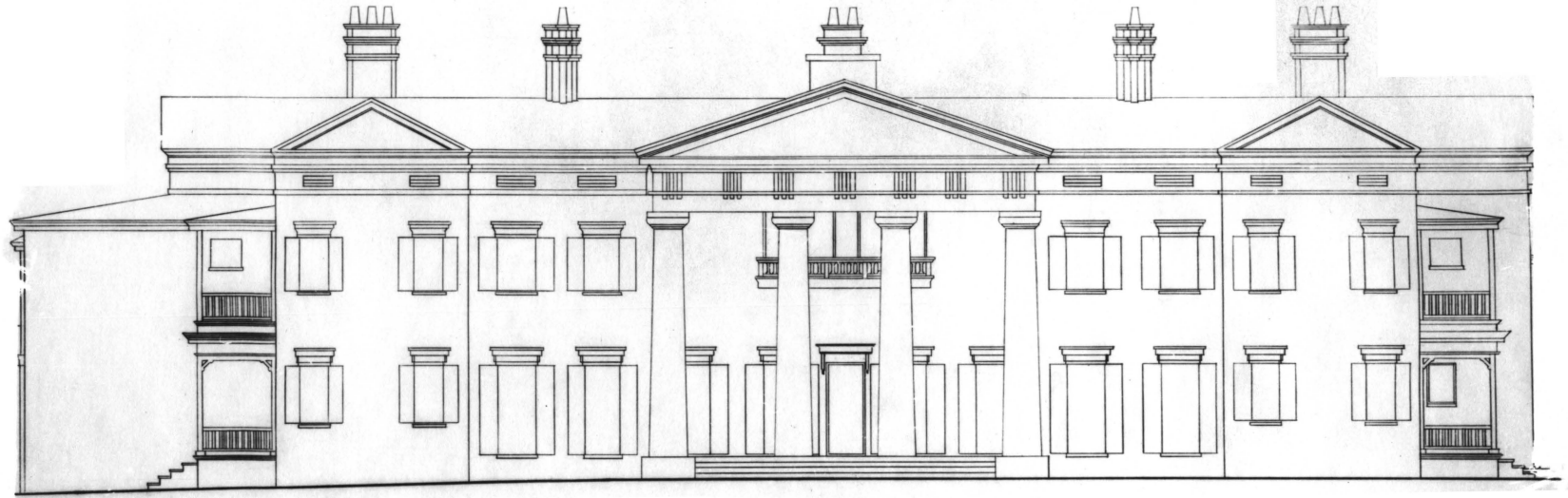
<sup>22</sup> Ella Lonn, "Thomas Swann," DAB, XVIII, 237-38.

<sup>23</sup> Raley, "Architectural Survey," Morven Papers, pp. 8-9.



- Room 117 - First Structure of the Existing Mansion  
 Rooms 100, 107, 108 - Built before 1832 by Thomas S  
 Swann I  
 Rooms 101, 102, 106, 109, 122 - Built by Thomas  
 Swann II  
 Room 100A - Built during the Carter Occupancy

MORVEN PARK: FIRST FLOOR PLAN



FRONT ELEVATION

MORVEN PARK: EAST FACADE

which the mansion had been endowed.<sup>24</sup> He was more concerned with the uses to which the land had been put and with the conditions of the slaves. Olmsted did note that the dining room (the present pantry) "extended out, rearwardly, from the house, and which in a Northern establishment would have been the kitchen. The cooking was done in a detached log cabin, and the dishes brought some distance by the servants."<sup>25</sup>

Morven Park's cuisine was typical of the gentry of Swann's era. It included cornbread, sweet potatoes, "four preparations of swine's flesh, besides fried fowls, fried eggs, cold roast turkey, and opossum . . . and milk and whiskey."<sup>26</sup>

Although Olmsted made no direct statement of Andrew Jackson Downing in connection with Morven Park, the latter's influence on Morven Park's grounds is beyond dispute. In the 1850's, Downing was publishing books on landscape gardening while he was beautifying the Capitol grounds in Washington. His Rural Essays severely criticized the Greek Revival mania, and one can surmise that under the guidance of Downing's Architecture of Country Houses (1852), Swann had embellished his mansion with

<sup>24</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted, A Journey In the Seaboard Slave States (2 vols.; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904; hereinafter cited as Olmsted, Journey), I, 99-100.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 102-03.

brackets, a cupola and towers to achieve an Italian villa.<sup>27</sup>

The meandering approach from the main road with its stately view of the mansion conformed to Downing's thinking. Moreover, Olmsted's mention of ailanthus trees on the lawn indicated that the master of Morven Park and Downing were in agreement that "the ailanthus is a picturesque tree, well adapted to produce a good effect on the lawn. . . ." Perhaps the clearest-cut similarity between the landscaping of Morven Park and that prescribed by Downing was that Swann had installed just such a cast-iron fountain with a swan as its central figure as Downing had used as an illustration in his Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening.<sup>28</sup>

By 1861, Swann had brought to a high degree of perfection that portion of his park nearest the mansion. A Union soldier recalled that in 1862, Morven Park had "'turlly lawns, blooming flower beds, fountains, statuary and tame deer."<sup>29</sup> In the 1861-1865 conflict, Morven Park fared well, less because there were no more than skirmishes at Leesburg, than because of Morven Park's special status as property of an absentee landlord who resided in Maryland. Giving practical meaning to the

<sup>27</sup> Raley, "Architectural Survey," Morven Papers, pp. 12-13 and Drawing No. 5. Modernizing such as Swann was then doing was common. Martin Van Buren was then giving his Lindenwald a "'Venetian Villa look'" by the addition of wings, an extra story and a loggia tower. Cranston Jones, Homes of the American Presidents (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1962; hereinafter cited as Jones, Presidential Homes), p. 70.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Jackson Downing, A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening (New York: C. M. Saxton & Co., 1855), pp. 231, 236-39 and 466.

<sup>29</sup> Article in the Leesburg Mirror, April 18, 1878 as quoted in Raley, "Architectural Survey," Morven Papers, p. 11.



exhortation of "Maryland, My Maryland," Confederates protected the property of anyone who might become a sympathizer. In the same manner, Unionists protected the property of a Union landlord, especially if he were an official of a railway like the B & O, so vital in wartime.

In 1883, Morven Park descended from Swann to his daughter, Mary M. Swann, who married first Ferdinand Latrobe and then Shirley Carter. The first of these was a Baltimorean who, like his father-in-law, became Mayor of Baltimore. The second was a gentleman of Loudoun County descended from the Carters of Nomini Hall who had moved to their Loudoun estate, Oatlands, before the Revolutionary War. Shirley and Mary Carter entertained lavishly and found the need to enlarge the mansion by the addition of at least six service rooms. More important, they constructed on the rear of the great hall a huge billiard room. Panelled in golden oak, it exemplified the Queen Anne style which the Philadelphia Centennial had first introduced into America.<sup>30</sup> With the lordly Carter's propensity to overbuild, the owners of Morven Park soon found that in perfecting the mansion, they had outstripped their ability to maintain it properly. Thus, by 1902, Morven Park was graced with a showy mansion--expensive, not only to renovate, but even to keep.

Changing architectural tastes had indicated for three generations of Swanns what Morven Park's architectural character should be. The Palladian had fascinated the first Thomas Swann; Downing had influenced

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<sup>30</sup> Raley, "Architectural Survey," Morven Papers, pp. 13-14. When the Davises occupied Morven Park, the golden oak walls received moose heads and tiger skins, achieving a striking resemblance to Theodore Roosevelt's trophy room at Sagamore Hill. Jones, Presidential Homes, p. 166 and jacket.

the second of that name; and the Gilded Age's golden oak had charmed the Carters. Although Westmoreland and Marguerite Davis appreciated much of Morven Park's architectural past, they removed most of the Italianate features, such as the towers and brackets, with the result that the exterior became more harmoniously a whole generally consistent to the Doric portico. The once-multi-leveled roofline was made regular, except for a single memento of its picturesque Italianate phase—the arched and canopied belfrey surmounting the roof of a one-story addition to the south end of the mansion. The Davises whitened the once-muddy-yellow paint of the stuccoed walls of the edifice, and the portico acquired a marble floor of white and black blocks set in a diagonal pattern. For many years, the Davises retained the green shutters, though in time these, too, were whitened to further the illusion of the Greek temple.

