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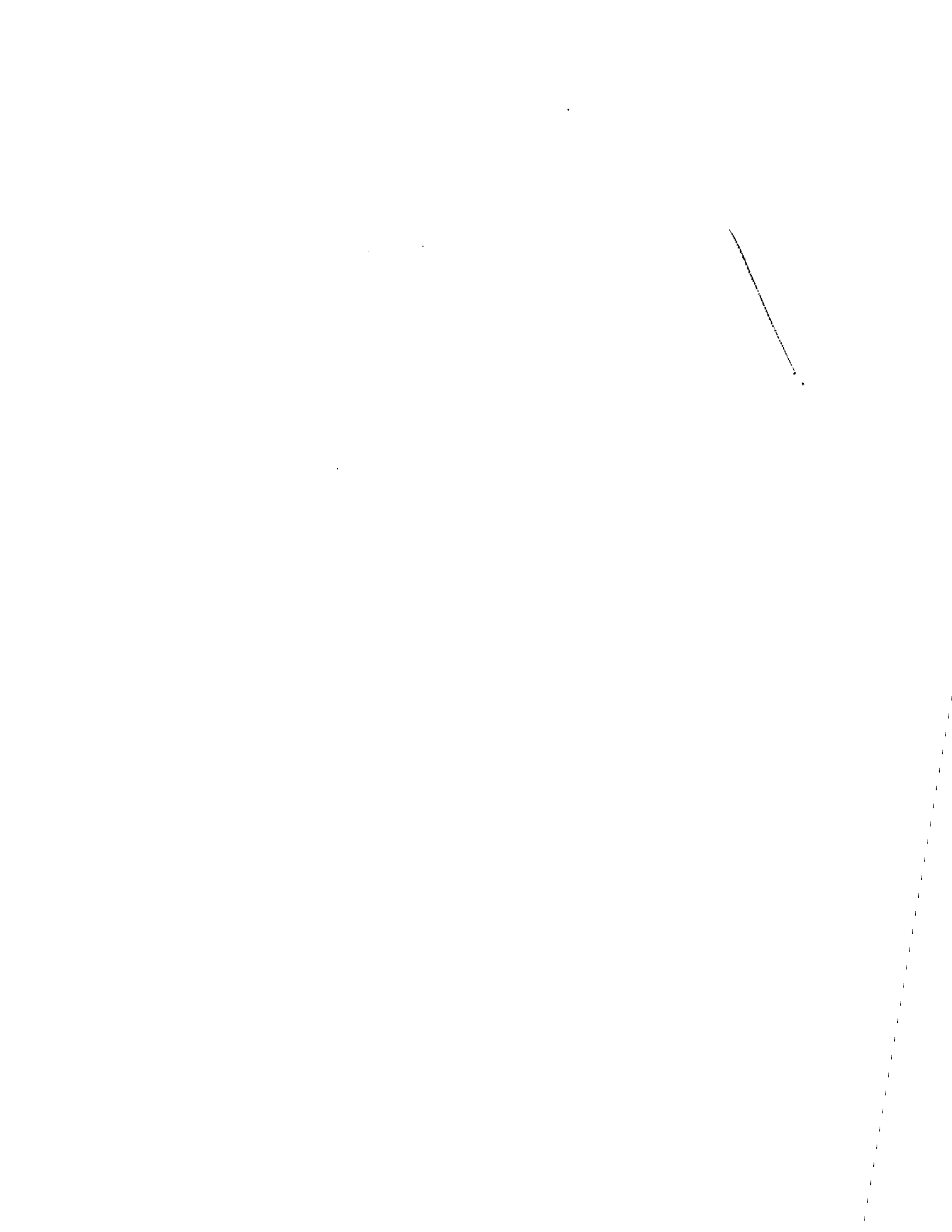
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The College of William and Mary in Virginia

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BENJAMIN STODDERT EWELL: A BIOGRAPHY

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

Anne W. Chapman

1984

APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Approved, April 1984

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This study is dedicated to Professor M. Boyd Coyner, Jr.
in appreciation for his friendship
and sustained belief.

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Virginia; Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia;
Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville,
Virginia; Library of the United States Military Academy, West
Point, New York; Prince William County, Virginia, Public
Library.

ABBREVIATIONS

BSE--Benjamin Stoddert Ewell

CWM--College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.

DAB--Dictionary of American Biography

LC--Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

SHC--Southern Historical Collection, University of North
Carolina, Chapel Hill.

TSLA--Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tenn.

USMA--United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.

VMHB--Virginia Magazine of History and Biography

VMI--Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Va.

WMQ--William and Mary Quarterly

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a study of the life and career of Benjamin Stoddert Ewell (1810-1894). A grandson of the first United States Secretary of the Navy, Benjamin Stoddert, and son of an old Virginia family, Benjamin Ewell grew up in Prince William County, Virginia, during the early days of the American republic. Although educated at the United States Military Academy, Ewell rejected the military life for a career in college teaching and administration. After holding faculty chairs at Hampden-Sydney College (1839-46) and Washington College (1846-48), Ewell became, in 1848, president pro-tempore of the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. For the next forty years he served William and Mary as professor (1849-54) and president (1848-49; 1854-88).

Ewell's years were troubled ones for the colonial college. In the ante-bellum period, financial difficulties and a dearth of students--problems common to almost all nineteenth century college presidents--constantly threatened the college's existence. In 1859 fire destroyed the main building, and Ewell faced the difficult problems of rebuilding. During the Civil War, in which Colonel Ewell served as adjutant to Confederate general Joseph E. Johnston, the college was burned again, this time by Union troops. Rebuilding after 1865 depleted the school's endowment, and its location in the inaccessible and economically depressed Tidewater region of Virginia discouraged student enrollment. Ewell's efforts to obtain reparations from Congress came to naught. In 1882, William and Mary was forced to close.

Ewell always considered the college a living monument to Virginia's years of glory during the period of the Revolution and Early Republic. On the basis of this belief, his dedication to William and Mary was so complete that his biography necessarily becomes a history of the college. In all its adversity Ewell kept the faith that William and Mary would survive and fought unrelentingly to prevent the institution's removal from Williamsburg. After William and Mary closed, he remained as president to protect both its charter and its buildings. Finally, in 1888, he led a successful campaign to make the colonial college a normal school for white males, thereby assuring its continued existence, its financial stability, and its location in Virginia's colonial capital.

BENJAMIN STODDERT EWELL: A BIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

This biography of Benjamin Stoddert Ewell (1810-1894) is intended to serve a three-fold purpose. First, and foremost, it is a study of Ewell's life and career with particular attention to his forty-year service as president and professor at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. Secondly, it explores the much-neglected 1848-1888 period in the history of that college. Finally, it is hoped this study will make a contribution to the history of higher education in the South, a similarly neglected topic.

Benjamin Ewell was born in Georgetown, District of Columbia, during the presidency of James Madison. A grandson of first United States Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Stoddert and son of a prominent, proud, but impoverished Virginia family, Benjamin spent most of his youth on the family farm in Prince William County in Northern Virginia. Thomas Jefferson was a frequent visitor to the Ewell farm, and Benjamin remembered visits to Mount Vernon. He came to revere the values of the Revolution and the Early Republic and to treasure Virginia's days of glory and national prominence. Later, his regret at the passing of that era would greatly influence his personal and career decisions.

Although educated at the United States Military Academy, Ewell rejected the military life for academia and spent fifty-two years as professor and/or president at institutions of higher learning in Virginia. After holding professorships at Hampden-Sydney College (1839-1846) and Washington College (1846-1848), he accepted the presidency of the College of William and Mary. His thirty-five year tenure as president of the colonial college was exceeded only by that of James Blair who held the post for fifty year. At many points from 1848 to 1888 Ewell's story becomes the story of William and Mary.¹

When Ewell arrived at William and Mary, the college was closed and had no students; when he retired in 1888, the college was closed and had no students. In the interim he would guide the school through years of financial difficulties, low enrollment, two disastrous fires, and three interruptions of its collegiate exercises. One of these closings occurred during the Civil War when most of the students and faculty left to serve the Confederate cause. Although he had been a strong Unionist, Ewell served with General John Bankhead Magruder in the Peninsula Campaign of 1862 and spent more than a year as adjutant to General Joseph E. Johnston in the western theatre of operations. After the war, Ewell returned to William and Mary to deal with a myriad of problems. The necessity of rebuilding the main building, burned by Union troops in 1862, nearly destroyed the school's

endowment, already severely depleted by investment in Confederate bonds. The social and economic dislocations of the Reconstruction years contributed to a dearth of students, and Ewell had repeatedly to fight efforts to remove the college from its Williamsburg site to a more favorable and accessible location. When Ewell's efforts to obtain reparations from the federal government for the burning of the college and appeals to the State of Virginia for aid failed, William and Mary was forced once again to close. For the next six years Ewell remained as president, although there were no students. Finally, in 1868, the Virginia General Assembly agreed to support William and Mary as a normal school for white males. Throughout it all Ewell kept the faith, never forsaking his belief that to abandon William and Mary was to abandon a living relic of Virginia's past.

When Benjamin Ewell died in 1874, having lived all but sixteen years of the nineteenth century, Grover Cleveland was serving his second term as president of the United States. Although Virginia still suffered from effects of the War, the United States was fast becoming an industrial power and an increasingly materialistic nation. As with the society of which it was part, William and Mary was not the "school for gentlemen" that Ewell had so staunchly defended since 1848. The institution was, however, still located in its traditional Williamsburg site and remained a viable part of Virginia's system of higher education. Much of the credit

for the resolution of its troubles the college owed to Benjamin Ewell for his steadfast refusal to let William and Mary die.

Benjamin Ewell's story has remained untold for too long, as has that of the college with which his name is irrevocably associated. No complete history of the College of William and Mary exists nor, as far as the author knows, has one ever been attempted. The years since 1800 have received little attention, perhaps because historians have been more interested in recounting the college's beginnings and its contributions to the Revolution than in investigating the less prosperous era that followed. The Ewell years have usually been dismissed in a sentence or two or presented as a sort of romance. In the events and adversities of these years lies an essential link between the college's past and its present. It is a story of struggle and disappointment, of successes and failures, of compromise and endurance. It is a story worth telling, a history worth writing.²

Ewell's struggles as president of a Southern college in the last half of the nineteenth century were, perhaps, of greater magnitude than those of most of his counterparts, but they were not unique. The story of his career and of the College of William and Mary during his presidency is part of a much larger history, that of higher education in the South. Historians of education in the United State have almost universally failed to recognize the particular problems of

Southern institutions, especially in the post-war period. Most have concentrated on the establishment of land-grant schools, graduate institutions, and large mid-western universities, on admission standards and curriculum reform. with scarce mention of the many older Southern colleges that fought simply to survive. It is hoped this study of the life of Benjamin Ewell will illuminate a small part of that story.³

The reader will quickly learn that the author has great admiration for Benjamin Ewell and finds the Ewell family fascinating if eccentric. One can only regret that limited sources prevent greater knowledge of Benjamin's youth, family life, and early career. He was a brilliant, articulate, and compassionate man. Possessed of both charm and wit, he was well liked even by those who disagreed with him. Some will not judge his career a success and will perhaps regret his lack of personal ambition: few will deny the unusual quality of his dedication to a cause so seemingly hopeless.

NOTES FOR INTRODUCTION

¹Ewell served as president of the College of William and Mary, 1848-1849, before becoming a professor during the presidency of Bishop John Johns, 1849-1854. In 1854 Ewell again assumed the office, a post he would hold until his retirement in 1888.

²J. E. Morpurgo, Their Majesties' Royal Colledge: William and Mary in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (Williamsburg, Va.: The Endowment Association of the College of William and Mary of Virginia, 1976) is the only full account of the early years. It is greatly detailed but not altogether satisfactory. On the quick dismissal of the Ewell years see, for example, Lyon Gardiner Tyler, Williamsburg: The Old Colonial Capital (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1907), p. 192. Lisa Heuvel, "The Peal That Wakes no Echo: Benjamin Ewell and the College of William and Mary," Virginia Cavalcade, Fall 1978: 70-77, and Parke Rouse, Jr., A House for a President: 250 Years on the Campus of the College of William and Mary (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1983) are limited but somewhat fuller accounts.

³See, for example, Lawrence A. Cremin, American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876 (New York: Harper & Row, 1980); Frederick Rudolph, The American College and University: A History (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1962) and Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977); George P. Schmidt, The Liberal Arts College: A Chapter in American Cultural History (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1957). Most colleges in the South have been the subject of written histories. The sources are more than adequate for a general study of education in the South and for the inclusion of the Southern experience in general surveys of American education.