Yet the whole was not a literal return either to the classic Greek or to the Greek revival of the preceding century. Particularly since the interior of the mansion retained only occasional lip-service to Greek motifs spared in the Victorian renovation, the mansion itself must be designated as eclectic. Such categorization is heightened by the fact that the half-dozen or so principal dependencies remained towered, bracketed Italianate cottages, stables and outbuildings of the picturesque school.

Westmoreland Davis's preference for the eclectic is understandable, both individually and as a man representative of his time. One scholar has represented eclecticism as a "quite honest delight in the ever widening horizons of the nineteenth century world, the ever growing

acquaintance with places new and strange."<sup>31</sup> By 1902, Davis had broadened his own horizons by having traveled in Europe, although Marguerite Inman Davis was much more a wanderer than he, having accompanied her parents to Paris and Italy in the 1880's. Gilded Age America understood that its heritage was both diversified from, and yet a composite of, various European heritages. This heritage allowed great freedom in decorating and furnishing houses helter-skelter with articles of different periods, with both the authentic and the reproduction.

To enter the great hall of the mansion at Morven Park was to pass from the outward-looking arcadian Greece (albeit in bastardized architectural form) to the interior splendor of the Renaissance. What the eggshell tinted walls and the patterned plaster of the high ceilings were lacking in exuberance was more than compensated for in the richness of color and of carving of this great room's furnishings. On the south wall was an elaborate cassone, or Italian marriage chest, by which the wealth of a bride's family once had been judged. It was to the reliefs on the cassones that the Renaissance craftsmen devoted most of their time. On the same wall was an Italian settee in the Renaissance style which the Davises had purchased in Italy in 1897.<sup>32</sup> Nearby were three large armchairs of the settecento, whose seats were covered in red silk velvet trimmed with gold lace.<sup>33</sup> The matching footstools that complement

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<sup>31</sup> Talbot Hamlin, Architecture Through the Ages (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), p. 598.

<sup>32</sup> Marguerite Davis, Inventory, June, 1926, Morven Papers, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Frank G. Muller, Appraisal, June, 1926, ibid., p. 1.

the chairs are, however, Milanese reproductions.

It was in Milan that the Davises bought much of the hall furniture. As frequent travelers to Italy, they visited Italy's palaces and selected specific designs they wished reproduced. Though the mansion at Morven Park contains many reproductions, the Davises balanced these with collectors' items. For instance, Davis "bought from a collector in Milan" a "very old, very fine " walnut writing desk. Yet the desk chairs are reproductions of Florentine chairs in the Pitti Palace.<sup>34</sup>

Nothing is now known concerning the original mantelpieces on the west wall of the great hall. The present mantelpiece represents classic maidens who hold up a shelf, conforming to the fashions of the 1830's. In 1839 in Richmond, Virginia, Judge Robert Stannard constructed a fashionable Greek Revival mansion at 601 East Grace Street. After the Civil War, Richmond's Westmoreland Club acquired the dwelling, and it remained with them until the 1930's when it was destroyed to make way for the John Marshall Hotel. Just prior to its destruction, Westmoreland Davis purchased from it a mantelpiece for his great hall at Morven Park. The piece was appropriate to the hall's Renaissance motif, since in the early 1840's, Judge Stannard had purchased the mantelpiece in Italy.<sup>35</sup>

The *mélange* of miscellaneous items in the great hall reminds one

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<sup>34</sup> Marguerite Davis, Inventory, June, 1926, Morven Papers, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Earle Lutz, A Richmond Album (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, 1937), p. 178.

that the Davises' taste was eclectic with a vengeance. From India came a great Cashmere rug on top of which were spread with Byzantine opulence a number of fur pelts. From Spain came two, large church pedestals of the twisted baroque such as Stanford White delighted to employ in his dramatic tableaux, two church mirrors and a profusion of brass charcoal braziers. From Switzerland came simple wooden peasant chairs as well as a decoratively carved, high back church arm chair, perhaps the mansion's oldest piece of furniture. Buddhas, foo lions and an antique Japanese temple drum represented the Orient.<sup>36</sup>

The affinity which the man of 1900 felt for the Renaissance required declaration, and the display of tapestries was an accepted and affluent means of doing so. The tapestries in the great hall at Morven Park are good examples of what a wealthy man of taste purchased on his frequent trips to Europe. If in a broad sense the Italian Renaissance represented the rebirth of classicism, Davis's tapestries depicting the tragedy of Scipio, Massinissa and Sophonisba particularized the devotion of both the sixteenth century designers of tapestry and the turn-of-the-nineteenth century nabobs to the mythology of ancient Rome. Fertile ground was Petrarch's rendition of the Second Punic War in his life of Scipio and in his epic, "Africa."<sup>37</sup> Petrarch himself, in the fourteenth century, had transmuted the historic figure of Scipio into an

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<sup>36</sup> Marguerite Davis, Inventory, June, 1926, Morven Papers, pp. 3 and 7.

<sup>37</sup> Aldo S. Bernaldo, Petrarch, Scipio and the "Africa" (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1926), p. 26.

allegorical hero personifying virtue. Illustrative of Scipio's virtue were his dealings with the ruler of a Libyan city-state, King Massinissa.

Cajoled by the Romans, Massinissa had declared war against his neighbor, King Syphax, an ally of Carthage. Massinissa pledged either to kill Syphax and his queen Sophonisba, or to send them captives to Rome. When he did defeat and capture Syphax, he was true to his vow and sent his rival to grace a Roman triumph, though he spared the lascivious Sophonisba. Indeed, he married her and hid her in a sumptuous castle by the sea. After Scipio reproached Massinissa for betraying his pledge, the latter promised to renounce Sophonisba, who Scipio convinced him was the personification of vice. Since Massinissa could neither bear to kill her nor send her to Scipio, he sent her a phial of poison with a letter of renunciation. The unhappy queen used the poison to commit suicide; but before she did so she placed a curse upon both men which may not have been the cause of their undoing but which was remarkably prophetic of their fate: a lonely old-age and dying without honor from their fellow countrymen.

Although the provenance of the Morven Park tapestries is not known, their ultimate origin is easily identifiable. In the mid-sixteenth century, the Flemish weavers of Brabant adopted distinctive marks for their tapestries to maintain quality and to prevent forgery. These marks, the manufacturers wove into the bottom right selvage. The "B ♡ B" on most of the Morven Park tapestries indicates a Brussels weaving.<sup>38</sup> Yet the

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<sup>38</sup> ~~see~~ George Leland Hunter, Tapestries: Their Origin, History and Renaissance (New York: John Lane Co, 1912; hereinafter cited as Hunter, Tapestries), p. 268.

weaver, the cartoonist and the exact date of the weaving are conjectural. Although a weaver sometimes included on the right border his personal signatory mark, none appears on the set of tapestries depicting the story of Sophonisba at Morven Park. The unidentified cartoon from which the tapestries were woven was probably Italian, since Italy furnished the best Renaissance cartoonists. In date, the tapestries' borders, brilliant perspective and minute details rank them with Brussels's zenith, 1528-1551, since a Brussels law of 1528 made the inclusion of the city's mark mandatory.<sup>39</sup> Without doubt, the tapestries at Morven Park constitute its finest furnishings. Four tapestries in the five piece set depicting the tragedy of Sophonisba are valued at \$60,000, and Morven Park's five other tapestries are probably of equal value.<sup>40</sup>

The Renaissance furnishings of the great hall gave richness to the austerity of the room. Besides the crimson velvet of the chairs and footstools, there were matching curtains at the windows and doors as well as a profusion of red velvet pillows on the cassone and settee. The four tapestries, with their more delicately faded tones of blue and rose, and the architectonic pattern of their borders, gave subtle contrast to the austere walls and the bold velvet. The gleaming brass of the braziers and fire tools reflected the myriad lights of a great sixteen-candle electrified chandelier. Although the mansion's spaciousness

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<sup>39</sup> Hunter, Tapestries, p. 268, and Helen Churchill Candee, The Tapestry Book (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1912), p. 265.

<sup>40</sup> Although there are five tapestries in Morven Park's Sophonisba set, only four are displayed in the great hall. Milton Samuel to George Green Shackelford, January 30, 1968, Morven Papers.

obviated the clutter of Bagatelle, there was no scarcity of furniture in the great hall, or, for that matter, in any room. Yet each of the three principal public rooms contained some pieces of furniture which were unique treasures and often inharmonious with the other pieces. For the Davises, there was no objection to mingling the authentic with the reproduction. Both Marguerite and Westmoreland revered their parents and were proud to place inherited furniture in places of glory, even if the pieces were sometimes undistinguished. Remarkably, the furnishings were functional and in good taste in their setting at Morven Park, given the eclecticism of the period.

Adjacent to the great hall is the dining room, whose motif is a blend of Jacobean and Renaissance. The Davises' acquisition of furniture for this room extended over several years. They brought much of it to Morven Park from Bagatelle; but while in Milan in 1897, they contracted Mora Brothers, a furniture designer specializing in reproductions, to fashion several pieces for Morven Park's great hall and dining room.<sup>41</sup> Milan was also the home of the Mora Collection, an extensive collection of Italian furniture from the Renaissance. If the firm of Mora Brothers owned the famous collection, this explains the similarity between the fantastic sideboard carved in high relief at Morven Park and a similar one in the collection.<sup>42</sup> Mora Brothers also fashioned for the

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<sup>41</sup> Mora Brothers Receipt, November 17, 1897, and Mora Brothers to Westmoreland Davis, November 17, 1897, Morven Papers.

<sup>42</sup> Harold Donaldson Eberlein, Interiors, Fireplaces and Furniture of the Italian Renaissance (New York: The Architectural Book Publishing Co., 1916; hereinafter cited as Eberlein, Interiors), p. 59.



Davises a china cabinet identical to one in the Castle Di Vincigliata in Florence.<sup>43</sup> Nile green curtains and the turquoise of the Inmans's monogramed china by Pilleought established the color scheme for the room.

Just as Milan furnished the Italian sideboard and cabinet, so London furnished the Jacobean chairs for the dining room. On March 27, 1905, Westmoreland Davis purchased from Duveen Brothers at 21 Old Bond Street seven Jacobean chairs, formerly in the S. H. Fraser Collection at Cleadon Meadows Hall.<sup>44</sup> The price was £600, or today about \$430 per chair. The price certainly corresponded to Duveen's motto: "When you pay high for the priceless, you're getting it cheap."<sup>45</sup>

To purchase from Duveen was to account yourself a Morgan. Joseph Duveen, later Sir Joseph Duveen of Milbanke, had already made Duveen Brothers the world's foremost dealer in art and antique furniture. In his offices in London, New York and Paris, his connoisseurs (not salesmen) were attired in cutaways and striped pants. When Duveen acquired a piece of furniture, it was no longer Jacobean or Chippendale but "a Duveen." Joseph Duveen knew that America was full of wealth and that Europe was full of antiques. He believed that his mission was to transfer the antiques to America and the wealth to Duveen.

American millionaires like Westmoreland and Marguerite Davis could

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<sup>43</sup> Eberlein, Interiors, p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Duveen Brothers Receipt, March 27, 1905, Morven Papers.

<sup>45</sup> S. N. Behrman, Duveen (New York: Random House, 1951), pp. 30-31.

amass yachts, houses and thoroughbreds; but after this they had little else to acquire. Unlike Englishmen of this and other periods, remarkably few Americans at the turn of the century entered politics. Accordingly, many of the more thoughtful of America's millionaires se- cluded themselves to enjoy the Edwardian pleasures of an Arcady— becoming sportsmen or collectors or both. Because, since antebellum days, both the Inmans and the Davises had been accustomed to life's fineries, it was natural that Marguerite and Westmoreland Davis would become respected patrons of the patronizing Duveen.

Across the great hall from the dining room lies the drawing room. The gilt of French furnishings from Louis XIV to Napoleon III, the blue of Sevres and of Berlin cobalt ware, and the mustard field of a fine rug, contrasted with and yet complemented the Nile green curtains at the windows and doors. Bric-a-brac everywhere, gilt and embroidered velvet, brighter colors and a Steinway piano presented a more refined appearance than that of the great hall. Yet, like the dining room and hall, the drawing room did not adhere strictly to its motif. Here, the Davises featured braziers from Madrid, Spanish Hapsburg mirrors and a Tiffany art nouveau lamp.<sup>46</sup> The lamps Davis purchased directly from Tiffany and Com- pany, as he did his gold cuff links and stationery.<sup>47</sup> The drawing room also contained several "Duveens"—a marble-topped gilded console, a marble-

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<sup>46</sup> Marguerite Davis, Inventory, June, 1926, Morven Papers, pp. 2-8.

<sup>47</sup> Tiffany Studios Bill, undated, and Tiffany and Company to West- moreland Davis, September 26, 1928 and December 10, 1929, Davis Papers, UVA.

topped table with Kent-like grotesque feet, two superb French vitrenes and a French gilt mirror.<sup>48</sup>

The tradition that the marble mantelpieces in the drawing room and the dining room came from the White House may be correct. In 1903, the firm of McKim, Mead and White was renovating the White House; at the same time the Davises were moving to Morven Park. Charles McKim removed some mantelpieces from the former; Westmoreland Davis installed some mantelpieces in the latter. Moreover, the mantelpiece in the dining room at Morven Park is identical to one removed from the White House in 1873 and now in General Dwight Eisenhower's battlefield home at Gettysburg.<sup>49</sup>

Portraits and landscapes complete the motifs. M. de Forest Bolmer and Edward Gay were the most famous of the landscape painters whose works are exhibited at Morven Park. Both were contemporaries of Westmoreland Davis, both were New Yorkers and both had studied abroad—Bolmer in Paris and Munich, and Gay in Karlsruhe. Gay's "Haymaking" at Morven Park portrays against a sunny sky an undulating field of oak-tan hay, a hay wain and two peasants. Enchanted with rural life, Gay painted "Broad Acres," which won for him the Metropolitan prize of \$2,000 in 1887.<sup>50</sup> Gay's landscapes are exhibited in Milwaukee's Layton Museum,

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<sup>48</sup> Marguerite Davis, Inventory, June, 1926, Morven Papers, p. 7.

<sup>49</sup> Jones, Presidential Homes, p. 214.

<sup>50</sup> Who's Who In America, XIV, 780, and John Denison Champlin and Charles C. Perkins, Cyclopedia of Painters and Paintings (4 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886-1887), II, 115.

the Metropolitan Museum, the Minneapolis Fine Arts Gallery, the Art Institute of Chicago and Washington's National Gallery.<sup>51</sup> Sporting a gallant moustache, a wing collar and artist's tie, and making it a point to paint his landscapes out-of-doors, placed Gay firmly in the Barbizon school of artists.<sup>52</sup>

Three portraitists were responsible for the family portraits at Morven Park. The most famous was William James Hubard. Although his Morven Park portraits bear the signature of "Hubert," evidence exists that "Hubert" was Hubard's artistic alias. In 1852, Hubert entered an exhibit in the National Academy of Design. From the exhibit and from Hubert's listing Richmond, Virginia, as his address, one scholar has deduced that Hubert and Hubard were the same.<sup>53</sup> A further coincidence which lends credence to the Hubard attribution lies in the fact that Hubard lived for nine years (1832-1841) in Gloucester County, Virginia, which had been the homeplace of the members of the Morris family who were his subjects. The portrait of Annie Morris Davis as a young girl depicts her at an age which corresponds to the period when both subject and artist were living in Gloucester County.

William Hubard was a virtuoso of art—portraitist, silhouettist and sculptor. Since there are among the memorabilia at Morven Park

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<sup>51</sup> American Art Annual (37 vols.; New York: The American Federation of Arts, 1904-1941), XXV, 369.

<sup>52</sup> Edward Gay Manuscripts, Morven Papers.