CHAPTER I

HERITAGE

In 1810 Georgetown, District of Columbia, still showed signs of the thriving seaport and trading center it had been in the late colonial era. This elegant and prosperous old community, founded in 1695 and located at the head of navigation on the Potomac River, had failed of selection as the primary site for the new federal district but remained the commercial and social center of the city of Washington. At the corner of 34th and Prospect Streets stands a large, Georgian-style, brick mansion called Halcyon House built in 1783 by Benjamin Stoddert, one of Georgetown's leading merchants and first United States Secretary of the Navy. In 1810 the Stoddert home, which overlooks the Potomac River and the rolling Virginia countryside to the south, was the residence of Stoddert's eldest daughter Elizabeth and her husband Dr. Thomas Ewell. Here, on the fifteenth of June, their first son, Benjamin Stoddert Ewell, was born.¹

Elizabeth Stoddert Ewell had herself been born and raised in Halcyon House, and it held many memories for her of the brilliant society in which her parents had moved. She was exceedingly proud of her father's military record, his

important political and commercial positions, the people he had known and entertained. She never allowed young Benjamin to forget the Stodderts' good connections or the prominence of the grandfather for whom he was named.²

Benjamin Stoddert, born at Bladensburg, Maryland, in 1751, served as captain of a Maryland cavalry unit during the Revolution and received a severe wound at the Battle of Brandywine Creek in September 1777. Failing to recover fully from his injuries, he resigned from the service in April 1779, and from September 1779 until February 1781 served under John Adams as Secretary of the Board of War. On 17 June 1781 Stoddert married Rebecca Lowndes of Bladensburg, a daughter of shipping magnate Christopher Lowndes. He settled with his bride in Georgetown where he became a successful and prosperous shipping merchant and began construction of his home on the Potomac. Elizabeth, the Stoddert's second child and eldest daughter, was born 2 September 1794. In 1791, at the request of President George Washington, Stoddert conducted private negotiations to purchase land--at lower prices than the government could command--for the proposed site of the new capital at Washington. As an original proprietor of land included in the federal district he profited from many of these land deals. His position as incorporator, and later president, of the Bank of Columbia, organized in 1793 to handle land transactions in the District of Columbia, further increased his advantage and

assets.³

In May 1798 Congress, fearful of war with France and adhering to John Adams' policy of armed neutrality and the strengthening of national defenses, created a Department of the Navy. Adams appointed his old friend Stoddert to the new cabinet post. The Stodderts moved to Philadelphia, and there fourteen-year-old Elizabeth was introduced to the social milieu she would crave all her life. Dances, tea parties, and social visits filled the days and evenings. Years later she entertained her own children with stories of Abigail Adams' visits to Rebecca Stoddert, and of the large plum cakes the President's wife always brought. Elizabeth attended Madame Capron's French School to study dancing, music, and manners. For the rest of her life she would never, when sitting, allow her back to touch the back of her chair, a posture she had been taught was required of gentle ladies.⁴

When the government moved to Washington in the summer of 1800, the Stodderts returned to Georgetown. Benjamin would continue to serve as Secretary of the Navy until shortly after the inauguration of Thomas Jefferson in March 1801. When her mother died a year later Elizabeth became mistress of Halcyon House and hostess to her father's friends and associates. One of these associates was Thomas Ewell, a young physician, whom she married 3 March 1807 at Halcyon House. Her children would never be allowed to forget that

the future President and Mrs. James Madison were among the guests. Shortly after his daughter's marriage Benjamin Stoddert's finances, hurt by the effects on trade of the European war and badly overextended in public projects and land speculation, reached a crisis. He handed over management of his business affairs and his home in Georgetown to his new son-in-law and returned to Bladensburg where he died, deeply in debt, in December 1813.⁹

If Elizabeth Ewell was heritage-proud, so too was Thomas Ewell. The Ewell's were, as one descendant put it, "purely Virginian." The best available evidence indicates that the first Ewell to settle in America was James Ewell who appears in Accomac County, Virginia, records in 1668. Charles Ewell, son of James, settled in St. Mary's Parish, Lancaster County, around 1710, having received a substantial grant of land. Two of Charles Ewell's sons, Charles and Bertrand, bought large tracts of land in Prince William County, Virginia, sometime prior to 1739 and became the progenitors of the "Prince William Ewells." Jesse Ewell, eldest son of Charles Ewell II and father of Thomas Ewell, was born at Bel Air, his father's estate near Dumfries, Virginia, in 1743. By the time Thomas Ewell was born in 1785, Ewell family estates were scattered over the length and breadth of Prince William County, and the Ewells had become a perfect example of the entangled cousinry so prevalent among Virginia's upper class in the eighteenth century. Brothers

of one family married sisters of another; a majority married first cousins, sometimes successively. Jesse Ewell married his first cousin, Charlotte Ewell, thereby making his contribution to inbreeding among the Ewells.*

Thomas Ewell was the fourth son and seventh child of the eighteen children of Jesse and Charlotte Ewell. He grew up at Bel Air in the early years of American independence and associated with many Virginians responsible for shaping the new government. The Ewells were distant neighbors of the Washingtons and frequently visited at Mount Vernon. Jesse Ewell's sister Marianne was wife of Dr. James Craig, friend and physician to Washington. Thomas Ewell's sister Fanny, ten years his senior, married Parson Mason Locke Weems, early biographer of Washington and author of the hatchet and cherry tree legend. Thomas Jefferson had been Jesse Ewell's close friend and classmate at the College of William and Mary and often spent the night at Bel Air on his travels to and from Washington. Thomas Ewell was proud of these connections, of the fact that his grandfather, Charles, had served with Colonel George Washington at Winchester in 1755, and of his father's service as colonel of militia in the Revolution. He took care that his children--especially Benjamin, the eldest son--knew and appreciated their aristocratic Virginia heritage. Benjamin learned his lessons well. Throughout his long career as president of the College of William and Mary, and in all his efforts to save the institution, Benjamin

Ewell was guided by a vision of Virginia composed of nostalgia for its days of Revolutionary greatness and admiration for the social values of that era. William and Mary was to become for him a living symbol of that vision.⁷

At about the age of fourteen, Jesse Ewell apprenticed his son Thomas to study medicine first with Dr. George Graham of Dumfries and then with Dr. John Weems in Washington. Young Thomas proved a brilliant student, and in 1803 Jesse Ewell "sold seven Negroes and land near the Falls" to pay for a two-year course of lectures at the University of Pennsylvania with Dr. Benjamin Rush. After graduation Dr. Thomas Ewell secured the aid of his father's old friend, Jefferson, in obtaining first a commission as surgeon at the naval hospital in New York City and later, after his marriage to Elizabeth Stoddert, at the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C. President Jefferson's intercession on behalf of Jesse Ewell's son was strictly a gesture of friendship and not of political interest. Thomas Ewell was an ardent Federalist and taught Federalist principles "to such of his children as were old enough to understand." Much later Benjamin would describe himself as a "birthright Federalist." Thomas Ewell was still employed at the Washington Navy Yard when Benjamin, his second child and first son, was born.⁸

Benjamin would remember life in his father's house as anything but ordinary. Thomas Ewell had charming manners, a

searching mind, and displayed extraordinary talent for research, invention, and authorship. He was also reckless and irresponsible, and seems to have suffered from both depression and alcoholism. He entered into his various pursuits with exaggerated energy and enthusiasm, and as quickly lost interest in them. Always described by friends as well as family members as "eccentric," he had a taste for the good life, and Elizabeth Ewell found his convivial habits unbecoming to her status in Washington society. As a result of his personality and habits, Ewell repeatedly found himself in difficult situations, and on these occasions he turned to his father's friend Jefferson for advice and support. Jefferson's letters to Thomas Ewell, destroyed at the family home in Prince William during the Civil War, were "full of counsel, suggestions how in difficult positions of affairs to act, [and] full of the most delicately worded warnings." Thomas Ewell valued the letters but ignored the advice as he continued to engage in behavior calculated to shock Washington's upper crust.⁷

Between 1805 and 1826 Ewell published four books on the theory and practice of medicine, one on the practical applications of chemistry to everyday life, and the first American edition of Humes's essays. Medically and scientifically he was far ahead of his time, but official Washington was unready to consider his plan for a lying-in hospital in that city, to be devoted to the study of women's

and infants' diseases and supported by national subscription; nor did early nineteenth century ladies take kindly to his suggestion that their fainting spells, tears, and tantrums were due to physical causes and not to sensibility. In his Discourses on Modern Chemistry (1806), written at the age of twenty, Dr. Ewell advocated the use of chemical fertilizers, soil testing, and insect control for better crop production and urged heat conservation and construction of houses to conform to the laws of heat to prevent desecration of American forests. Many years would pass before such advice would be taken seriously. Ewell's family was socially embarrassed when the Catholic Church of Georgetown publicly censured his edition of Hume's essays. He refused to back down, declaring that the public should be credited with intelligence enough to read them without Christian belief being undermined.¹⁰

Since 1809 Thomas Ewell had served at the Washington Navy Yard under James Madison's Secretary of the Navy, Paul Hamilton, a close friend for whom he named his second son. At Madison's second inaugural celebration in 1813, Hamilton, no longer able to hide his alcoholism, displayed public drunkenness and was forced, shortly after, to resign. The new Secretary, William Jones, promptly requested Ewell's resignation. The reason for the Secretary's action is unclear, but Ewell believed it politically motivated and protested to Madison that the "cruel injustice" was a

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violation of a pledge of continuance given him when Jefferson left office.¹¹

After leaving the Navy, Ewell returned to private practice in Georgetown and to the management of his own business and professional affairs. When Benjamin Stoddert died in 1813, Ewell, as executor, also assumed responsibility for Stodderts's estate. In none of these activities was he particularly successful. As a physician he was interested only in cases requiring complicated diagnosis or providing opportunity for testing new treatment methods. On one occasion he was nearly lynched by a mob for dissecting the brain of a recently deceased patient without permission from the man's widow. As his practice gradually declined he turned to other enterprises. In 1812 he had built a plant in Bladensburg to manufacture gunpowder by a process he had recently invented, a process which employed the rolling rather than pounding of powder, and was designed to lessen the risk of explosions. Ewell found that his reputation for recklessness and for experimentation with untried methods had preceded him when he encountered strong opposition from some citizens of Bladensburg. Only one small explosion, however, occurred during Ewell's ownership. With the United States at war, the manufactory might have been successful had not the Navy refused to honor a contract to buy powder, on the grounds that it was defective. When Congress refused to honor his claim against the Navy, Ewell was unable to absorb

the loss and was forced to sell the business. The new owners promptly proceeded to blow up the works and Ewell never collected on the sale. Much of his capital was tied up in Stoddert's business ventures, but Stoddert's creditors were so numerous that Ewell seems to have collected from the Stoddert estate only the stock he had held in the Anacostia Bridge Company. The upper bridge over the Anacostia River, built in 1805 by Benjamin Stoddert and several associates, was burned by order of American military authorities when the British captured Washington on 24 August 1814. This time Ewell had better luck with Congress. In March 1815 Ewell's claim was honored and the bridge rebuilt with public funds.¹²

With his energies so divided, Thomas Ewell had not the time--nor, perhaps, the inclination--to be an attentive father. Benjamin remarked that the family hardly knew him and that he always felt his father did not care for him. Dr. Ewell did, however, recognize his eldest son's academic ability and in 1817, when Benjamin was seven years old, arranged for him to attend the preparatory department of Georgetown College, a Roman Catholic institution located about four blocks from Halcyon House. Benjamin remained there for only a few months, but he made certain that the school would not soon forget him. On his first day of attendance, having been told by some joking students that it was the proper place to stable his mount, he rode his pony

into the main academic building. He was sent home and told to return on foot. His participation in the 1817 Commencement exercises produced Benjamin Ewell's favorite story--one he would tell repeatedly in later years to anyone who would listen. In 1815 Congress granted Georgetown College the right to confer collegiate degrees; the 1817 celebration honored its first graduating class. Everyone was anxious lest things not go smoothly. Young Benjamin practiced for hours a short piece of poetry he was to recite at the close of the ceremony, and he "anticipated a great triumph." Being forced to wait from 11:00 A.M. until 4:00 P.M., he fell asleep. When called on, he awoke not knowing where he was, and, catching a glimpse of the waiting audience, began to cry. He remembered being "hustled off the stage when ridicule and frowns were bestowed without stint." He always claimed this ended his aspirations to be a brilliant orator. Despite his lack of triumph on this occasion, Georgetown College made a deep impression on him. For the rest of this life he felt a profound admiration for the Catholic Church, and from time to time flirted with the notion of joining it.¹³

Benjamin's training at Georgetown ended in 1818 when Thomas Ewell, in an effort to rejuvenate his floundering career, took the family to Philadelphia where he again attended lectures at the University of Pennsylvania. After a year of study Ewell brought Elizabeth and their five children

back to Washington but not to the Stoddert home in Georgetown. While in Philadelphia Dr. Ewell had had a house built on Lafayette Square, across the street from the White House. The federal district in 1819 was still a frontier town with a handful of private residences, several crowded hotels, few sidewalks, and no streetlights. When the Ewell's moved in, only two other structures stood on Lafayette Square: St. John's Episcopal Church and the new Stephen Decatur house. Benjamin and his older sister Rebecca remembered watching from an attic window as Decatur was brought home mortally wounded after a duel with Commodore James Barron at the Bladensburg duelling grounds on 22 March 1820. Without doubt they also kept an eye on activities across the street at the White House, then occupied by President James Monroe, but they were to enjoy this privilege for only a short time. In 1820 Thomas Ewell, having failed to revive his practice, his finances in a desperate state, and his health failing, rented his home to Secretary of the Navy Smith Thompson and took his family home to Prince William County, Virginia.¹⁴

Benjamin Ewell spent the remainder of his youth on the 600 acre estate near Manassas that Thomas Ewell bought from Solomon Ewell, his first cousin and brother-in-law. Solomon had called the farm "Belleville," but Benjamin immediately rechristianed it "Stony Lonesome" in tribute to the rocky soil and the general air of loneliness that

pervaded the place. The Ewell children came to love Stony Lonesome and the rural society of Northern Virginia, but Elizabeth Ewell found it a far cry from the society of Georgetown and Washington. The rocky soil resisted cultivation, and, having dealt only with house servants, she found the field hands impudent and recalcitrant. To make matters worse, Thomas Ewell, increasingly unable to control his alcoholism and depression, withdrew from family and friends. One of his children would describe his life in the Prince William years as "chequered." In 1822 financial insolvency forced sale of his remaining stock in the Anacostia Bridge Company, and henceforth money was a scarce commodity in the Ewell home. The following year Thomas began work on a medical guide to be called The American Family Physician. Sale of the volume might have alleviated his pecuniary difficulties, but he lost the manuscript just after its completion and, in order to meet the publisher's deadline, was forced to rewrite hurriedly and from memory. Despite the book's rough form, Ewell sent copies to James Madison and Thomas Jefferson requesting their assistance in securing a medical chair at the new University of Virginia at Charlottesville. Neither seems to have interceded on his behalf. In any case, this was the last attempt Ewell would make to revive his career. On the first day of May 1826 he died at the age of forty. Elizabeth Stoddert Ewell never forgave him his failures; when each of her sons reached

adulthood she urged him to drop the name Ewell and take "Stoddert" as a surname.¹⁰

After Thomas Ewell's death, Elizabeth became sole supporter of eight children. Besides fifteen-year-old Benjamin, there was Rebecca Lowndes, seventeen; Paul Hamilton, fourteen; Elizabeth Stoddert, twelve; Richard Stoddert, nine; Virginia, six; Thomas, four; and William Stoddert, one. Two girls had died in infancy. The family could depend for income only on the relatively unproductive farm and on rent of \$300 to \$400 a year from the house on Lafayette Square which for many years served as a residence for cabinet members. Elizabeth Ewell was determined, strong-willed, and proud. She refused to borrow money or to accept help from her brothers and sisters. Young Benjamin shared her attitude and wrote that while he deplored the "unavoidable misfortunes which have reduced us to the state in which we now are," he would rather "eat the bread & fish of the poorest negro than that of magnificent dependence." Concerned that the family not fall into "a state of vulgarity," Elizabeth reminded her children of her sacrifices and insisted they behave in a manner becoming their heritage. Social position, she insisted, was defined by birth, not wealth, and "when those who are gentry by birth lose their money . . . they do not think themselves lowered by it, as it is only an accident not affecting their rank in reality." Although a stern and domineering parent and much concerned

with the opinions of others, she did not succeed in defeating the tendency of her children to think and act independently, often without regard for her opinions or that of their peers.¹⁶