<sup>53</sup> George C. Groce and David H. Wallace, The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America: 1664-1860 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 332.

photographic copies of daguerreotypes of Annie Morris Davis and of others posed as they are represented in Hubbard's paintings, it is likely that the artist himself took the tintype to supplement sittings.

Born in 1807 in England, Hubbard began his artistic career making woodcuts which, in 1824, he brought to America to sell. Four years later, with the encouragement of the poor and infirm Gilbert Stuart, he began portrait painting. From Boston he progressed southward, bringing from Philadelphia to Baltimore a letter of introduction from Thomas Sully.<sup>54</sup> After his stay in Gloucester County, Virginia, he moved to Richmond where sculptoring so caught his fancy that he established there a foundry for casting bronze. With the Civil War, he converted the foundry to making ammunition, and, while thus engaged, was killed when a shell exploded. His portraits, including ones of Andrew Jackson, John Marshall, Henry Clay and John Caldwell Calhoun, hang in the Maryland Historical Society, the United States Capitol and Richmond's Valentine Museum.<sup>55</sup>

In his horse portrait of Glos'ter, Hubbard indicated the wealth and influence of Christopher Staats Morris, Westmoreland Davis's grandfather. Glos'ter was a thoroughbred whose sire, Sir Charles, was probably the get of Sir Archie, considered by some "America's greatest thorough-

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<sup>54</sup> Parke-Bernet Galleries Catalogue: Sale 2626 (November 29, 1967), Lot No. 58.

<sup>55</sup> Helen G. McCormack, William James Hubbard: 1807-1862 (Richmond: The Valentine Museum, 1948), pp. 26 ff.

bred."<sup>56</sup> In addition, Glos'ter's grandsire was Hambleton, perhaps the same for whom the race, the Hambletonian, was named.

English and French artists are responsible for the portraits of Westmoreland Davis, his wife, his two sisters-in-law and his parents. During one of Thomas and Annie Davis's frequent trips to France between 1856 and 1860, they sat for Eugene Quesnet, who was later decorated a chevalier of the French Legion d'honneur.<sup>57</sup> The two portraits depict a handsome, raven-haired Southern planter attired in the traditional Prince Albert coat and his wife in "satin, silk and crinoline."

Although Westmoreland Davis once queried John Singer Sargeant about painting at London portraits of him and Mrs. Davis, nothing came of it. Instead, it was Frank Percy Wild of Leeds, England, who painted Davis, his wife and her two sisters. The ladies are portrayed in long white gowns; Westmoreland Davis, as Master of Foxhounds. Although there is in the memorabilia at Morven Park a photograph of Davis generally corresponding to his attire and pose in the portrait, Wild painted the family from life at Morven Park in 1908. Davis's choice of Wild as the artist doubtless was based not only on the latter's recognized merit as an artist but also upon his willingness to come to Morven Park to

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<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Amis Cameron Blanchard and Manly Wade Wellman, The Life and Times of Sir Archie (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1958; hereinafter cited as Blanchard and Wellman, Sir Archie), title page.

<sup>57</sup> Emmanuel Benezit, Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs et Graveurs (8 vols.; n.p., Librairie Brund, 1948-1955; hereinafter cited as Benezit, Dictionnaire), VII, 76.

execute the commissions.<sup>58</sup>

This was not the last portrait of Westmoreland Davis. As former Governor of Virginia, he presented in 1926 to the Commonwealth for its collection in the capitol a portrait by Irving Ramsey Wiles of Long Island, New York. Wiles had studied in Paris under Émile Carolus-Duran, co-founder of the National Society of Fine Arts and a portraitist whose works sold for as much as 16,000 francs.<sup>59</sup> Wiles had exhibited his works in the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the National Collection of Fine Arts and the Metropolitan Museum. In New York, Knoedler's Gallery had even staged a Wiles exhibition. After her husband's death, Marguerite Davis became close friends with Wiles and his daughter, Gladys.<sup>60</sup>

Still another portrait of Westmoreland Davis is in the collection of the College of William and Mary at Williamsburg, Virginia. Upon the request of the college's president, Julian A. C. Chandler, several of the former governor's close friends commissioned what proved to be the last portrait of Davis. To locate the most talented artist available, Davis contacted Fiske Kimball, then Director of the Philadelphia Museum of Fine Arts. Upon Kimball's suggestion, the governor's friends hired Leopold Seyffert. A New Yorker like Bolmer, Gay and Wiles, Leopold

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<sup>58</sup> Washington Sunday Star, January 15, 1939, clipping, Morven Papers.

<sup>59</sup> Benezit, Dictionnaire, II, 325.

<sup>60</sup> Gladys Wiles to Marguerite Davis, September 15, 1944, January 9, 1945, February 6, 1945 and March 8, 1945, Morven Papers.

Seyffert was a member of the National Academy of Design and had exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Carnegie Institute at Pittsburg. After Kimball had approved Seyffert's work, the friends made the presentation in 1932.<sup>61</sup>

The three Davis portraits present two different aspects of the man. Both Seyffert and Wiles depicted a magisterial Davis not unlike his older contemporary, William Howard Taft, wearing the gown of an LL.D., an honorary degree conferred upon him by Washington and Lee University. The Percy Wild portrait features Davis, the trim sportsman, in his hunting pinks. Significantly, Davis retained the latter portrait at Morven Park. Although he displayed in his home photographs of the older, clean-shaven gubernatorial likeness, there are many reasons why he looked back upon his years between 1903 and 1914 as his happiest. Between the ages of forty-four and fifty-five, he and Marguerite Davis basked in the warmth of their mutual devotion; together they enjoyed the pleasures of the chase; they journeyed to New York, to Washington and even abroad for urban pleasures; and like lord and lady of the manor, they presided over a fitting habitation.

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<sup>61</sup> Fiske Kimball to Westmoreland Davis, January 27, 1931 and February 13, 1931, Morven Papers.



## CHAPTER FOUR:

### THE PURSUITS OF A COUNTRY GENTLEMAN

As a poor boy in the faded trappings of antebellum Southern society, Westmoreland Davis nonetheless had great expectations. Once Annie Davis had won from her uncle's estate her rightful patrimony, she and Westmoreland were freed from the shackles of Reconstruction poverty. By 1903, Davis himself had become rich and had married a rich wife. He was, therefore, to express the other side of his character formed in the hard years of the mid-seventies: this was the desire not just to be a country squire, but to earn the respect of his peers and inferiors as a modern good-farmer equivalent of an antebellum good-planter. Although in reality farming for him was more a pleasurable avocation than a vocation, it was not until the 1920's that he realized it.

In the tradition of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Edmund Ruffin, Davis undertook to farm scientifically. Since he was secure financially, he could experiment as well as equip his farm handsomely. In the early 1900's, he sailed to the Isle of Guernsey to buy highly-bred progenitors of what became Morven Park's famous Guernsey herd, for which he constructed concrete silos, modern barns and gravity filled manure bins.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, he purchased abroad Dorset sheep, Fercheron horses and Yorkshire hogs. In an amusing advertisement,

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<sup>62</sup> By 1927, Davis had enlarged his herd to 150 head. Southern Planter (128 vols.; Richmond; Southern Planter, 1841- ; hereinafter cited as Southern Planter), LXXXVIII (May 1, 1927), 20, and Kirby, "Davis, Planter," p. 35.

Davis once described his hogs as "the hardiest, most prolific, most vigorous and most growthy of all the forms known to pigdom."<sup>63</sup>

The Percheron horse had a special appeal to Davis. Originally bred in the Perche region of France below Normandy and between Lyon and Paris, they so well combined the attributes of strength, endurance, speed and lightness, that for hundreds of years before 1900, they were used to draw heavy coaches and large artillery pieces. Since they also served French knights as mounts, they appealed to Davis as symbolic links with his concept of the landed gentry. In April of 1906, Davis began his Percheron stock at Morven Park by importing from France six mares and a stallion, all registered with the Société Hippique Percheronne de France. Two years later, he imported nine additional mares. From 1906-1919, Morven Park employed in all fifty-two registered Percherons. Davis's offer to sell a stallion, Brilliantine, for \$2,500 attests to the reputation his horses had established.<sup>64</sup>

Westmoreland Davis did not confine his farming interest to Loudoun County. He held office in the Virginia Guernsey Breeders' Association, and he was an important member of the Virginia State Farmer's Association. In addition, Davis belonged to the United Agricultural Board, a State agency designed to combine the information of both State and Federal departments of agriculture and distribute it to the

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<sup>63</sup> Southern Planter, LXIX, (February, 1908), 167.

<sup>64</sup> Memorandum of Agreement for the Sale of the Percheron Stallion, "Brilliantine," Morven Papers.

county agents.<sup>65</sup> Finally, in 1912, Davis purchased the Southern Planter and through it propogandized the most advanced farming techniques.

Yet Davis's hobby became a costly one. In 1921, he employed fifteen men receiving monthly salaries of \$768. By 1942, Davis's activity at Morven Park encompassed almost all phases of farming. The highest yield—\$12,558—came from the dairy. The sale of livestock and smaller farm animals totaled over \$13,000. Turkey sales alone brought over \$3,000. In the first nine months of 1942, all farm operations grossed \$26,495, which was more than offset by expenditures of \$29,486, of which labor and feed were \$9,629 and \$10,106 respectively.<sup>66</sup>

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Davis conscientiously devoted the months of April through October to farming. From October until April, he rode in the hunt. As a member of the Orange County Hunt Club in New York, Davis had gained proficiency as a horseman. When he moved to Loudoun County, he quickly felt the absence of a club. In 1903, with E. H. Harriman, who had founded the Orange County Hunt Club, Davis organized the Loudoun Hunt Club, whose territory lay within a fifteen mile radius of Leesburg.<sup>67</sup> This was the day when virtually everyone rode horses, and the hunting field was by no means pre-empted by the wealthy. Because small farmers rode

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<sup>65</sup> Kirby, "Davis, Planter," pp. 41-48.

<sup>66</sup> Copy of "Form 1040F—Schedule of Farm Income and Expenses" for Westmoreland Davis, January 1, 1942 to September 2, 1942, Morven Papers.

<sup>67</sup> Obituary clipping, September 3, 1942, Davis File, VMI, and Wecter, Saga of American Society, p. 445.

to the hounds, too, there was little question of securing landowners' permission to hunt their land. As Davis described it, "Houses are kept open and dinners with pink coated gentlemen and hunt breakfasts given by such charming hostesses as Mrs. Henry Fairfax of Oak Hill, Mrs. William C. Eustis at Oatlands . . . Mrs. Westmoreland Davis at Morven Park . . . and many others whose hospitality . . . is delightful if their estates be less pretentious."<sup>68</sup>

The Davises were especially noted for their hospitality. In October of 1906, as the hunting season opened, Westmoreland and Marguerite Davis gave a luncheon for 600 guests. The menu included 16 gallons of oyster stew, 3,000 half-shell oysters, 100 pounds of veal, 150 pounds of ham, 120 pounds of lamb, 140 pounds of turkey, 150 pounds of chicken salad, 1,000 rolls, 600 servings of ice cream, 50 pounds of cake, 28 gallons of coffee and 8½ kegs of beer.<sup>69</sup> Such an elaborate menu is characteristic of the Gilded Age's emphasis upon quantity.

Since Davis was well-known in hunting circles, the Loudoun Hunt Club made him Master of Fox Hounds. This was no mean position; the MFH was in many ways the Arbiter Petronius of his locality. Virginia, with only thirteen clubs, could boast almost three times as many as any other State. As Master of Fox Hounds, Davis lodged the kennels at Morven Park and divided major expenses with his most wealthy members.

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<sup>68</sup> Westmoreland Davis's description of the Loudoun Hunt (ca. 1907), Davis Papers, UVa.

<sup>69</sup> Gilbert Farintosh to Westmoreland Davis, October 16, 1906, ibid.

Davis acquired an interest in canine breeding and kept in touch with the country's best kennels. However, Master of Fox Hounds was not always a pleasant task, for to him came the complaints of farmers whose property was damaged by the hunts. As was its habit, the Loudoun club during the off-season released foxes on the ranges the club would hunt in the fall. Since the Loudoun fox relied upon the Loudoun turkey for food, Davis became well acquainted with the county's turkey farmers.<sup>70</sup>

Davis's position as Master of Fox Hounds entitled him to membership in the Master of Fox Hounds Association, whose headquarters were in London. The association was both a social club and an organization which encouraged proper hound breeding and field trials. Davis must have been pleased to serve on its board of directors with three earls and one marquis. Davis probably attended some meetings while in England and received invitations to hunt with such famous clubs as the Quorn.<sup>71</sup> He was not impressed. In 1907, he wrote that in Loudoun "few foxes have been killed in the open. . . . A kill is no mean feat, for the Loudoun Fox knows no coddling, such as falls the lot of his English cousin."<sup>72</sup>

Although he remained a director on the Loudoun club's board, in 1908, Davis resigned as Master of Fox Hounds and was succeeded by his close friend, Harry Worcester Smith of Massachusetts. Smith was at

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<sup>70</sup> Mrs. S. P. Vansickler to Westmoreland Davis, October 3, 1907, Davis Papers, UVa.

<sup>71</sup> Photographs, Morven Papers.

<sup>72</sup> Westmoreland Davis's description of the Loudoun Hunt (ca. 1907), Davis Papers, UVa.

home in both togs and silks. He had previously won the Grand National Steeplechase and with it, \$10,000. In the 1906 trial match between English and American hounds, it was Smith's pack which represented the United States and his pack which won the contest.<sup>73</sup>

Through the Loudoun Hunt Club Davis became acquainted with hunters from several Northern clubs. During the 1907 season, the Middlesex, Massachusetts, Hunt Club wintered at Leesburg. Their presence prompted the Loudoun club to extend the hunting from the customary two to five days per week.<sup>74</sup>

In 1909, Davis became the chairman of the Hunts Committee of the National Steeplechase and Hunt Association.<sup>75</sup> His primary responsibility as chairman was to investigate the clubs applying for membership, which naturally meant attending the perspective club's social affairs. Davis had little rest from the sport, even if he had wanted any.

Westmoreland Davis took pride in his wife as an equestrienne, but she gradually withdrew from the hunting field to become increasingly absorbed in her flower garden at Morven Park. In 1903, when the Davises occupied the estate, they began expanding the garden, which the Swanns had begun, and later surrounded it with a brick wall. Westmoreland Davis's responsibility was the boxwood, and here, he was

<sup>73</sup> Description of Harry W. Smith of the Loudoun Hunt Club (ca. 1908), Davis Papers, UVa. For a further discussion of Smith, see Wecter, Saga of American Society, p. 445.

<sup>74</sup> Westmoreland Davis's description of the Loudoun Hunt (ca. 1907), Davis Papers, UVa.

<sup>75</sup> Fletcher Harper to Westmoreland Davis, March 16, 1909, ibid.

as energetic a gardener as farmer, relying on the United States Department of Agriculture for information on proper planting and care. Davis also planted several yew, juniper and magnolia trees, which reinforced the resemblance between the surroundings of the English country house and his own Morven Park.<sup>76</sup> Even at eighty-two, Davis was energetically enlarging the garden.<sup>77</sup>

A pleasure that Davis had enjoyed since his VMI days was travel. He had even married Marguerite Inman in England. As a young couple, the Davises had gone abroad when his demanding law practice would allow. In 1897, they embarked on a round-the-world tour which took them from the Mediterranean to the Orient. Then in 1903, while Morven Park was being beautified, they sailed on a Cunard "ocean greyhound," the Etruria, to Europe to spend several months. Three years later, Davis journeyed to the Isle of Guernsey and to France to purchase livestock. Yet a man of his amiability did not go abroad without socializing.

From 1906 until 1922, there is no record of the Davises having left the United States; but Westmoreland Davis traveled nonetheless. His new role of farmer led him to visit the Midwest to study first-hand such concepts as the Wisconsin Idea, which entailed more State aid to agricultural colleges and thus more information for the farmer. He also found time for frequent trips to New York City. In the 1920's, a Rolls-Royce lent comfort to these journeys. Even then, New York driving was such a nightmare that Davis would hire a separate chauffeur for New York City alone.