Benjamin, now male head of the family, took his new role in stride and did what he could to alleviate financial hardship. With some help from his brothers Paul and Richard, he sold garden produce grown at Stony Lonesome. Years later his sister Elizabeth declared that his "exertions [and] sufferings" on the family's behalf had prevented a total wreck of their fortunes. Despite his efforts, the family often went hungry, and Richard Ewell would remember many evenings when he had only a piece of cornbread for supper.¹⁷

All who remembered Benjamin Ewell as a young man described him as gregarious, independent, and strong-willed, with a direct manner and a droll sense of humor. He was proud of his heritage and did his best to see that his brothers and sisters behaved properly, but he did not share his mother's concern that the family might fall into a "state of vulgarity." Benjamin enjoyed the rural social life Prince William offered, especially "tippling a pint" now and then, and often took his mother to task for "not wishing us to be on an equality with our rough, uncultivated neighbors." Like his father he had charming manners which would, in addition to a magnetic personality, prove his greatest assets

throughout a long career. Friends and associates would often disagree with him--few would not like him.¹⁰

The Ewell children remembered vividly the austerity and deprivation of those years at Stony Lonesome, but they also had pleasant recollections. First there was the music. Elizabeth Ewell had brought with her, from her father's house in Georgetown, a grand piano which she taught Rebecca and Elizabeth to play. Several of the children played guitar and Ben played the flute. Family musicales were frequent and gay affairs. Then there was Fanny Brown, a free mulatto woman whom the children called "Mammy," and who had come to Stony Lonesome with the family. Benjamin Stoddert had bought her for his daughter, and Thomas Ewell had freed her for her dedication in nursing him through a severe fever. She remained with the family as a wage-earner, though seldom paid, until her death in 1857 at the age of ninety. Benjamin remembered Mammy as one of the greatest influences in his life and the source of some of his fondest memories. A kindly but high-tempered woman of dignified presence and with formal manners, Mammy was nurse, advisor, and surrogate mother to Elizabeth Ewell's brood. A benevolent tyrant, who always had her way, and the children both loved and feared her. Mammy was also a Roman Catholic, and it was likely she who influenced Benjamin's sister Elizabeth to convert to Catholicism and enter the Convent of Visitation at Georgetown. Only with difficulty did the elder Elizabeth, an

Episcopalian, dissuade Rebecca from joining her sister. Even Benjamin would express many times his regret at not following Mammy's lead and joining the Church.¹⁹

Elizabeth Ewell knew she would not be able to offer her sons wealth or assure them the social status she felt to have been their birthright. She could, however, see that they were educated for positions as professional men; this goal became for her almost an obsession. As the eldest son, Benjamin was her first problem. In the early years at Stony Lonesome he had attended a neighborhood school where he showed great promise as a student. At about the age of fourteen he began study with a tutor who reported that "his correct deportment, unceasing application, and rapid improvement . . . have been seldom equalled . . . by any youth that studied under me." Thomas Ewell had brought with him to Prince William a "fine and well chosen" library; Ben made good use of it and especially favored works in history and literature. That he showed unusual ability and shared his father's inquiring mind there was no doubt, but the problem of financing a college education remained.²⁰

After weighing the alternatives, especially in terms of the Ewells' straitened circumstances, Elizabeth concluded that she had only one viable course of action. Perhaps the grandson of Benjamin Stoddert could obtain an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. Certainly Benjamin had the family connections and academic

ability. Elizabeth only hoped she could convince the right politicians that her son should be educated at public expense.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER I

¹Harold Donaldson Eberlein and Van Dyke Cortlandt Hubbard, Historic Houses of Georgetown and Washington City (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1958), pp. 4-7, 22-28. Although still standing, Halcyon House is much altered in appearance. The birthdate of Benjamin Stoddert Ewell remains uncertain. Obituary notices and Ewell's manuscript biography give it as 10 June 1810; the family Bible and a plaque erected to his memory at the College of William and Mary record it as 15 June 1810. I have chosen to accept the family Bible entry as the correct date. Williamsburg Virginia Gazette, 22 June 1894; Benjamin Stoddert Ewell [hereafter cited as BSE], Autobiography (typescript), n.d., Ewell Faculty File, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia [hereafter cited as CWM]; leaves from Ewell Family Bible (photograph) Ewell Papers, CWM.

²Eberlein and Hubbard, Historic Houses, p. 27.

³Ibid., pp. 8-10, 24-25, 54; Genealogy Sketch and Ewell Family Bible (photograph), Ewell Papers, CWM; Stoddert Genealogy Chart, Jesse Ewell Family Papers, University of Texas, Austin.

⁴Eberlein and Hubbard, Historic Houses, p. 25; Harriet Stoddert Turner, "The Ewells of Virginia and especially Stony Lonesome" (typescript), Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

⁵Eberlein and Hubbard, Historic Houses, pp. 25-31; Wilhelmus Bogart Bryan, A History of the National Capital from its Foundation through the Period of the Adoption of the Organic Act (New York: MacMillan, 1914-1916) 1: 97-100, 497; Turner, "Ewells of Virginia," Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

⁶Genealogy Sketch, Ewell Papers, CWM (quotation); Eleanor M. Ewell and Alice M. Ewell, "Ewell Family History" (typescript), Jesse Ewell Family Papers, University of Texas, Austin. In other versions of the family genealogy Charles Ewell of Lancaster is said to have come to America from Sussex, England in 1699 to help build the

capitol at Williamsburg before receiving land on the Northern Neck of Virginia. Turner, "Ewells of Virginia" and Sketch of Thomas Ewell, both in Ewell Papers, CWM.

⁷Ewell and Ewell, "Family History," Jesse Ewell Family Papers, University of Texas, Austin; Genealogy Sketch and Sketch of Thomas Ewell, Ewell Papers, CWM; Thomas Ewell to Jesse Ewell, 20 Dec. 1802, Jesse Ewell Family Papers, University of Texas, Austin; Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

⁸Dictionary of American Biography, s.v. "Thomas Ewell"; Jesse Ewell to Thomas Ewell, 1 Aug. [1803], Ewell Papers, CWM (quotation); Thomas Ewell Student Record, University of Pennsylvania Archives, Philadelphia, Pa.; Sketch of Thomas Ewell, Ewell Papers, CWM (2d quotation); BSE to Edmund Quincy, 23 Aug. 1876, Ewell Faculty File, CWM (3rd quotation).

⁹Sketch of Thomas Ewell, Ewell Papers, CWM (quotation). Information on the Jefferson letters is in this manuscript probably written by Thomas Ewell's daughter Elizabeth. Eberlein and Hubbard, Historic Houses, p. 29.

¹⁰Letters to Ladies Detailing Important Information Concerning Themselves and Infants (Philadelphia [?]: Printed for the author by W. Brown, 1817; Discourses on Modern Chemistry (New York: Brisban & Brannon, 1806), pp 22-24. This work is dedicated to Jefferson in appreciation "for favors received" and contains an endorsement by Jefferson. Hume's Philosophical Essays on Morals, Literature, and Politics (Philadelphia: Edward Earle, 1817); Sketch of Thomas Ewell, Ewell Papers, CWM. For a complete list of the published works of Thomas Ewell see Bibliography.

¹¹Irving Brant, The Fourth President: A Life of James Madison (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1970), pp.406, 464, 529; Thomas Ewell to James Madison, 21 May 1813, Madison Papers, Library of Congress [hereafter cited as LC], Washington, D.C. (quotation); DAB, s.v. "Thomas Ewell."

¹²DAB, s.v. "Thomas Ewell"; Sketch of Thomas Ewell, Ewell Papers, CWM; Thomas Ewell to James Madison, 15 Apr. 1812, 21, 23 May 1813, Madison Papers, LC; Digested Summary and Alphabetical List of Private Claims . . . presented in the House of Representatives 1(1853), 602; BSE to Lizinka C. B. Ewell, n.d., Ewell Papers, CWM; Eberlein and Hubbard Historic Houses, p. 30; Bryan, National Capital 1: 98.

¹³BSE to Elizabeth Ewell (sister), 6 Dec. 1892, Ewell Papers, CWM. Because Benjamin Ewell's mother, sister, and daughter were all named "Elizabeth Stoddert Ewell," the mother's and sister's relationships will be placed in parenthesis; the daughter will be identified by her nickname of "Lizzy." Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM (all quotations); BSE to the Very Reverend J.H. Richards, S.J., president of Georgetown University, 3, 24 Nov. 1891, Georgetown University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Eberlein and Hubbard, Historic Houses, p. 94.

¹⁴Ewell and Ewell, "Family History," Jesse Ewell Family Papers, University of Texas, Austin; BSE to the Very Reverend J. H. Richards, 24 Nov. 1891, Georgetown University Archives, Washington, D.C.; Andrew Tully, When They Burned the White House (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1961), passim; Robert Seager II, And Tyler Too: A Biography of John and Julia Tyler (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963), pp. 60-61; Eberlein and Hubbard, Historic Houses, pp. 178, 259-261; Turner, "Ewell's of Virginia," p. 18; George Rothwell Brown, Washington: A Not Too Serious History (n.p., 1930), p.228. The Ewell home was on the west side of Lafayette Square, which in the early 19th century was often called "President's Square." Its address in the 1840s and 1870s was No. 7, 16 1/2 Street, and it was later known as No. 14, Jackson Place. The house was demolished in 1930; the site is now occupied by the Brookings Institute Building. Information from District of Columbia Public Library.

¹⁵Ewell and Ewell, "Family History," Jesse Ewell Family Papers, University of Texas, Austin; Register of Brown-Ewell Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville [hereafter cited as TSLA]; Virginia Writers Program, Prince William: The Story of its People and its Places (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1941), p. 150; Turner, "Ewell's of Virginia," p. 23; Elizabeth S. Ewell (mother) to Rebecca Ewell, 30 Oct. 1851, Ewell Papers, CWM; Bryan, National Capital, p.492; Thomas Ewell, American Family Physician (Georgetown: J. Thomas, 1824); Thomas Ewell to James Madison, 12 Dec. 1824, Madison Papers, LC; Elizabeth S. Ewell (mother) to BSE, 10 Mar. 1839, Ewell Papers, CWM. Information on Thomas Ewell's probable depression and alcoholism comes from an interview with his great-great-great granddaughter, Rebecca Paluzsay, 16 Jan. 1980, Williamsburg, Va. Only Elizabeth Ewell's youngest son, William, dropped the Ewell name.

¹⁶Leaf from Ewell Family Bible (photograph), Ewell Papers, CWM; Turner, "Ewells of Virginia," p. 19; Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Brown, Washington, p. 228; Sketch of

Richard S. Ewell, BSE to Paul Ewell, n.d. (1st quotation), Elizabeth S. Ewell (sister) to BSE, 2 Apr. 1885 (2d and 3rd quotations), all in Ewell Papers, CWM. Ben would defy his mother's wishes in his choice of a career and of a wife: General Richard S. Ewell was remembered by soldiers who served with him in the Confederate Army as eccentric, independent, and extremely outspoken. Elizabeth shocked and distressed the entire family when she converted to Catholicism and entered a convent in 1842.

¹⁷Turner, "Ewells of Virginia," p. 26; Elizabeth S. Ewell (sister) to BSE, 5 May 1885, Ewell Papers, CWM (quotation); Richard S. Ewell to Lizinka Brown, [?] Nov. 1861 in Percy Gatling Hamlin, Old Bald Head (General Richard S. Ewell): The Portrait of a Soldier (Strasburg, Va.: Shenandoah Publishing House, 1940), p. 67.

¹⁸Demos Kent to BSE, 31 Dec. 1831, and Elizabeth S. Ewell (sister) to BSE, 2 Apr. 1885 (quotation), both in Ewell Papers, CWM.

¹⁹Elizabeth S. Ewell (sister) to BSE, 14 Sept. 1876, and Rebecca Ewell to BSE, 1 Aug. 1837, Ewell Papers, CWM; Turner, "Ewells of Virginia," passim.; Elizabeth S. Ewell (mother) to Rebecca Ewell, 3 Dec. 1842, Ewell Papers, CWM; Georgetown University Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁰Elizabeth S. Ewell (sister) to BSE, 5 May 1885, Ewell Papers, CWM; affidavit of Phillip Smith, 14 Dec. 1826, Cadet Application Papers, [microcopy #688] National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C. (1st quotation); papers concerning Thomas Ewell (typescript), Ewell Papers, CWM (2d quotation). Elizabeth Ewell was remarkably successful in her attempts to educate her sons for the professions. Paul studied medicine at Columbia College until his death in 1831; Thomas became a lawyer and politician; Richard, an 1840 graduate of West Point, became a professional soldier and rose to the rank of Lt. General in the Confederate Army; William, a graduate of Union Theological Seminary, had a long career as a Presbyterian minister.

CHAPTER II

CADET AND ENGINEER

West Point had much to recommend it, at least from Elizabeth Ewell's point of view. First among its advantages was the fact that it was free. In the 1820s the Military Academy required no competitive examinations and candidates were usually selected by Congressmen and appointed by the President upon the advice of the Secretary of War. The Secretary made his recommendations on the basis, at least theoretically, of poverty and the service of the candidate's family to the nation. On arrival at West Point the candidate was required to complete successfully a series of entrance examinations before being accepted as a cadet. In practice this procedure meant that most appointments went to the sons of political and social leaders who had the advantages of good connections, old-family status, and opportunity for adequate preparatory education. This, in turn, lent social prestige to a West Point degree. Elizabeth Ewell believed her eldest son had the necessary family connections for admission, and certainly the social distinction of such an education was desirable. Further there were the academic advantages and the curriculum the Military Academy could

offer.