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<sup>76</sup> William and Harvey Nursery to Westmoreland Davis, February 17, 1932, Morven Papers.

<sup>77</sup> Westmoreland Davis to Eugene Bready, August 12, 1940, ibid.

After his November, 1922, defeat by Claude A. Swanson for the United States Senate, Westmoreland and Marguerite Davis again sailed for Europe. Although she then was approaching middle age, she listed on her passport as her date of birth, 1882. This would have made her ten years old at the time of her marriage. Departing from New York on February 27, 1923, the Davises disembarked at Cherbourg and went immediately to Paris to visit Jane Frances Inman Payne, Marguerite Davis's oldest sister. As the former governor had been host when Marshall Foch visited Virginia in 1921, he returned the visit and met many French dignitaries of the period. The Davises visited battlefields and were tendered reviews both by American occupation troops at Mainz and by French troops in the Rhur before the couple relaxed at Baden-Baden, Dusseldorf, Stuttgart, Bremen and the seaside resort, Gerstemunde.<sup>78</sup> The Davises returned to America in early April aboard the Pittsburgh, a triple-screw, White Star liner of 16,322 tons.

In 1926, Westmoreland and Marguerite Davis made their last trip to Europe. Again they sailed from New York to France, again disembarking at Cherbourg. Again Marguerite Davis falsified her age. Yet this time the Davises were not without Virginia friends. In 1921, when Marshall Foch had visited Virginia, the Richmond Light Infantry Blues had so impressed him with their parades that he invited the unit to France. After five years of planning, the Blues departed for France in May of 1926. Westmoreland Davis met the unit in Paris, where he and the battalion were

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<sup>78</sup> Photographs, Morven Papers, and The United States of America Passport of Westmoreland Davis (issued February 13, 1923), ibid.



guests of French President Doumergue at a reception in their honor at the Elysées Palace.<sup>79</sup> After the battalion embarked for America, the Davises remained in France until March of 1927, when they left Europe for the last time at Southampton, England.

The Davises could long remember their journeys by the objects they had acquired abroad. The round-the-world trip provided an opportunity to bring furniture from Spain and statuary from the Orient. The 1905 trip led them to the famous Duveen, who sold them the Jacobean chairs. The 1906 trip yielded the Guernsey herd. Finally, the 1923 voyage started Davis on another hobby, Doberman pinschers.

Davis probably became interested in Dobermans in an effort to divert his attention from his crushing defeat for the Senate. Yet since he owned and bred horses and cattle, the interest in canine breeding is not surprising. In Germany, he purchased one male and one female for a kennel. The male, Astor von Reschenstein, he purchased from a Mr. Baumann in Bremen. The female, Fricka von Haiterbach, Davis bought in Haiterbach. Since the male proved impotent in America, Davis had to locate a suitable stud for Fricka. John P. Turner, a noted Doberman veterinarian in Washington, recommended the White Gate Kennels in Maryland as having "the best in America."<sup>80</sup> The kennel could boast an international champion, Prinz Favoriet van de Koningstad, and a national one, Big Boy. Davis sent Fricka to Big Boy at White Gate, and the results—Minka of Morven and Greta of Morven—started Davis toward a kennel of his own.

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<sup>79</sup> John A. Cutchins, A Famous Command: The Richmond Light Infantry Blues (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, 1934), illustration facing p. 270.

<sup>80</sup> Dr. John P. Turner to Westmoreland Davis, June 9, 1923, Morven Papers.

It was not until February of 1921 that several Doberman owners organized the Doberman Pinscher Club of America. Three years later, Westmoreland Davis joined. On February 11, 1924, the club held its annual meeting to elect officers in the Prince George Hotel in Brighton, Massachusetts. Events at the meeting suggest Davis's presence. The attendance of only twenty-seven of the sixty-six members was poor. Immediately after the meeting began, eighteen members forced a change of rules to allow for the nomination of candidates from the floor instead of by mail. Davis, seldom one to participate in anything without himself being a leader, was probably one of the eighteen, for he resigned when the club threatened action against the defiant members.<sup>81</sup> After his resignation, Davis's interest in Dobermans gradually waned. Indeed, after 1932, he never mentioned the dogs again. At seventy-three, he had lost that energy which allows versatility.

By 1920, Davis's sixty-one years forced on him less strenuous sports. Instead of riding, he enjoyed horse shows and yachting. Exactly when he first became fond of yachting is unknown, although his association in New York with brother-in-law Robert Inman, as well as with Pierre Lorillard, suggest his early interest. For twenty years after Davis returned to Virginia in 1903, his pleasure in yachting was at best dormant while he was so preoccupied with farming, riding and politics. Yet as Governor of Virginia from 1918 until 1921, he and

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<sup>81</sup> O. J. Anderson and Mrs. W. E. Donovan to All Members of the Doberman Pinscher Club of America, February 13, 1924, and Mrs. W. E. Donovan to Westmoreland Davis, April 23, 1924, Morven Papers. Davis stapled a copy of the threat of retaliation to his letter of resignation.

Mrs. Davis had not only reviewed the victory celebrations at Newport News, but they had gone on an extended tour of the Chesapeake and its tributaries with the State Commissioner of Fisheries. As one who had sought to establish a trout hatchery at Morven Park and who had tried to raise the standard of living for poor farmers by lobbying for State-owned lime fertilizer plants, Davis was keenly interested in increasing the potential of Virginia's seafood industry. Provided with life rings, tow lines and stages alongside the Commissioner's comfortable steam yacht, Mrs. Davis "swam" bravely in the rejuvenating salt water of the Chesapeake.<sup>82</sup>

In 1920, Davis was interested in purchasing an ocean-going craft. From Samuel Gowan, Paymaster of the Navy, he received a catalogue of surplus naval craft to be offered for sale on July 13, 1920. After inquiries about prices, Davis indicated in pencil in the margins of the catalogue that his interest extended as high as \$138,750.<sup>83</sup> The yacht he finally purchased he christened Virginian. From the craft's usual mooring in the marine basin at South Brooklyn, New York, he and Marguerite cruised annually to Florida, where they vacationed at fashionable Hobe Sound, where Mrs. Davis had inherited a cottage. Davis spent enough time yachting that he had Tiffany and Company print him stationery with the letterhead, "On Board the Virginian."

Just as Davis preferred the modern methods of farming and gardening, so he had purchased not a sailing craft but a craft powered

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<sup>82</sup> Photographs and notes, Morven Papers.

<sup>83</sup> Catalogue of the Sale of Yachts, Cargo Boats, Tugs and Other Vessels by the Navy: July 13, 1920, Davis Papers, UVA.

by a 110-horsepower gasoline engine. The Virginian was so commodious that it required a captain and two crewmen. Besides crew's quarters, engine room, galley, companionways and lazeret, there were a forward cabin, an after cabin and a dining salon. By the use of the last, there were berths for ten guests. Davis furnished the craft with blue Edwardian wicker furniture, and on the floor were Persian and Oriental rugs.<sup>84</sup> The mahogany superstructure and the white canopied expanse of the teak-planked deck presented a smart appearance, reinforced by Davis's standing orders that at all times his steward wear a white uniform and his captain and crew wear either "blues" or "whites" as latitude or seasons required.

Another hobby which occupied much of Davis's time was his avid interest in history and genealogy. Even while he lived in New York, he aided his mother in preparing a genealogical history of the Morris and Thurston families, although neither ever completed the task. Aside from this, Davis assisted George C. Gregory of Richmond in preparing a chart of the descendants of Sir Thomas West.<sup>85</sup>

As a member of the Sons of the American Revolution, Davis extended his interest to the Revolutionary War. One grandfather, Henry Morris, had served at Jamestown with LaFayette and had received from him a silver drinking cup. Another, Charles Mimm Thurston, had gained notoriety as a "war parson." In 1928, a Bristol, Tennessee, friend,

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<sup>84</sup> Frank G. Muller, Inventory, Yacht "Virginian," October, 1926, Davis Papers, UVa.

<sup>85</sup> Westmoreland Davis to George C. Gregory, April 8, 1926 and November 22, 1926, Morven Papers.

Samuel King, wrote to inform Marguerite Davis that an Inman had been at least as heroic during the Revolution at Musgrove's Mill in Tennessee as Henry Morris had been at Jamestown.<sup>86</sup> Interest in this Inman prompted Davis to search for over a year for King's Mountain and Its Heroes and Ramsey's Annals of Tennessee for his library.

Davis's interest in history must have been well known to his friends, since in 1896, William M. Habliston invited him to visit Civil War Battlefields in Virginia and North Carolina. In addition, Davis's library at Morven Park, containing Alexander's Mosby's Men, Worsham's One of Jackson's Foot Cavalry, Freeman's R. E. Lee, Varina Davis's Jefferson Davis, Jefferson Davis's The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, and a large photograph of General Lee as the room's only picture suggest more than a casual dabbling in Civil War History.

Dear to Davis's heart during his last twenty years were his thoroughbreds. 1922 was the last year Davis registered Percheron horses.<sup>87</sup> He turned, instead, to race horses. Having constructed on his Big Springs Farm adjacent to Morven Park comfortable stables, Davis filled them with some of America's best equines. He was fortunate to begin early with a good stud, Lucullite. Calved in 1915, Lucullite won three races as a two-year-old. At three, he established a track record (1:11 4-5 for six furlongs) in the Liberty Bond Handicap at Jamaica. At four, he won nine races with two track records, one at Jamaica,

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<sup>86</sup> Samuel King to Marguerite Davis, February 5, 1928, Morven Papers.

<sup>87</sup> Registration forms of the Percheron Society of America, ibid.

the other at Belmont.<sup>88</sup> In the 1920's and 1930's, Davis advertised that Lucullite would stand at stud for \$250, a high fee for that time. By 1938, Lucullite had sired the winners of 340 races with winnings of \$382,151.<sup>89</sup> Yet Davis also brought to his mares Maryland, Kentucky and other Virginia thoroughbred stallions. His best Kentucky stallion used was Wise Counsellor, whose 1937 winnings of \$86,852 was fifth highest of any American thoroughbred.<sup>90</sup>

Davis utilized Virginia stallions most frequently. Since stables in northern Virginia were plentiful, owners could patronize one another without the usual problem of transportation. Davis relied heavily upon studs from four stables: those of William Hitt at Middleburg, of B. B. Jones at Audley, of Admiral Cary Grayson at Upperville, and of A. S. Hewitt at White Post. A. S. Hewitt had probably known Davis in New York before both moved south. The grandson and namesake of the steel tycoon and Mayor of New York, young Hewitt had tasted society at Tuxedo Park where his father was a member.

In obtaining either mares of stud service, money was no object to Davis. In 1939, for instance, he paid Hewitt \$3,000 for a mare.<sup>91</sup> Neither was it uncommon for Davis to pay \$500 for stud service.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> "Morven Park Stud" (pamphlet printed for Westmoreland Davis by the Loudoun Times-Mirror, 1933), Morven Papers.

<sup>89</sup> Fasig-Tipton Catalogue of Thoroughbred Yearlings: Property of Westmoreland Davis, 1938, ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Memorandum entitled "Leading Sires of 1937," ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Westmoreland Davis to A. S. Hewitt, October 5, 1939, ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Westmoreland Davis to B. B. Jones, March 12, 1938, ibid.

His motivation here was his desire to get the best available. Of the twenty leading sires of 1937, Davis had used the services of six.<sup>93</sup> One of these was Man O' War, then the second highest money winner of the American turf.

During the 1930's, Davis annually sold his yearlings at Saratoga. In 1935, his yearlings included a filly sired by a Kentucky Derby winner.<sup>94</sup> Davis brought his business acumen to bear even in matters of thoroughbred sales. In order to suggest a connection between his animals and those of Kentucky, Davis contracted a chemist to analyze the water on his Big Springs Farm. Davis advertised that the chemist found that the farm's water "resembles very closely that analysis of the waters of the Kentucky Blue Grass region."<sup>95</sup>

Not all of Davis's thoroughbreds measured up to his expectations. In 1941, for example, he sold Catoctin Lad, a yearling and grandson of Man O' War, to J. H. Strotler for \$1,000, of which one-half was in cash and the remainder to come from the purses.<sup>96</sup> To the dismay of both men, Catoctin Lad failed even to place, and Strotler sold him for an embarrassing \$76.

Before selling his thoroughbreds at Saratoga, Davis would enter

<sup>93</sup> Memorandum of Leading Sires of 1937, Morven Papers.

<sup>94</sup> Fasig-Tipton Catalogue of Thoroughbred Yearlings: Property of Westmoreland Davis, 1938, *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Fasig-Tipton Catalogue of Thoroughbred Yearlings: 1935, *ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Agreement between Mrs. Westmoreland Davis and J. H. Strotler, April 18, 1941, *ibid.*

them in several area horse shows. His favorite was the Upperville Colt and Horse Show, the first show of its kind in the United States.

Through these shows Davis was even able to revive old friendships, for in 1931, his old friend from Tuxedo Park days, Pierre Lorillard, Jr., judged the thoroughbred class.<sup>97</sup> Davis attended these shows even in his eighties, and in 1941, his filly sired by Supremus (sixteenth best sire in 1937) won first prize in the two-year-old class. This prompted The Washington Post to include a feature article on Davis's stables at Big Springs Farm.<sup>98</sup>

Until he retired to Virginia, Westmoreland Davis spent long days in his law practice and short ones in his recreation. When, in 1903, he took up the life of a squire, he by no means cut himself off from the bustle of New York and its money-making. Particularly did he retain control of the investments of the modest fortunes of Mrs. Davis, Miss Willie Lee Inman and himself. The introduction of rudiments of such business methods as cost accounting kept him busy first on his own farm and then on the farms of the State at large through the columns of the Southern Planter, which he purchased in 1912.

Although there are grounds for believing that Davis as governor might have led in the reform of the governmental administration of

<sup>97</sup> Prize List, Upperville Colt and Horse Show (June 9 and 10, 1939), Morven Papers.

<sup>98</sup> The Washington Post, June 21, 1941, newsclipping, Westmoreland Davis File, Headquarters, Sigma Nu Fraternity, Lexington, Virginia.



Virginia, the coincidence of his term of office and World War I precluded much real accomplishment.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, it resulted in the still-birth of any meaningful progressivism on Davis's part. There are equally good grounds for believing that his liberalism was more that of Theodore Roosevelt or of Woodrow Wilson before 1912, not the least of which reasons is the cultural milieu which Davis represented until 1918, when he became governor. Following in their parents' footsteps, he and Marguerite Davis traveled extensively and yet still had time to create an agricultural showplace at Morven Park. In accordance with the pleasures of the Gilded Age, they rode to the hounds, enjoyed yachting and concentrated on breeding horses. Indeed, for the last four decades of his life, Davis delighted in the pursuits of a country gentleman.

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<sup>99</sup> Kirby, "Davis, Planter," pp. 93-131.

## CONCLUSION

On Sunday, August 31, 1942, Westmoreland Davis fell ill at Morven Park. Because he was eighty-three, it was thought advisable to take him to the Johns Hopkins University Hospital, where he died three days later from "natural causes resulting from his advanced age."<sup>200</sup> At Episcopal services at Morven Park the following day, he was laid to rest in a mausoleum, which he had designed for himself and Marguerite Davis among the boxwood he had planted.

As is the custom, prominent citizens of the Old Dominion sent condolences to the widow, and their eulogistic statements were quoted in the press. Without exceptions these statements emphasized Davis's role as Governor of Virginia during World War I. Without exceptions they failed to realize that Westmoreland Davis was of the Gilded Age America. Certainly he had conformed unconsciously to Thorstein Veblen's characterization of the Gilded Age aristocracy as interested only in "expensive dress and furniture, the pursuit of time-consuming and expensive sports such as breeding race horses and pedigreed dogs, the display of decorous manners, and the acquisition of titles and honorary degrees."<sup>1</sup>

Of course, one might argue that it was Marguerite Davis rather

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<sup>200</sup> Obituary clipping, September 3, 1942, Davis File, VMI.