Founded by the federal government in 1802, the Academy had suffered a rocky beginning, but after 1817--under the guidance of Superintendent Sylvanus Thayer--it became increasingly known for the excellence of its course and the success of its graduates. Instruction in mathematics and engineering science dominated the curriculum at this the first technical college in the United States, to the almost total exclusion of the classical studies which reigned in all other American institutions. Increasing national interest in internal improvements, accompanied by a serious shortage of trained engineers, made engineering a promising profession. Young Benjamin had shown exceptional ability in mathematics. Despite all this, he preferred to study law and perhaps, given a choice, would have chosen to attend one of Virginia's private or state-supported colleges. But economics ruled the decision, and he acquiesced in his mother's efforts to send him to the Military Academy on the banks of the Hudson River.¹

Scarcely a month after Thomas Ewell's death, Elizabeth began what would prove to be a lengthy campaign to convince the proper authorities that her son belonged at West Point. She turned first to United States Representative and family friend Charles Fenton Mercer of Loudoun County, Virginia. Mercer informed her that both places allowed Virginia had been filled for 1826-27 and suggested she seek

an at-large appointment from Secretary of War, and former Governor of Virginia, James Barbour. Over the next two years, with support from Mercer and armed with endorsements from Benjamin's tutors, Elizabeth bombarded Barbour's office with letters stressing her son's relationship to Benjamin Stoddert, Stoddert's service in the Revolution, his failure to receive any pension, and the family's current poverty. Finally, on the advice of Mercer and another family friend, Governor Joseph Kent of Maryland, she convinced Benjamin to try a personal approach. In the spring of 1828, with letters of recommendation from Kent and Mercer in hand, Benjamin went to Washington to see Barbour. In his letter Kent wrote:

The young gentleman [who will] . . .hand you this has been for the last year or two a candidate for admission at West Point. . . . Notwithstanding the strong claims this young gentleman has upon the public favour in consequence of the services of his ancestor, I feel more interested for his success from the conviction that his receiving an education at West Point would be a public benefit. Rely on it he is no ordinary youth. This you can ascertain by conversing with him. With proper advantages he would make a prodigy in mathematical science. . . .I will agree he shall be dismissed [from] the school if he is not at the head of any class he shall be put in at the end of four months.²

In late March Benjamin signed the articles of enlistment binding himself to serve the United States as a cadet for five years. The lesson that face-to-face solicitation might succeed where all else had failed was not lost on Benjamin. People seemed to respond to his friendly and charming manner, his wit, his conversational ability. In the future when faced with a difficult problem requiring much

persuasion, he would make every effort to present his case in person.³

In July 1828 Benjamin left Stony Lonesome for New York City where he would catch a steamer for the six-hour trip to West Point. Elizabeth had managed to scrape together enough money for travel and clothing but nothing for contingent expenses. Distressed by the situation, Mammy gave him ten dollars although she had received no wages for more than a year. The account of her kindness on this occasion later became a favorite in Benjamin's repertoire of anecdotes. Upon arrival at the Academy, he experienced his first taste of the garrison life he would grow increasingly to dislike over the next four years.⁴

Life at West Point under Superintendent Sylvanus Thayer (1817-1833) offered a rigid code of discipline, constant supervision, a full schedule, no unnecessary comforts, and monotony. An austere, inflexible, and aloof man--cadets swore he never smiled--Thayer was also an impartial disciplinarian. Concerned that West Point was too often considered a school for the privileged, Thayer determined to make it an institution where an individual's standing depended solely on merit rather than on adventitious circumstances of birth, wealth, or influence. Instruction, discipline, food, clothing, and quarters were meted out alike to all. Convinced that desirable moral values, duty, honor, and loyalty could best be encouraged by clean living, Thayer

forbade drinking, card playing, gambling, tobacco, games, the reading of novels, swimming in the river, musical instruments, and the writing for publication of anything concerning the Academy. Accommodations were spartan. The quarters, where cadets slept two to a room on mattresses on the floor, were cold in winter and hot in summer. In the regular winter session cadets put in fifteen-hour days filled with study, drill, and policing of the buildings and grounds. Superintendent Thayer had eliminated the summer leaves previously granted and instituted a summer encampment during which cadets lived in tents, practiced tactical manuevers, and learned the art of soldiering. The only break in this routine came at the end of a cadet's third year when he was allowed a two-month summer furlough--at no other time could he leave the post. The early nineteenth century curriculum offered a wide variety of mathematics and natural science courses necessary to engineering; French, necessary for the use of military texts in that language; topographical drawing; and a capstone course in moral philosophy and political science. Cadets received a daily grade in each course. In January and June, Thayer, the professors, and members of the Board of Visitors subjected each cadet to five hours of gruelling examination.⁹

Cadet Ewell, as with most cadets before and since, found much at West Point of which to complain. The food was "tiresome." The ill-fitting, constraining uniforms did not

fit comfortably on his five-feet, four-inch frame. Money was a constant problem. All cadets, forbidden to bring money with them or to receive any from home, were forced to live on the eighteen dollars a month the government paid them, an amount they never actually received. Each cadet's pay was deposited in his account at the commissary to be drawn upon for necessities. It was never enough, and most cadets were constantly in debt, a state of affairs that brought curtailment of the few privileges allowed. Ewell described his account as always "grossly deficient." He missed his friends at home, especially the ladies, and found West Point an "isolated" and "insulated" spot that offered "little variety in the diurnal routine of a cadet's life." To his sister Elizabeth he wrote:

Our recreations are very few. They consist in walking over a plain about 800 yards in diameter & in the enjoyment of each other's society (which, to me at least, is rather more of a bore than anything else) when it is not study hour or drill. By far the most profitable and pleasant of our time is . . . spent in the Mess Hall. There are a very few ladies on the Point & those who are here are pretty ugly which is not at all congenial with my tastes who [sic] have been accustomed to beauty.⁴

Ewell also found the curriculum monotonous. He complained that he spent most of his time studying mathematics "which will never be of any service unless I should become a teacher." Superfluous or not, he thrived on the scientifically-oriented course of study except during his first semester as a "plebe" when he gained a reputation for indolence and came very close to failure. On this occasion

Elizabeth Ewell, remarking that she would not have him "idling about at home or sauntering about with the ladies," scolded him seriously for his failure to study and held up to him as an example one whose reputation as a model cadet was apparently established even before his graduation. Speaking of a family friend, she wrote:

Nelson Lloyd was here today. . . . He has a friend who has been there three years and never received a bad mark; his name is Lee, the son of General Harry Lee.⁷

Whether or not Robert Edward Lee's record was an inspiration to Benjamin is unknown, but he did eventually conquer the academic course. The cursed demerit was another matter. By the end of his first year Cadet Ewell had managed to earn 124 demerits. This record did not rival the top number of 728 nor does his account reflect the penalties for profanity, failure to attend church, or ungentlemanly conduct so prevalent in the records of many cadets of the period. He also escaped the fate of Jefferson Davis who, in 1825, was court-martialed but not dismissed for frequenting a tavern which was off-limits but nonetheless a favorite refuge and drinking place for cadets. Ewell's conduct record reflects a gregarious personality and efforts to catch a few extra moments of sleep between inspections, drills, class, mess, and study. Numerous entries concern visiting after hours, and talking on post and in ranks at parade, reveille, and mess. Even though the number of demerits against a cadet was included in computing class standing, and for the first year

Ewell's delinquency record placed him in the bottom third of his class in conduct, he finished first for the 1828-29 session. Rarely did a cadet with so many demerits rank so high. His success must be attributed to his first place finish in the mathematics courses which counted three times as much as anything else and were the cause of most failures. All in all, Benjamin Ewell's academic record at the Military Academy was impressive. While only one in five cadets who enrolled, graduated, he finished second in his third-year class (1829-30) and fourth in his second-year class (1830-31). Ewell graduated, in June 1832, third in a class of forty-five cadets, a rank that would undoubtedly have been higher but for a very poor performance in drawing, and a mediocre conduct record.®

On 1 July 1832 Cadet Ewell was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Fourth United States Artillery. The reason for his assignment to the artillery remains unclear. After final examinations the Academic Board ranked each cadet in order of merit, a procedure which usually determined the corps to which he would be assigned. Those graduating with the highest class ranks were almost always assigned to the coveted engineer corps and dispatched to work on fortification of rivers and harbors and the building of canals. The rest received appointment to the "fiery cavalry, the respectable artillery, or the prosaic infantry," and usually served at army posts on the frontier or in the Indian

Wars. Certainly Ewell's merit rank entitled him to a place in the engineers. Perhaps for personal reasons, he requested assignment to the artillery. In any case, his "ordeal . . . of 4 years imprisonment" over, he went home to Virginia and to Stony Lonesome for the first time in four years. Poverty had prevented his taking advantage of the allotted summer furlough; nor had he been able to return home when his favorite brother, Paul, a medical student at Columbia College, died in March 1831. Lieutenant Ewell spent two months at home and, "like a plant removed from the shade into a hothouse," took full advantage of the female society Prince William had to offer. In late August 1832 Ewell returned to the Academy to fulfill his obligation to the army, but, unlike most of his classmates, he did not go directly into field service.*

As early as 1831 Ewell had determined not to remain in the army. West Point offered an excellent education, but an army career offered poor prospects. In a period devoid of serious external enemies, an economy-minded Congress insisted on keeping the regular army small. West Point graduated many more officers than the army could use, and promotion was slow or nonexistent. Both morale and pay were low--\$700 a year for a second lieutenant in the elite engineers and as low as \$300 a year for a similar rank in the infantry. Ewell had never liked the "idle and miserable" martial life anyway, and faced with these circumstances which would leave him "no

better off 20 years hence," he determined to remain in the army only long enough to satisfy his obligation of field service. But Superintendent Thayer offered a reprieve. One of Thayer's innovations at West Point had been the introduction of small course sections taught by recent graduates and supervised by regular faculty members. Similar to the tutorial system prevalent in most nineteenth century American colleges, this arrangement provided inexpensive labor and helped to ease the acute shortage of instructors trained in the scientific disciplines. Only the best scholars and those who gave the greatest promise as teachers were detailed to the Academy as instructors. Thayer offered Ewell one of these coveted appointments. For three years (1832-1835) he served as Assistant Professor of Mathematics under Professor Charles Davies, perhaps the best known mathematician in the nation during most of the nineteenth century. For an additional year Ewell assisted Professor William H. C. Bartlett, a well-known astronomer and textbook author, in his natural philosophy courses. Rarely did the army detail an instructor to the Academy for more than two years before he was forced to report to his regiment or resign his commission. That Ewell proved a knowledgeable, patient, and talented teacher probably explains his four-year tenure as instructor.¹⁰

His success as a teacher notwithstanding, by the summer of 1836 it became clear to Ewell that the position at

West Point offered no real possibility of advancement. Professors tended to remain for years; rarely did a faculty vacancy occur. Even had a permanent appointment been offered, it is doubtful he would have accepted. Since his graduation in 1832 things had changed at the Academy. Since about 1830 President Andrew Jackson and some of his supporters in Congress had launched sporadic attacks on the Military Academy as a bastion of the rich which offered special privilege and advantage to the wealthy at government expense. Jackson, as a self-taught soldier, favored the militia and considered the regular army anti-democratic. Bills aimed at cutting off appropriations for the Academy were introduced in Congress, and cadets found with increasing frequency that unfavorable results of courts-martial could be overturned by a personal appeal to Jackson or to the War Department. These activities in Washington badly undermined both morale and Superintendent Thayer's carefully conceived and hard-won system of discipline. In January 1833, after repeated failure to come to terms with the Jackson administration, Thayer resigned, to be replaced by Rene E. DeRussy. During DeRussy's superintendency the academic program suffered and discipline declined to the extent that Jackson was finally forced, in the summer of 1835, to declare that he would no longer listen to appeals from courts-martial. All this served to reinforce Ewell's already strong anti-Jacksonian bias and his reluctance to remain in

the army--either at the Academy or in the field.¹¹

Having ruled out the military life, Ewell considered several alternatives. He flirted with the notion of moving West where opportunities, he believed, were greater. Perhaps he would, after all, study law, an occupation which offered "constant employment and the intercourse of all classes of men." For a time he thought seriously of combining the two by joining his brother Tom who was studying law with his uncle, William Stoddert, at Jackson, Tennessee. Family circumstances intervened to rule out this possibility. In March 1831 Benjamin's brother Paul had died, and in the summer of 1836 another brother, Richard, would enroll at the Military Academy. With Tom in Tennessee, twelve-year-old William was the only son remaining with their mother on the farm in Prince William. As the eldest son, Benjamin believed he must remain near home. Elizabeth refused his plea to "sell out and seek our fortune in some new country" on grounds that she would suffer a "loss of society"; Ben replied that "she might as well be in the Desert of Sahara as where she is at present." In any case Benjamin felt obligated to resist the lure of the West and seek employment nearer Prince William.¹²

If his training as a professional soldier seemed a dead end, his knowledge of civil engineering did not. America's developing railroad and industrial empire offered increasing opportunity for engineers, almost all of whom were

trained at West Point. State and city governments, as well as private corporations, bid fiercely for their services and offered handsome salaries. When Isaac Trimble, chief engineer for the Baltimore and Susquehanna Railroad, offered Ewell a position as assistant engineer in that company at \$2.50 an hour with guaranteed promotion, he was quick to accept. On 30 September 1836 Ewell resigned from the army and prepared to leave the institution that had been his home for nearly a decade.¹³

Ewell would never return to West Point, not even to attend the reunions so popular with many of its graduates. As with most of them, however, he was never really able to leave the Academy behind. He had spent eight years in a tightly-knit society that seldom included more than 210 cadets and fifteen faculty and supervisory personnel. Such intimacy and the common experience shared by all cadets encouraged bonds of brotherhood that lasted for a lifetime. In his later career as a professor of mathematics he corresponded regularly with his own instructors in that subject. Charles Davies, Albert E. Church, and Edward C. Ross offered advice on textbooks and curriculum, as well as an occasional recommendation for employment. Professor of Military Science and Civil Engineering Dennis Hart Mahan, from whom most of the leading military figures of the American Civil War learned the art of war, remained a close friend. Robert E. Lee and Joseph Eggleston Johnston were in

their last year at the Academy when Ewell entered. He never knew Lee well, although he would later remark that "in appearance, in dignified bearing, and in soldierly demeanor and in influence over fellow cadets . . . I never saw his equal." With Johnston, whom he described as "noted for his intellect & pleasant address [but who] gave no promise of the genius & practical ability & military skill as a strategist his subsequent career developed," Ewell formed a close relationship. This friendship grew stronger over the years as their paths repeatedly crossed, most notably during the Civil War when Ewell served as Johnston's Adjutant-General and Chief-of-Staff. Other close friends were fellow Virginians Francis Henney Smith, later first Superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute, and John Bankhead Magruder, with whom Ewell would serve in the Virginia Peninsula Campaign of 1862. Over the years Ewell kept and valued his association with his students Braxton Bragg, future general in the Confederate States Army, and Joseph R. Anderson, future owner of the Tredegar Iron Works at Richmond.¹⁴

In addition to these enduring friendships and his training as an engineer and professional soldier, Ewell also took with him from the Academy certain intellectual bonds that would greatly influence his life and career. Authorities at West Point, as trainers of those who would defend the United States, insisted on a strong sense of obligation to the

Academy and to the Union. They openly attempted to prevent sectional prejudices and to promote a love of the union that would transcend political, economic, social, and sectional differences. This emphasis on nationalism strongly reinforced Ewell's allegiance to the union and would make his decision in 1861 to join the Confederate forces a truly excruciating one. In his post-war career he would openly, and with considerable unpopularity, espouse the cause of unionism and reconciliation. The years at West Point were relatively brief, but the spirit--for Ewell as for most graduates--lasted a lifetime.

When Benjamin Ewell arrived in the beautiful mountain community of York, Pennsylvania, in the fall of 1836, to assume his duties as engineer for the Baltimore and Susquehanna Railroad Company, he had reason to hope that engineering would prove a more lucrative and satisfying profession than that of soldier. The Baltimore and Susquehanna Railroad, chartered in 1828 by a group of Baltimore businessmen, was an attempt by the city's business community to enlarge their western markets and counter the threat posed by the Erie Canal and Pennsylvania's state canal-rail system joining Philadelphia to Pittsburgh. Because Baltimore had no important inland waterway connections, the railroad's founders proposed to lay rail from the city north to York where it would connect with the

Pennsylvania Portage and Canal System. Work began in 1829, but by 1835 the railroad, burdened by high construction costs in the mountainous terrain, was only partially completed. In that year a one-million dollar loan from the State of Maryland allowed work to continue. As resident engineer at York, Ewell would act as representative of the chief engineer and supervise the laying of the last bit of rail to connect that southeastern Pennsylvania community to Baltimore.¹⁰

Despite the promise the position seemed to offer, Ewell's enthusiasm for a career in civil engineering was short-lived. Railway construction in the 1830s was an exasperating and treacherous enterprise. Roadbeds and bridges collapsed, strap-iron pulled away from wooden rails, and the large wheels of locomotives imported by the Baltimore and Susquehanna from England proved unadaptable to the railroad's sharp curves. Quarrels and fights among workmen, intoxication, and disagreements among engineers were constant problems. By the fall of 1838 construction funds were almost gone, and the failure of the Pennsylvania canal to be completed beyond Harrisburg seemed to indicate that the railroad would not attract the large and profitable transportation its supporters had hoped for. Campaigns to secure from Pennsylvania the right to extend the railroad to Harrisburg, and from Maryland the funds to continue, promised no immediate results. Finding it again necessary and

desirable to change professions, Ewell turned to the thing he found most satisfying and in which he excelled--teaching.¹⁷

On the advice of Professor Charles Davies of West Point, Ewell applied for a proposed chair of civil and military engineering at South Carolina College in Columbia. When the South Carolina legislature failed to establish this position, Ewell applied for a professorship in Mississippi. Failing in this endeavor, he finally secured a professorship of mathematics at Hampton-Sydney College in Virginia, a position vacated by his close friend, Francis Henney Smith, who had resigned to become first superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute at Lexington, Virginia.¹⁸

In the spring of 1839 Ewell left York to spend the summer at Stony Lonesome before assuming his duties at Hampden-Sydney in the fall. With him was his new wife, Julia McIlvaine Ewell, whom he married at York on 10 April 1839. Eleven years his junior, the eighteen-year-old Julia was the daughter of Dr. William McIlvaine, a York physician, and Juliana McIlvaine.¹⁹

Elizabeth Ewell was not pleased with her son's choice of a wife. She held strong views on what constituted proper marriage alliances for her children, and only young men and women of wealth and high social position--preferably from Virginia or Maryland--met her criteria. Such unions she hoped would rejuvenate the family fortune and do justice to

the Ewell and especially the Stoddert names. So successful was she in impressing these views on her children that only two of her six children who lived to adulthood ever married. After her death, and at the age of forty-five, Richard married his cousin Lizinka Campbell Brown, also a grandchild of Benjamin Stoddert.²⁰

Under such circumstances it was not likely Elizabeth would view Julia as an ideal mate for her eldest son. Not only did she lack wealth and old-family status, but she was a high-spirited and outspoken young woman, characteristics both Elizabeth and Benjamin's sisters found objectionable. Although the Ewells attempted to welcome her to the family, relations were never cordial and deteriorated over time. It must have been a considerable relief to all when Benjamin and his bride departed Prince William in August 1839 for the small college town of Hampden-Sydney, Virginia.²¹

NOTES FOR CHAPTER II

¹Morris Schaff, The Spirit of Old West Point (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1907), pp. 2, 76; Stephen E. Ambrose, Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), pp. 82-83, 129; Rudolph, Curriculum, p. 62; BSE to Rebecca Ewell, 15 June 1831, Ewell Papers, CWM.

²Charles Fenton Mercer to Elizabeth Ewell (mother), 30 May 1826, Ewell Papers, CWM; letters of Elizabeth Ewell to Mercer and Barbour, Mercer's to Barbour, and Kent's letter, 25 Mar. 1828 (block quotation) are in Cadet Application Papers (microcopy # 688), National Archives, Washington, D.C. Joseph Kent of Bladensburg was governor of Maryland, 1826-1829 and was elected to the United States Senate as a National Republican in 1833, DAB.

³Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to James Barbour, 31 Mar. 1828, Cadet Application Papers, National Archives.

⁴Francis H. Smith, West Point Fifty Years Ago: An Address Delivered Before the Association of Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy . . . June 12, 1879 (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1879), p. 2; Turner, "Ewells of Virginia," p. 20, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

⁵Ambrose, West Point, p. 37; Robert H. Hall, "Early Discipline at the United States Military Academy," Journal of the Military Service Institution 2(Nov. 1882): 465.

⁶BSE to Rebecca Ewell, 15 June 1831; Thomas Tasker Gantt to Rebecca Ewell, 17 Dec. 1831; BSE to Paul Ewell, 1 Apr. 1830; BSE to Elizabeth Ewell (mother), 10 Apr. 1830 (quotation), Ewell Papers, CWM. On cadets' pay see Ambrose, West Point, pp. 70, 151.

⁷BSE to Paul Ewell, 1 Apr. 1830 (1st quotation), and Rebecca Ewell to BSE, 8 Feb. [1838], Ewell Papers, CWM; Turner, "Ewells of Virginia," p. 22; Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to BSE, n.d. in Hamlin, Old Bald Head, pp. 4-5 (2d quotation and block quotation). Robert E. Lee, class of 1829, was a 1st classman when Ewell went to West Point. He is often said never to have received a demerit or

a failing mark.

⁹Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Thomas J. Fleming, West Point: The Men and Times of the United States Military Academy (New York: William J. Morrow & Co., 1969), pp.54,57; Delinquency Records, Archives; United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y. [hereafter cited as USMA]; Ambrose, West Point, pp. 74, 89-90; Academic Records, Archives, USMA. The 4th year class is a cadet's first year at the Academy, the 3rd year class, his second year, etc.

⁷BSE to G. W. Cullum, 6 Feb. 1850, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; for cadet assignments see Ambrose, West Point, pp. 56, 73 (1st quotation), and Ellsworth Eliot, Jr., West Point in the Confederacy (New York: G. A. Baker & Co., 1941), pp. 22-23; BSE to Rebecca Ewell, 15 June 1831, 4 Mar. 1831; Thomas Tasker Gantt to Rebecca Ewell, 10 June 1832 (3rd quotation); all in Ewell Papers, CWM.

¹⁰BSE to Paul Ewell and to William Stoddert, 7 Dec. 1834, both in Ewell Papers, CWM; Fleming, West Point: The Men and Times, pp. 37, 98; Ambrose, West Point, pp. 116, 75-76, 95-96, 104; Charles Davies to John Tyler, 27 Apr. 1848, William and Mary College Papers, Archives, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia [hereafter cited as WM College Papers]; Charles Davies, an 1815 graduate of the Academy, taught at West Point from 1823 until 1837. He was author of more than a dozen texts in mathematics which were used in most 19th century American mathematics courses at all levels. Ambrose, West Point, pp. 92-93. Numerous letters of recommendation in Ewell's Faculty File, CWM, attest to his virtues as a teacher.

¹¹Ambrose, West Point, pp. 110-119; Ethan Allen Hitchcock, Fifty Years in Camp and Field, ed. W. A. Croffret (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), pp. 64-67; Fleming, West Point: The Men and the Times, pp. 70-91; Smith, West Point, p. 4; BSE to Rebecca Ewell, 4 Mar. 1831 and Thomas Ewell to BSE, 4 Apr., 3 Aug., 25 Sept. 1841, all in Ewell Papers, CWM.

¹²BSE to William Stoddert, 7 Dec. 1834 (all quotations); William Stoddert to BSE, 17 Nov., 3 Jan. 1835; Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to BSE, 30 Mar. 1831; all in Ewell Papers, CWM.

¹³Isaac Trimble to BSE, 19 May [1836], Ewell Papers, CWM; BSE to G. W. Cullum, 6 Feb. 1850, BSE Alumni File, Archives, USMA. Isaac Trimble (1802-1888), an 1822 graduate of West Point, later served in the Confederate Army with Lt. General Richard Stoddert Ewell, brother of Benjamin Ewell. Trimble was a brigade commander under General Ewell

along the Rappahannock River and in the Valley Campaign of late 1862 and early 1863. Eliot, West Point in the Confederacy, pp. 446-447.

¹⁴Fleming, West Point: The Men and Times, pp. 46-47; Letters from Davies, Church, Ross, and Mahan are in Ewell Papers and WM College Papers, CWM; Ambrose, West Point, pp. 99-100; BSE, "Reminiscences of General John Bankhead Magruder," Ms copy of an address to the Magruder-Ewell Camp of Confederate Veterans, n.d., Ewell Papers, CWM (1st and 2d quotations). Magruder was in the Class of 1830 and Smith the Class of 1833. Smith and Ewell conducted a voluminous correspondence, some of which survives in the Archives of the Virginia Military Institute at Lexington, Virginia [hereafter cited as VMII], and in the Ewell Papers at CWM. Bragg, Class of 1837, and Anderson, Class of 1836 were only two of the many students Ewell knew or taught whose names would become famous during the Civil War. Others were Jubal Anderson Early, John Clifford Pemberton, Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard, William Joseph Hardee, W. W. Mackall, Henry Wager Halleck, Joseph Hooker, Irwin McDowell, and George Gordon Meade.

¹⁵Ambrose, West Point, p. 167.

¹⁶Report and Proceedings in Relation to a Railroad from Baltimore to the Susquehanna (Baltimore, B. Edes, 1828; Clayton Colman Hall, History of Baltimore, 2 vols. (New York: Lewis Publishing Co., 1912) 1: 138-139; Henry Hungerford, The Story of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad: 1827-1927, 2 vols. (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1928) 1: 68; Maryland, House of Delegates, Report of the Committee on Ways and Means for the Completion of the Baltimore and Susquehanna Railroad to the Borough of York, 4 Mar. 1835.

¹⁷Hungerford, Baltimore and Ohio, 1: 68-69, 111; William McIlvaine to BSE, 18 June 1839 and Isaac Trimble to BSE, 29 April 1839, Ewell Papers, CWM.

¹⁸Charles Davies to BSE, 26 Oct., 2 Nov. 1838, Ewell Papers, CWM; Edwin L. Green, A History of the University of South Carolina (Columbia, S.C.: The State Company, 1916), p. 48; Thomas Tasker Gantt to BSE, 29 Apr. 1839, Ewell Papers, CWM; Alfred J. Morrison, Calendar of Board of Trustee's Minutes: 1776-1876 [Hampden-Sydney College] (Richmond: Hermitage Press, 1912), p. 121; Francis H. Smith to BSE, 3 June 1839, Ewell Papers, CWM.

¹⁹Obituary, 2 Jan. 1905, clipping in Jere Carl Scrapbook, Vol. 19, p. 160, York Historical Society, York,

Pa. Julia McIlvaine Ewell was born at York, 5 May 1821.

²⁰Numerous letters in the Ewell Papers, CWM, express Elizabeth's views on marriage. See also genealogical material in Ewell Papers.

²¹William Stoddert to Rebecca Ewell, 29 Dec. 1845, and Thomas Ewell to Elizabeth Ewell (mother), 4 Feb. 1840, Ewell Papers, CWM. Both letters indicate family objections to Julia.