<sup>1</sup> Wecter, Saga of American Society, p. 185.

than Westmoreland who was responsible for the choice of furnishings and other household details, but such a viewpoint is sustained neither by the Davises' extensive correspondence and inventories nor by the memory of their friends and guests. Without being either passive or submissive, Marguerite Inman Davis sought her husband's advice and commendation in almost everything that she did. Rarely did her love for him permit her to entertain views contrary to his, and her efforts to please his whim as a rider in Virginia, as a Madame Butterfly in Japan, or as a bathing beauty in the style of Lillian Gish at Atlantic City, are attested by a profusion of photographs.

It is also true that many of the furnishings of Morven Park had been inherited from the Inmans. Regardless of whether today it is possible to know or only to surmise which furnishings came from William Inman's New York City house on 56th Street via Tuxedo Park to Loudoun County, it is impossible to estimate the kind and number of things left behind. But the fact that it was Westmoreland rather than Marguerite Davis who was responsible for installing the chandeliers and mantelpieces in the three principal public rooms goes far in establishing the couple's arbiter of taste.

In accordance with Veblen's characterization, Davis paid almost \$500 each for seven of his twelve dining room chairs. For recreation, he bred expensive horses and dogs and sailed an expensive yacht. As for the decorous manners of which Veblen spoke, the china and silver collections at Morven Park indicate that both Governor and Mrs. Davis were in their element at formal banquets. As for the titles and degrees, Davis

was Master of Fox Hounds and had an LL.D. conferred by Washington and Lee University, besides being Governor of his Commonwealth. If one expands Veblen's description of the Gilded Age aristocrat to include an emphasis upon quantity, he finds that the Davises not only preferred "something massive" in lawn furniture, but they were addicted to either huge luncheons or very formal small dinners. When the Davises bought Morven Park, they found that the Swanns had installed ornamental cast-iron stags and a cast-iron swan fountain in front of the mansion. In the course of time, Westmoreland Davis removed these Victorian embellishments because of their dilapidated state; but it was not accidental that the big, black, cast-iron lions continued to guard the steps and portico. Davis was not a good follower; he was a masterful man who gave and asked no quarter.

Many Gilded Age aristocrats saw themselves as refined patrons of the arts, and Duveen's acceptance of Davis's patronage was proof of Davis's status. Since Davis was in a lower financial eschelon than J. P. Morgan or Colis P. Huntington, he could not purchase paintings by old masters. Instead, he patronized contemporary artists as the Renaissance princes had done, adorning the walls of his country house with works by Bolmer and Gay as well as with studio copies of Renaissance paintings. After Davis installed the superb Brabant tapestries in the great hall, he made a sincere effort to identify them, which suggests more refinement than diletantism.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Memorabilia, Morven Papers and Davis Papers, UVa.

The Gilded Age witnessed the development of the concept of stewardship of wealth. John J. Rockefeller frequently gave to churches, Andrew Carnegie to libraries, and Marshall Field of Chicago to the Field Museum of Natural History. Westmoreland Davis was a frequent and generous donor to the Leesburg churches, area libraries, the Red Cross, area baseball teams and the Loudoun County Hospital.<sup>3</sup> His greatest benefaction was postponed for two decades until Marguerite Davis provided in her last will and testament for accomplishing his desire that Morven Park become a cultural center and Museum. Since Mrs. Davis's death in 1963, the Westmoreland Davis Memorial Foundation has given effect to this purpose.

The Gilded Age Aristocracy demanded conservatism in economic matters. Davis had seen a Readjuster movement in Virginia deprive bond holders of interest payments. He had married into a family who encouraged President Cleveland to stand firm for gold. He had earlier come under the influence of Theodore Dwight, who had denounced the Knights of Labor and the ilk of Henry George. In 1912, Woodrow Wilson promised economic reforms which would stabilize the country's finances and abolish a fluctuating currency that could ruin men like Davis. Thus Davis contributed \$1,000 to Wilson's campaign fund and sent him a congratulatory telegram on the eve of Wilson's nomination which emphasized Davis's hope that as president, Wilson could "affect the reforms so necessary to the prospect of the country."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Memoranda of Contributions, Morven Papers.

<sup>4</sup> Westmoreland Davis to Woodrow Wilson, July (?), 1912, The Western Union Telegraph Company, Woodrow Wilson Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Yet at the same time, the Gilded Age was characterized by extravagance in one's personal life. During the half-century that Westmoreland Davis lived at Morven Park, he never found use for his residence of thirty rooms. Personal excess is further illustrated by Davis in the depression year of 1931 paying \$190 for two brass locks.<sup>5</sup> Another example is Marguerite Davis's furs, which included a seal muff, a broad-tail muff, a skunk muff, a pair of seal skin gloves, a mole skin coat and belt, an otter coat, a long seal wrap, a long skunk scarf, a small skunk neck piece, a muskrat coat, a Hudson sable cape, a mink muff, two sable muffs, two sable boas, a mink hatpiece, a mink cape and a mink scarf.<sup>6</sup>

In a sense, Davis recreated at Morven Park within the concepts of the Gilded Age the agrarian ideal of the Southern gentry. This ideal was not necessarily lost during the Gilded Age; it merely assumed protective coloration. The shift in architectural style at the turn of the century, which McKim, Mead and White epitomized in their monumental railroad stations, university buildings and great houses, coincided with Davis's purchase of a great country house in Virginia, whose background bespoke something of the romance of the agrarian republic. The financier-turned-planter not only bred thoroughbreds whose lineage equalled that of the equine F. F. V.'s, but he and Mrs. Davis continued the horticultural tradition of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson

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<sup>5</sup> Francis's Antique Shop Bill, April 23, 1931, Morven Papers.

<sup>6</sup> Marguerite Davis, Inventory, June, 1926, ibid., pp. 39-40.

by planting not only boxwood but also yew, juniper and magnolia trees. At Morven Park Davis rode in the hunt less in the English tradition of Squire Weston than in that of Squire Alsworthy. Fittingly, it was in the squire's tradition of responsibility that Davis entered politics rather than that in the pattern of a prideful aristocracy—new or old—or of a reformer—revolutionary or progressive.

Westmoreland Davis thus combined the material comforts and extravagances of the Gilded Age with those of eighteenth century and antebellum Virginia. He represented the modern and scientific in his farming, gardening and yachting; he represented the traditional in his hunting and thoroughbred breeding. Davis was far more the product of nineteenth than of twentieth century America. Through consideration of man's social and cultural milieu, one can best appreciate that Davis represented the turn-of-the-century man of wealth more desirous of ameliorating than of changing the society which produced him. That his term as governor began in 1918 more freed him from the necessity of instituting any progressive remodeling of the government of Virginia than it fettered him from accomplishing messianic changes inconsistent with the man's nature as revealed by his social and cultural milieu.

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THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL MILIEU OF WESTMORELAND DAVIS

Jack Irby Hayes, Jr.

ABSTRACT

Born into an aristocratic Southern family in 1859, Westmoreland Davis grew up in Richmond, Virginia. He received his education at the Virginia Military Institute, the University of Virginia and the Columbia University. After graduation in 1886 with a degree in law from Columbia, Davis remained in New York and experienced a meteoric rise to prominence and wealth. In 1887, he joined the Tuxedo Corporation of Tuxedo Park, New York City's most exclusive suburb. There, he built Bagatelle, whose exterior and furnishings epitomized Gilded Age America. He married wealthy, New York socialite Marguerite Inman and, with her, attended the Tuxedo Club's fashionable Autumn Balls along with Pierre Lorillard, J. Pierpont Morgan and E. H. Harriman.

In 1903, Davis purchased Morven Park, a northern Virginia plantation. Davis further manifested the Gilded Age through furnishings of the mansion as well as riding to the hounds, breeding thoroughbreds and pedigreed dogs, yachting and giving extravagant banquets. At the same time, he exemplified the antebellum Southern gentleman by becoming a good-farmer equivalent of the good-planter, by continuing the horticultural tradition of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, and by serving the Commonwealth as governor from a sense of responsibility which had been synonymous with the Virginia term, gentleman. Thus, one can understand Westmoreland Davis through consideration of his social and cultural milieu. More significantly, one can understand nineteenth century America through consideration of Westmoreland Davis.