CHAPTER III

THE PROFESSOR

For most of the nineteenth century, especially before the great university movement of the 1870s, small liberal arts colleges provided higher education for most American youth who sought and qualified for such training. Although varying much in size and facilities, these institutions were so alike in terms of locale, organization, government, support, mission, and curriculum--and tended to change so little over time--that it is possible to speak of the typical college. Almost all were rural, residential, and paternalistic. Remoteness, the founders believed, would encourage a moral environment free from the temptations to dissipation present in urban areas. Students lived and studied in one building and were bound by strict rules which the faculty enforced with a greater or lesser degree of success. Most early colleges were "denominational," having been established under the auspices of a religious organization, but few were directly controlled by the church of their founding nor did they usually receive financial support from this source. Appointments of trustees, presidents, and faculty who belonged to a particular church provided the principal link to the ideologies of an

institution's affiliation. Although most colleges stressed the Christian character of their instruction, few required or could afford to demand denominational religious tests for admission, and nearly all disavowed the teaching of the tenets of any particular sect.¹

The curriculum in the early American college, until the demands of an industrial society forced changes in the post-Civil War period, was largely classical, an amalgam of the course of study in medieval universities as filtered through the universities of Renaissance and Reformation England. The prescribed studies, usually required of all students, aimed at producing scholar-gentlemen with the mental discipline and the proper moral, ethical, and religious attitudes to become civic leaders for a new nation. Latin and Greek dominated the curriculum and were supplemented by instruction in rhetoric, belles lettres, logic, mathematics, natural and moral philosophy. After about 1820 an increasing emphasis on internal improvements and the accompanying demand for technicians increased the number of courses in mathematics and science, but classical studies continued to reign as the core of the curriculum.²

In the 1830s and 1840s Hampden-Sydney College, Virginia's second oldest institution of higher learning, was no exception to this profile. Located amidst the red hills and pine forests of rural Prince Edward County in

south-central Virginia--a location its authorities claimed was immune to the "bustle of life" and "temptation to idleness" present in towns and cities--the school had been founded in 1776 under sponsorship of the Presbyterian Church. In 1783 the college was granted a state charter. Approximately sixty students lived and studied in a four-story brick building containing about fifty rooms and located, according to one student, "in the middle of an old field full of gullies and weeds and the cows of the neighborhood" whose bells made study difficult. Hampden-Sydney offered a four-year course of study with the usual classical emphasis. Many students, perhaps a majority, planned to enter the Presbyterian ministry, and some of these continued their training at Union Theological Seminary, established at Hampden-Sydney in 1807.³

Benjamin Ewell knew Hampden-Sydney was not a thriving institution, that it was suffering from life-threatening problems, when he agreed to accept the chair of mathematics. Indeed, he accepted the appointment only as a temporary measure while he continued to seek a more promising situation. When he arrived at Hampden-Sydney in the early fall of 1839 with his young wife and his younger brother William, who planned to enroll at the college, Ewell found conditions worse than expected.⁴

In the first half of the nineteenth century almost all colleges and universities suffered from inadequate

funding and low enrollments. The great mania for founding colleges, fed by sectarian rivalries and dispersal of population, resulted in too many schools for too few students. This was especially true of the period from 1830 to 1861, when, in the United States as a whole, 133 permanent institutions were founded as compared to only 49 from the beginning of the colonial era to 1829. From the founding of Harvard University in 1636 until 1861, more than 700 institutions failed. In Virginia at least 32 colleges entered the competition before the Civil War. Of these, only ten survived.®

With so many colleges, almost all offering a curriculum that appealed to the elite, competition to attract enough students to justify their existence was fierce. Colleges offered low tuition fees or no fees at all. Some even paid students to attend. This, in turn, increased operating costs not offset by available funds. Most colleges depended on private benefactors, and to a lesser extent on sectarian support, to build an endowment. The proliferation of institutions stretched this source of support rather thin. Nor could they depend on appropriations from the state governments which often failed adequately to support their own universities. Under such adverse conditions faculty salaries yielded to budget crises and were poor at best. Many faculties were forced to accept the division among their number of whatever funds remained after expenses. Some were

paid only with promises. Deaths or resignations often meant the apportioning of classes among those who survived.⁶

At Hampden-Sydney Ewell encountered all these problems and a few more besides. The severe financial panic of 1837 brought a decrease in donations and enrollment which in turn depleted an endowment which amounted to less than \$20,000 in interest-bearing funds. The next year a rupture in the Presbyterian Church divided it into New Light and Old Light factions. New Light Presbyterians ceased to support Hampden-Sydney when the college adhered to Old Light principles. Competition was an ever-present threat. In 1839 Hampden-Sydney was one of four sectarian colleges in Virginia; the next three years saw the foundation of three more such institutions. As much as these new "church" schools added to an already crowded field, it was the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, which opened in 1823, and the new Virginia Military Institute at Lexington that added most to the woes of Hampden-Sydney. Both institutions were founded by the state and received state support. In 1844 the General Assembly provided for the education without charge of 60 students a year at each school, provided the recipients teach in Virginia for two years. Denominational and private colleges were consistently denied state support although they applied for it often enough.⁷

During Ewell's seven years at Hampden-Sydney

(1839-1846), enrollments and resources continued to dwindle. In 1845 the freshman class numbered only two students. In a desperate attempt to attract students, college authorities reduced tuition from an annual fee of \$30 to \$18 and room rent from \$6.00 to \$2.50. Sons of ministers attended free. Unable to pay the \$1000 annual salary promised the professors, the trustees renegotiated salaries for each session, forcing the four faculty members to divide whatever remained after expenses. "The salaries of the faculty," Ewell wrote to Francis H. Smith, his old friend from West Point and his predecessor at Hampden-Sydney, "are not large enough to create uneasiness as to how they can be got rid of."⁹

Buildings fell into disrepair. Appeals to the state for aid and to the Presbyterian Church for closer association fell on deaf ears. Faculty members, unable to earn a living wage, drifted away until, by the spring of 1845, only Ewell and President Patrick J. Sparrow remained. Ewell was able to hold on only by selling some railroad bonds to pay his debts and by accepting the additional post of curator of the college building at \$50 per year.⁷

Since coming to Hampden-Sydney, Ewell had repeatedly attempted to find a better situation. In 1840 he rejected a professorship at Transylvania University at Lexington, Kentucky, on grounds that that institution was in even worse straits than Hampden-Sydney. Finding no way out, Ewell

worked with characteristic loyalty and dedication to doing justice to his position and to improving it if possible.¹⁰

In 1839-40, during his first session at Hampden-Sydney, Ewell--prompted by his experience with incompetent engineers on the Baltimore and Susquehanna Railroad project--added practical instruction in civil engineering to the regular mathematics courses. Finding the college did not possess and could not afford the necessary mathematical and astronomical instruments, he requested and received permission to raise the requisite \$600 for the equipment. When this venture met with no success, he applied to President John Tyler for the loan of instruments belonging to the federal government but not then in use. During most of the 1845-46 session Ewell travelled all over Virginia soliciting funds and recruiting students. These efforts led one former student to credit Ewell with keeping Hampden-Sydney open during these difficult times.¹¹

A charming, witty, articulate man and an effective teacher, Ewell was a favorite with the college trustees and his faculty colleagues. In his relations with students he was warm, genial, and kind, waiving the strict formality so common in professor-student associations in the nineteenth century. Unreasonably harsh regulations and their strict enforcement he thought unnecessary, and this alone was enough to cause his students to look on him more with affection than

awe. One student remembered Ewell as a gifted disciplinarian able to command both cooperation and respect.¹²

If Ewell's professional relationships at Hampden-Sydney were amiable despite the institution's severe problems, his personal life was quite a different matter. His young wife Julia detested country life and found the manner and habits of her Virginia neighbors strange. Refusing to emulate the sedate manners of Prince Edward's female society, Julia was vivacious, easy-going, and, in her father's words, "a latitudinarian." Her unwillingness to conform cost her female companionship, and poor health during her pregnancy in 1841 increased her isolation. Benjamin's brother William, who lived with them, disliked Julia and treated her "with cool contempt."¹³

This state of affairs, perhaps compounded by Benjamin's unpromising career possibilities and his financial difficulties, led to frequent quarrels between the two. They fought over the Ewells' attitude toward Julia, her behavior in public, and her refusal to see that laundry was done for the large number of boarders Ben took in--sometimes as many as eight. After the birth of their daughter Elizabeth in August 1841, Ben constantly complained that Julia failed to discipline the child. Each seemed to expect something the other could or would not provide. Julia did not behave in a manner Ben had come to expect of Virginia wives. She was uncooperative, headstrong, and too familiar with the

students, who were much closer to her own age than was her husband. Neither Ben nor Prince Edward County could provide the excitement and society she craved. Ben hired two slaves, a cook and a handyman, to help with the work, and Julia's sister came from York to live with them as company for Julia. Despite these improvements, fewer and fewer of their quarrels were settled amiably. Only a few years after their marriage Ben and Julia's relationship was suffering serious strain.¹⁹

In the winter of 1846, as Benjamin Ewell labored to keep Hampden-Sydney College afloat, the trustees of Washington College at Lexington, Virginia, offered him appointment as that school's first Cincinnati Professor of Military Science. Establishment of the new chair had been made possible by the transfer of funds to the college from the Society of the Cincinnati, an association founded in 1783 and limited to officers of the American Revolution and their descendants. In 1813 the Virginia division of the Society, facing dissolution, voted to award its funds to Washington College on the condition that the institution establish a military professorship.²⁰

The Cincinnati funds were tied up in litigation for more than thirty years. By 1839, however, when the Virginia Military Institute opened at Lexington, sufficient funds had been cleared to allow Washington College to make an

arrangement for its students to receive military instruction at the Institute. The conditions set down in the Cincinnati grant were thus fulfilled. For six years Francis H. Smith, first superintendent of VMI, taught and drilled a few students from the college. In June 1845 Washington College, having received most of the funds and hoping better to compete with the much more popular military school, announced it would terminate this arrangement in February 1846 and establish its own military professorship. Smith wrote Ewell suggesting he apply.¹⁰

Ewell seemed to be, at least from the standpoint of qualification, an excellent choice to fill the new position. Besides his academic and military training, he was also a Presbyterian and an ardent Whig. In general, Washington College enjoyed the same loose relationship to the Presbyterian Church as did Hampden-Sydney, but its ties were somewhat strengthened by the fact that three of its four faculty members were Presbyterian clergymen. While at Hampden-Sydney Benjamin and his brother William had turned their backs on their Episcopalian heritage to embrace the Presbyterian faith, their conversions apparently the result of a wave of revivals and camp meetings that swept through central Virginia in the 1840s. The faculty and trustees of Washington College were as avidly Whig as they were Presbyterian. Ewell's Federalist heritage and his extreme

distaste for the policies of the Jacksonians led him into the Whig fold. In an era when one's politics could make the difference between success and failure in many endeavors, the authorities of Washington College surely were influenced by his political leanings.¹⁷

When Benjamin, Julia, and their daughter Lizzy arrived at Lexington for the 1846-47 session at Washington College, the adults were impressed by the scenic beauty of that small community nestled in the Scotch-Irish country west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. A town of about 1500, Lexington was the county seat and market center of rural Rockbridge County. It boasted two hotels, twelve lawyers, two institutions of learning, and no bank. The inhabitants of town and county, mostly yeomen farmers and struggling merchants, were described by one professor as Presbyterians of the old school, remarkable for their piety, bigotry, hospitality, and intolerance."¹⁸

Washington College, founded in 1798, was much like other American colleges in the pre-Civil War period. To a small number of students, most of whom came from western Virginia, it offered the usual classical curriculum. It also suffered the same financial and recruiting difficulties of most other institutions. The trustees hoped that the Cincinnati chair, which represented a departure from the traditional course of study, would alleviate some of the problems by allowing the school to claim some students who

might otherwise choose the Military Institute for its military discipline. For his stipend of \$800 a year, plus one-fifth of the tuition fees and a residence on campus, Ewell was to teach military engineering, fortifications, gunnery, all of the mathematics courses, and drill those students who chose the Cincinnati course.¹⁷

He quickly became a popular and respected member of the college community. Fellow faculty members described him as learned, articulate, prudent, and modest. As in the past, Ewell's charming manners and conversational ability proved valuable assets in relations with his colleagues. He was also a favorite with the students, in part because he considered the mass of petty regulations that governed student conduct merely vexatious. It was, however, the duty of the faculty to insure student compliance with these rules. Often while inspecting student quarters professors wore carpet slippers, the better to catch errant students unaware. Ewell became a campus legend when he wore heavy boots to perform the same duty. A major factor in his success as a professor--and later his greatest asset as a college president--was the paternal relationships he achieved with the young men entrusted to his care. He achieved a rare balance of kindness, fairness, and firmness that seemed to encourage scholastic effort and proper behavior in students inclined to be unruly.²⁰

Cordial relations with his fellow faculty members and

success as a teacher and disciplinarian provided the only pleasant memories of the Washington College days. Julia was restless and dissatisfied, no happier than she had been at Hampden-Sydney. Money was always a scarce commodity. In April 1847 Benjamin's favorite brother, Thomas, was killed at Cerro Gordo while serving in the Mexican War. At Washington College, especially after early 1847, problems seemed to multiply. By the time Ewell left Lexington in 1848 the difficulties at Hampden-Sydney would seem small by comparison.²¹

When Ewell had assumed his duties at Washington College in September 1846, Henry Ruffner was beginning the eleventh year of his presidency of that institution. When Ruffner had come to Lexington in 1836 the school had been nearly moribund. For the next ten years conditions improved somewhat, but the last two years of his tenure marked perhaps the most turbulent period in the history of the college and the town of Lexington. Controversy over what would come to be called the "Ruffner Pamphlet" was exacerbated by editorial warfare between the community's two newspapers and a heated attack on Washington College by the pastor of Lexington's largest Presbyterian church.²²

A focus of the difficulties was Lexington's Franklin Society and Library Company. This public debating forum, whose membership included most of the town's intellectual and social elite, enjoyed a golden age from 1840 to 1861. The

Society, in weekly meetings, debated local, state, national, and international issues. Faculty members at both Washington College and the Virginia Military Institute were prominent participants. In February 1847, only two weeks after Ewell joined the Society, the membership began debating two potentially explosive and closely-related questions: Should Virginia be divided into two states along the Blue Ridge Mountains, and should slavery, the bulwark of eastern Virginia hegemony, be abolished in western Virginia? Over the next two months professors and townspeople expressed themselves at length on both sides of the issues. Records of the Franklin Society do not record any remarks by Ewell, although he was almost certainly in attendance. Ewell's old friend Francis H. Smith argued eloquently against both proposals, but it was Ruffner who made the greatest impact with his support both of political division and gradual emancipation coupled with colonization. Ruffner argued that slavery was a drain on the enterprise of white citizens and on Virginia's economy. Furthermore, the constitutional practice of counting slaves as a basis of representation in the General Assembly while they enjoyed a privileged position taxwise, assured control by eastern Virginia where 87 percent of slaves were held. This policy, he believed, deprived predominantly white western Virginia of much-needed internal improvements. A group of prominent Lexington residents, especially disgruntled at the failure of the state to

appropriate funds to extend the James River Canal from Lynchburg to Buchanan, urged Ruffner to publish his remarks. This he finally did in September 1847.²³

Benjamin Ewell's view of this controversy as well as his opinions of slavery are difficult to ascertain. Few personal letters survive from the Washington College years. The Ewell family at Stony Lonesome in Prince William County owned several slaves, usually less than ten. Benjamin, however, had had no personal experience with the institution--except as a hirer of slaves--since leaving home to attend the Military Academy at the age of eighteen. Oblique remarks in scores of personal letters indicate that he deplored the effects of slavery on both whites and blacks, but, like many Virginians--perhaps a majority--he saw no expedient means of achieving a peaceful and acceptable emancipation. He clearly felt that slavery was responsible, at least in part, for Virginia's economic decline and detrimental to her future industrial growth.²⁴

At first Ruffner received considerable local support for his views, but by early 1848 a reaction seems to have set in. Many believed Ruffner's stand was ill-timed in view of increased abolitionist activity in the North, and, as the end of the Mexican War approached, the almost certain injection of the slavery issue into debate over the Mexican Cession. As public tempers heated over the "Ruffner Pamphlet," Lexington's two newspapers engaged in wars of their own. The

Valley Star, a Democratic paper whose editor, James Gardner Paxton, was a candidate for the state legislature in 1847, engaged in editorial combat with the Lexington Gazette and concurrently attacked the Washington College professors and trustees, all of whom were Whigs. Paxton criticized the faculty for the manner in which they conducted their classes and demanded an investigation of mismanagement at the college. When the trustees mounted a counter-attack, Paxton refused to publish the letters.²⁸

While the newspaper bombardment continued, a controversy in Lexington's largest Presbyterian church added fuel to the flame. In early 1848 John Skinner, pastor of the church, began to pour heavy public criticism on those in the community who dared to disagree with him on political and theological issues. Supported by the Valley Star, he saved his severest condemnation for Henry Ruffner, George Armstrong, and Philo Calhoun, the three Presbyterian ministers on the Washington College faculty. Although Ewell and his other nonclerical colleague George Dabney seem to have escaped direct attack, Washington College did not escape division over the issue. When Ruffner, Armstrong, and Calhoun demanded Skinner's resignation, the Lexington Presbytery, in a public trial, found Skinner guilty of conduct unbecoming a clergyman and suspended him. Testimony of Washington College students on both sides caused deep divisions in the college community.²⁹

In the summer of 1848, as a result of these public controversies, Ruffner resigned the presidency of Washington College. Ewell and the other faculty members also offered their resignations. While it is likely that faculty members supported Ruffner in these last troubled years of his administration, their resignations cannot necessarily be interpreted in this light. In the first half of the nineteenth century it was standard practice for an entire faculty to resign when its president did. In any case, Ewell was forced once more to find employment.²⁷

By this time Benjamin Ewell surely questioned his penchant for stepping into turbulent situations and ventures that hung by a thread. Although he could not know it, he would face difficulties similar to those at Hampden-Sydney and Washington College many times in a long career. These problems were a function both of the difficult situation that existed almost universally in the world of higher education in the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century and of his own choice to remain in academia. Given that choice, there were few alternatives, and the worse was yet to come.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER III

¹George P. Schmidt, The Old-Time College President (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), pp. 40-41; Ibid., Liberal Arts College, pp. 12, 28-40, 76-102; Rudolph, American College, p. 87.

²Rudolph, Curriculum, pp. 30, 53; Schmidt, Liberal Arts College, pp. 43-45 and College President, pp. 21-22.

³Donald G. Tewksbury, The Founding of American Colleges and Universities before the Civil War (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teacher's College, Columbia University, 1932), p. 28; Albea Godbold, The Church College of the Old South Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1944), pp. 107-108, quoting from Morrison, Trustees' Minutes, p. 127; Thomas Cary Johnson, The Life and Letters of Robert Lewis Dabney (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1903), p. 38 (2d quotation), p. 39; Herbert C. Bradshaw, A History of Hampden-Sydney College, 2 vols. (Durham, N.C.: Fisher Harrison Corporation, Seeman Printing Division, 1976), p. 236. Cornelius J. Heatwole, in A History of Education in Virginia (New York: MacMillan, 1916), pp. 139-147 gives the date of the founding of Union Theological Seminary as 1807. Other sources give it as 1812. Hampden-Sydney began as an academy in 1776 and was granted a charter of incorporation by the State of Virginia in 1783.

⁴[?] to BSE, 15 Oct. 1839; Richard Ewell to Elizabeth S. Ewell (mother), 3 Oct. 1839; Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to BSE, 26 Oct. 1839; all in Ewell Papers, CWM.

⁵Schmidt, College President, p. 68; Tewksbury, Founding of American College, pp. 16, 28; Rudolph, American College, pp. 218-220.

⁶Schmidt, Liberal Arts College, pp. 10-11, 14-15, 95; Rudolph, American College, pp. 177-189, 193-194.

⁷William H. Whiting, Jr., "Some of Hampden-Sydney's Professors Whom I Have Known," typescript in Charles William Dabney Papers, Southern Historical

Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Bradshaw, Hampden-Sydney, pp.228-229; Johnson, Robert Lewis Dabney, p. 35; Tewksbury, Founding of American Colleges, p. 220; Heatwole, Education in Virginia, pp. 185, 200-202. In the ante-bellum era colleges were founded in Virginia as follows: William and Mary 1693; Hampden-Sydney, 1776; Washington College, 1798; University of Virginia, 1819 [opened 1823]; Randolph-Macon, 1830; Virginia Military Institute, 1839; Emory-Henry, 1839; Richmond, 1840; Bethany, 1840; Roanoke 1853 [sometimes given as 1842].

⁹BSE to Francis S. Smith, 16 Nov. 1840, 13 Dec. 1845, 20 Apr. 1844 (quotation), Francis H. Smith Papers, VMI; Bradshaw, Hampden-Sydney, pp. 237, 245; Morrison, Trustees' Minutes, p. 119.

⁷Bradshaw, Hampden-Sydney, pp. 230-235, 245-248; A Memorial of the Convention of Colleges Recently Assembled in the City of Richmond Asking an Appropriation from the Literary Fund (Richmond, 1844), WM College Papers; Morrison, Trustees' Minutes, pp. 119-127; BSE to Francis H. Smith, 16 Nov. 1840, Smith Papers, VMI.

⁶S. Eastman to "To whom it may concern," 11 Nov. 1839; William McIlvaine to BSE, 30 July 1844; [?] to BSE, 15 Oct. 1839; M. C. Johnson to BSE, 31 Jan. 1841; all in Ewell Papers, CWM.

¹Isaac Trimble to BSE, 13 Sept. 1839, Ewell Papers, CWM; Bradshaw, Hampden-Sydney, p. 237; Morrison, Trustees' Minutes, p. 127; BSE to Francis H. Smith, 13 Dec. 1845, Smith Papers, VMI; Whiting, "Hampden-Sydney Professors," p. 16, Charles William Dabney Papers, SHC, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

²F. N. Watkins (for the Board of Trustees) to BSE, 21 Aug. 1846; Moses D. Hoge to George Dabney, 17 June 1854; both in Ewell Papers, CWM.

³William McIlvaine to BSE, 3 May 1839 (1st quotation); Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to BSE, 12 Dec. 1839, 13 Apr. 1841; Thomas Ewell to Elizabeth Ewell (mother), 7 Mar. 1840; William Stoddert to Rebecca Ewell, 29 Dec. 1845 (2d quotation); all in Ewell Papers, CWM.

⁴William Stoddert to Rebecca Ewell, 29 Dec. 1845, and [? 1843]; Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to BSE, 15 Jan. 1846; all in Ewell Papers, CWM. Sixth Census of the United States (1840), Prince Edward County, Va., manuscript slave schedules.

¹⁰Samuel McD. Reid (for the Board of Trustees of Washington College) to BSE, 14 Mar. 1846, Ewell Papers, CWM; Ollinger Crenshaw, General Lee's College: The Rise and Growth of Washington and Lee University (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 31; "The Cincinnati Gift to Washington College," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (hereafter cited as VMHB) 43(Jan. 1935): 49-51; Journal of the Virginia House of Delegates, 20 Dec. 1813, p. 69.

¹¹Francis H. Smith, The Virginia Military Institute: Its Building and Rebuilding (Lynchburg, Va.: J. P. Bell, 1912), pp. 68-70; "Cincinnati Gift," pp. 49-51; Francis H. Smith to BSE, 6 Dec. 1845, Smith Papers, VMI.

¹²Crenshaw, General Lee's College, p. 94; William Couper, One Hundred Years at VMI, 5 vols. (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, 1939), 1: 139; Percy Gatling Hamlin, ed., The Making of a Soldier: Letters of General R. S. Ewell (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1935), pp. 48-50; Thomas Ewell to BSE, 4 Apr. 1841, Ewell Papers, CWM.

¹³Crenshaw, General Lee's College, pp. 69-71, 87 (quotation).

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 18, 86; BSE to Francis H. Smith, 29 Nov. 1845, Smith Papers, VMI.

¹⁵George E. Dabney to Joseph Cabell, 24 May 1854, Ewell Papers, CWM; Crenshaw, General Lee's College, p. 97.

¹⁶Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to BSE, n.d., Ewell Papers, CWM; Richard S. Ewell to BSE, 25 Nov. 1847 and to Elizabeth Ewell (mother), 22 Apr. 1847 in Hamlin, ed., Making of a Soldier, pp. 64-69.

¹⁷Crenshaw, General Lee's College, pp. 55-57.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 58, 74-75; Franklin Society Secretary's Book, 16 Jan. [1847] and 23 Jan. 1847, Records of the Franklin Society, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va.; F. N. Boney, John Letcher of Virginia: The Story of Virginia's Civil War Governor (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1966), pp. 36-39; Patricia E. P. Hickin, "Antislavery in Virginia, 1831-1861," part 2 (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1968), pp. 308, 415-419; Henry Ruffner, Address to the People of West Virginia: Showing that Slavery is Injurious to the Public Welfare and That it may be Abolished without Detriment to the Rights and Interests of Slaveholders (Lexington, Va.:

R. C. Noel, 1847). According to the Secretary's Book, Records of the Franklin Society, BSE was elected to membership 16 January 1847 and attended for the first time 25 January 1847. From that date until 10 June 1848 no absences from weekly meetings are recorded for him. Ewell took part in debates and assisted in forming questions for debate, but the substance of remarks by members are not recorded.

²¹Fifth and Sixth Censuses of the United States (1830 and 1840), Manuscript Slave Schedules for Prince William County, Virginia.

²²Hickin, "Antislavery in Virginia," pp. 418-419; Crenshaw, General Lee's College, pp. 65-68.

²³Crenshaw, General Lee's College, pp. 66-67.

²⁴Hickin, "Antislavery in Virginia," p. 419; Crenshaw, General Lee's College, p. 68.

CHAPTER IV

AN ANCIENT AND HONORED INSTITUTION

In early February 1848 Ewell learned of a vacancy in the chair of mathematics at the College of William and Mary at Williamsburg, Virginia. Deciding that the situation in Lexington was likely to become increasingly untenable, he began to solicit letters of recommendation to the college's Board of Visitors from former colleagues and students at the Military Academy, Hampden-Sydney, and Washington College. On 14 July 1848 the Visitors appointed Ewell not only to the chair of mathematics but--with only one dissenting vote--to the presidency as well. Despite prior communication to the Visitors that he did not wish to be considered for the presidency, Ewell decided to accept the appointment and prepared to move to Williamsburg in time for the opening of the college in October.¹

The College of William and Mary, chartered in 1693 by King William and Queen Mary of England

. . . to the end that the church of Virginia may be furnished with a seminary of ministers of the gospel, and that the youth may be piously educated in good letters and manners, and that the Christian faith may be propagated amongst the Western Indians

was the second oldest institution of higher learning in the United States and the oldest in the South. By the 1840s

these priorities provided one of the school's major claims to fame. In public announcements the college was always described as "old," "venerable," or "ancient."²

After a shaky beginning in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the college prospered in the late colonial period. Its location in Virginia's colonial capital, where it played a prominent role in the social and political life of England's most aristocratic colony, and the patronage of an increasing number of planters who chose to educate their sons close to home rather than send them to England, provided the necessary support. The institution was obsessively proud of its connections with Virginia's most prominent families and reveled in being the alma mater of such Revolutionary statesmen as Thomas Jefferson, Edmund and Peyton Randolph, and Richard Bland. By the 1840s the college had added James Monroe and John Tyler, as well as a majority of Virginia's senators, many Congressmen, cabinet members, diplomats, and governors to this honor roll of graduates. The more precarious its present, the more William and Mary clung to its illustrious alumni and its status as a living relic of Virginia's past glories.³

After the Revolution William and Mary was beset by a potpourri of interrelated problems which would continue to plague the school for more than a hundred years. Some were common to all institutions of higher learning, some were unique, but at one time or another during his long

association with the college, Benjamin Ewell would be called upon to deal with them all.

The separation of Virginia from England deprived William and Mary of endowments granted by the crown and the House of Burgesses, as well as funds from private sources. Lost were incomes from a tax on tobacco exported from Virginia and Maryland, taxes on peddlers, liquors, skins and furs, and the profits of the office of Surveyor-General of the colony. A bequest from the estate of Robert Boyle of England for the education of Indians was diverted, through litigation, to the education of Negroes in the West Indies. Depreciation of currency during the Revolution further reduced the college's assets. After the Revolution the school retained only a small amount of capital and about 20,000 acres of land granted by the crown and scattered throughout eastern Virginia. In 1784 these holdings were increased when the Virginia General Assembly made a donation of public lands in the Williamsburg area, but efforts by the college to obtain a financial endowment from the state failed. Over the next thirty years the college Visitors sold most of these lands to build up an endowment of approximately \$150,000. Nevertheless, student fees plus the approximately \$7800 annual income from the endowment were seldom greater than expenditures, and left little for maintenance of the school's ancient buildings.⁴

These financial difficulties William and Mary shared

with most other collegiate institutions in the first half of the nineteenth century, but the school's identity problem was uniquely its own. In the colonial period William and Mary had existed as an instrument of both church and state. When, in 1776, the Commonwealth of Virginia fell heir to the rights of the crown, the college found itself in a no-man's-land of being neither state-supported nor officially affiliated with the Protestant Episcopal Church of America.

The Virginia General Assembly, supported by public opinion, refused state support for any particular religious denomination as a violation of the principle of separation of church and state, and William and Mary would long be associated in the public mind with the Episcopal Church. This association was strengthened by the fact that prior to 1836 all presidents of the college--save one--were Episcopal clergymen, and a majority of the Visitors were Episcopalians. But this was the extent of the connection. After the Revolution the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia never took action to redefine its relationship with the college or to establish it as an Episcopal school. In any case, the declining resources of the post-Revolutionary Virginia Episcopal Church made financial support from that quarter impossible. Despite this lack of support and the fact that many of Virginia's Revolutionary leaders had been trained there, many citizens regarded with suspicion the college's former status as an instrument of the Established Church and

refused to send their sons to an institution they regarded as imbued with the taint of Anglicanism. With the founding in Virginia of denominational colleges and of the state university at Charlottesville, the position of William and Mary became increasingly anomalous. This existence in a twilight zone would plague the college and its governing authorities until the State of Virginia took over the charter in the early twentieth century.®

William and Mary, as with most of its sister institutions, also suffered severely from the necessity to compete for students with other colleges. In the two decades from 1782-1802 nineteen colleges were founded in the United States, nearly twice as many as in the 150 years prior to the Revolution. By 1860 the nation boasted approximately 250 institutions of higher learning, ten of which were located in Virginia. The state's sectarian institutions and the state-supported Virginia Military Institute at Lexington provided competition enough, but it was Jefferson's successful and prosperous school at Charlottesville that posed the greatest threat to the old college at Williamsburg. The state-supported University of Virginia opened in 1823 and, with its wide choice of courses, ease of access, lack of sectarianism, and association with many prominent Virginians, gradually assumed the role William and Mary had enjoyed before the Revolution--that of educating Virginia's sons for future positions of leadership. The cost of an education at

the Univeristy was considerably more than at William and Mary, and the university was widely criticized as an exclusive preserve of the aristocracy. On this basis William and Mary might have appealed to a different class had its tradition and image as an educator of the Episcopal elite not interfered.⁶

Nor did the college's location in Virginia's colonial capital prove an asset in attracting students. The fortunes of William and Mary had always been--and would continue to be throughout the nineteenth century--closely wrapped up with those of Williamsburg. When Virginia's capital was moved to Richmond in 1780, Williamsburg's prosperity and influence went with it. As many leading families, merchants, and civic leaders followed the legislature to Richmond, Williamsburg was destined to become a sleepy, dusty, little county seat with only the college and the Lunatic Asylum to sustain its economy. As far as the college was concerned, the widely-reputed generosity and hospitality of Williamsburg's remaining "first families," who maintained a semblance of life as it had been in the town's days of grandeur, were not enough to offset the Tidewater region's increasing subordination to the Piedmont as Virginia's center of economic activity, railroad construction, population, and prosperity. In the nineteenth century potential students were discouraged not only by the college's dilapidated buildings but by Williamsburg's general air of decadence. In

1835 a gazetteer recorded 1500 inhabitants living in 200 dwelling houses, "some of which were going fast to decay." The streets were covered with grass and livestock used them for pasture. Rain turned them to quagmires and frogponds. A few taverns remained open as way-stations for overland travel between Norfolk and Richmond, but even this function became less necessary with the advent of packet boats on James River. An occasional tourist came to see the historical sites along Main (Duke of Gloucester) Street, but there was little to see. Only a few ruins remained of the colonial governor's palace which had burned in 1781. In 1832 the colonial capitol met the same fate. The powder magazine, Raleigh Tavern, and Bruton Parish Church still stood but were in a serious state of disrepair. Williamsburg's reputation for being unhealthy in summer discouraged many prospective students. Both the town and the college made exaggerated claims for the healthfulness of the climate, but residents who could afford it spent their summers elsewhere. With such a present, Williamsburg clung tenaciously to the past, to pride of ancestry, and a shabby gentility.⁷

Low enrollments and the college's location in Virginia's economically-troubled Tidewater region led to repeated attempts to move the institution to Richmond or Alexandria. In 1824, President John Augustine Smith of William and Mary and a majority of the faculty and Visitors made a strong appeal to the Virginia legislature for

relocation in Richmond, only to be defeated by college Visitor, and future governor of Virginia and President of the United States, John Tyler, whose impassioned speeches argued eloquently for the entrenched historical interest of Williamsburg. Thomas Jefferson and Joseph Cabell reputedly lent support to Tyler's cause in the interest of avoiding competition to the new university at Charlottesville. Such schemes resurfaced at nearly every downturn of fortune and would periodically plague Ewell's administration as he fought to prevent the college's removal from its historic site.⁶

Almost from the beginning William and Mary had suffered from another problem, one inherent in its authority structure, which would reach its ultimate expression in 1847-48 and help set the stage for Benjamin Ewell's appointment to the presidency. Under the royal charter of 1693 responsibility for the college's endowment and government rested with the Bishop of London, his commissary in Virginia who acted as president, and a board of trustees appointed by the House of Burgesses and Governor's Council. In 1729, following the Oxford and Cambridge tradition of faculty control, this authority as well as the college property was transferred to a corporation made up of the president and masters. The professors thus became partners in an enterprise rather than employees of a corporation. The trustees remained as a "Board of Visitors," a self-electing

supervisory body which met once a year, usually in July, to assess the status of the institution, make appointments to the faculty, and act on questions of policy submitted by the president. This form of organization continued through most of the nineteenth century. It differed somewhat from that of most American colleges which followed the Yale example of vesting property and government in a single external body which acted as a corporation to execute the charter and usually included the president but not the faculty. Clashes between the trustees--who were appointed more for their wealth, influence, or prestige than their knowledge of educational policy--and college faculties were common but perhaps nowhere as frequent as at William and Mary. Absence of any explicit definition of the respective jurisdiction of Visitors and faculty made problems of authority almost inevitable. During its first 150 years of existence, William and Mary was often beset with dissension not only between Visitors and faculty but sometimes within the faculty itself.*

The 1847-48 controversy was a complicated affair that involved, besides the faculty and Board of Visitors, most of the students and many Williamsburg residents. Primarily at issue was the selection of a professor of history and moral philosophy to succeed president Thomas Roderick Dew who had died in September 1846.

At the time of Dew's death William and Mary boasted

an exceptionally able faculty that included John Millington (Natural Philosophy), Charles Minnigerode (Languages), Nathaniel Beverley Tucker (Law), and Robert Saunders (Mathematics). Dew had assumed the presidency in 1836 and during his tenure the college's fortunes and reputation took a temporary turn for the better. For the 1839-40 session enrollment reached 140, the greatest number the school attained as a private institution. By 1844, however, enrollment had fallen to only 69, a result of the founding of other colleges in Virginia, and, some said, of the extreme views of Dew and Tucker concerning states' rights, free trade, and the social and political benefits of slavery. A majority of students were sons of supporters of Virginia's Whig party who presumably looked with disfavor on these views as well as on Dew's and Tucker's Democratic politics. This disaffection was exacerbated by both men's close association with United States President John Tyler--a visitor of the college--and the peculiar circumstances of his presidency.¹⁹

A month after Dew's death the Visitors appointed Roberts Saunders president pro-tempore and in February elected George Frederick Holmes to take over Dew's lectures in history. Meanwhile they attempted to persuade John Johns, assistant bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, to accept the presidency. When Johns refused, the Board, in October 1847, elected Saunders president. In November 1847,

having divided Dew's chair, they offered the chair of moral philosophy to Georgetown lawyer Archibald Cary Peachy, formerly of Williamsburg, an 1841 graduate of William and Mary, and a favorite of both Dew and Tucker. Peachy's appointment was apparently the result of Tucker's influence with Judge John B. Christian of the Board of Visitors, Tucker's personal friend, political ally, and neighbor. Tucker also lived next door to the candidate's brother, Dr. William Samuel Peachy, who was a former Tucker student and one of the most radical Democrats in Williamsburg.¹¹

All of the faculty except Tucker objected vehemently to Peachy's appointment. Millington, Minnigerode, and Holmes believed that the twenty-eight-year-old Peachy could not bring to the college the experience, influence, and accomplishment that Dew had. Dubbing the appointment an act of political favoritism and nepotism, they also were not pleased to have the important chair of moral philosophy filled by one who held political views similar to those of Dew and Tucker, views that might bring more public censure to the institution. The visitors, they declared, had no right to force on the faculty an unacceptable candidate. President Robert Saunders objected not only on these grounds but on personal ones as well. The Saunders and Peachy families had been involved in a feud of some duration, one possibly rooted in Saunders' role as one of Williamsburg's Whig leaders and the Peachys' Democratic affiliation. Saunders considered

Peachy's appointment a personal affront and immediately resigned his month-old presidency, effective in July 1848.¹²

A majority of the students sided with the faculty majority, while Williamsburg residents and the state press chose sides in the dispute. When Peachy arrived in Williamsburg on 22 November 1847, a group of students with blackened faces, beating on tin pans and ringing cow bells, staged a midnight protest at the Peachy residence on Palace Green. Archibald Peachy and his friends met the insult with loaded firearms, and catastrophe was avoided only by the intervention of Beverley Tucker.¹³

Meanwhile Peachy had learned that Saunders' resignation was a result of his election and, believing that this action had compromised his "honor as a gentleman," he requested that Saunders publicly state his objections. When Saunders refused, Peachy challenged him to a duel. Through the intervention of mutual friends the challenge was settled without bloodshed, but Peachy's choice of Judge Christian's son, a student at the college, to deliver the challenge produced further difficulty. In early January 1848 a majority of the faculty--excluding Tucker and Peachy--voted to dismiss young Christian for "disrespect to the Faculty," an action Tucker, Peachy, and Judge Christian regarded as censure of their conduct.¹⁴

The situation heated even more when the Board of

Visitors became embroiled in a controversy with President Saunders over sale of some college land without Board approval. Both the Visitors and Saunders considered such action to be in their respective realms of authority. Before the question was settled, Tucker poured more oil on the flames by informing friends on the Board that Saunders, Minnigerode, Millington, and Holmes were plotting to move the college to Richmond. Actually the four had only planned to establish their own university at Richmond, but for Tucker this was enough to warrant the charge.¹⁰

In early March 1848 the Visitors, meeting in extraordinary session at Williamsburg, requested that the faculty furnish a record of their proceedings for the 1847-48 session so that conditions at the college, including the disputed land contracts, Tucker's charges concerning the removal of the college to Richmond, and the move to dismiss James Christian for his part in the aborted duel, might be evaluated. The faculty, meeting at Saunders' residence on Palace Green without the presence of Tucker or Peachy, refused all the Board's demands except the request to explain young Christian's expulsion. Not satisfied, the Visitors ordered that Christian be reinstated and requested that the entire faculty resign effective at the end of the session in July.¹⁰

Between this March meeting and the regular meeting of the Board in July 1848 tempers cooled somewhat, despite a

continued furor in the press. At the July conclave the Visitors re-elected Millington, Holmes, Peachy, and Tucker. Saunders refused re-election, and the Board declined to reappoint Minnigerode on the grounds that he refused to make any effort to get along with Peachy. This action was not popular with some Visitors, three of whom resigned. At this same meeting the Visitors voted to offer Saunders' chair of mathematics and the presidency to Benjamin Ewell and Minnigerode's chair of language to Professor Morgan J. Smead. Neither had any connection with those involved in the controversy and thus were desirable candidates.¹⁷

Here matters stood when Ewell accepted the position in July 1848. An avid reader of the Richmond Whig, which had covered the controversy in some detail, he was doubtless aware of the vicissitudes the college had endured since November. The situation was disquieting, but at least he could expect to begin his administration with a full faculty. It was not to be. In mid-August Holmes and Millington resigned--Holmes to accept the presidency and Millington the chair of chemistry and natural philosophy at the new University of Mississippi. A month later Peachy resigned, having decided to seek a future in California. Only Tucker, professor of Law, remained.¹⁸

When Ewell arrived in Williamsburg in early October 1848 he found not only a diminished faculty but was informed there would be no 1848-49 session except for Tucker's law

classes. Historians of the college have unanimously assumed that the Board of Visitors voted to suspend classes to allow time for tempers to cool. This may have been a consideration, but it is more likely that the Visitors felt they could not hope to compete for students with other institutions without a full faculty, and to attempt to fill the vacant chairs in haste might invite the same sort of controversy caused by Peachy's appointment. Because the college corporation was vested in the president and masters, the Visitors decided to honor their commitment to Ewell and Smead to prevent invalidation of the charter. Ewell had little choice. Having already declined an invitation to return to Hampden-Sydney, it was too late to seek a position elsewhere for the 1848-49 session. He would stay for the year as acting-president, but he had no intention of remaining in that office when the year was over.¹⁷

To earn his \$1000 salary Ewell devoted his time to repairing the college buildings, updating the scientific apparatus, and attempting to find suitable candidates for the vacant faculty positions.

The college plant consisted of three large glazed-brick buildings arranged in a triangular configuration and located at the west end of Williamsburg's main thoroughfare. At the apex of the triangle stood the main building, erected in 1695, burned in 1705, and reconstructed by about 1719. This structure contained lecture and

conference rooms, a library, a laboratory, the college chapel, student quarters, and a great hall which had from time to time during the colonial era served as a meeting room for the House of Burgesses and Council. The college's former Indian School, built in 1723 and called the "Brafferton," stood to the left of the main building and served in the nineteenth century as a boarding-house for students or a professor's residence. To the right, and directly across the college yard from the Brafferton, was the President's House, erected in 1732.²⁰

These buildings had had little attention since the Revolution and were in poor condition, especially the President's House which had been vacant for two years. With the meager funds available, Ewell was able only to make cosmetic repairs to his residence and to the main building. In the college yard, nestled among the old and badly-diseased live oaks that lined the entrance to the college, were several frame cabins that housed some of Williamsburg's relatively numerous free blacks. These structures he had removed. Ewell noted that the school's appearance was improved, but the buildings would soon require extensive renovation. During his forty-year tenure at William and Mary he would devote more energy to maintaining--or reconstructing--these ancient buildings than to any other pursuit.²¹

The college's scientific instruments, some of which

had been chosen by Professor William Small in the mid-eighteenth century and were still in use a hundred years later, also required attention. Ewell consulted with William Fenn Hopkins of Tennessee, an old friend from West Point who had been appointed to the chair of natural philosophy at William and Mary for the 1849-50 session, and together they decided what apparatus should and could be purchased with the funds available. The trouble was that none could be found anywhere near Williamsburg. Ewell finally ordered most of the instruments from England and traveled to New York and Boston to purchase the rest. Throughout the nineteenth century most Southern colleges faced the problem of having their already inadequate funds further depleted by the necessity to pay high shipping costs on equipment and books which could be purchased only in the North or abroad.²²

Also during this ghost session, Ewell, in conjunction with the Visitors, succeeded in finding acceptable scholars to fill the vacant chairs for the 1849-50 session. Ewell would retain the chair of mathematics; Tucker, Smead, and Hopkins would remain; and Henry Augustine Washington, a disciple of both Tucker and Dew, accepted the chair of history, political economy, and constitutional Law. Silas Totten, former president of Trinity College at Hartford, Connecticut, won the chair of moral philosophy and belles lettres. William and Mary would also have a new president.

After several refusals Bishop John Johns agreed to accept the presidency for a limited period.²³

The Visitors' tenacious pursuit of Johns represented an important policy decision for that body. For years friends of the college had debated the merits of strengthening the school's unofficial but publicly-accepted ties to the Episcopal Church as opposed to a repudiation of those connections. Proponents of stronger association with the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia argued that the amelioration of prejudice against Anglicanism, the success of church-sponsored and church-supported institutions in Virginia, and the fact that Virginia had no Episcopal college, made stronger association desirable and would encourage enrollment. Opponents maintained that the continued existence of William and Mary rested on non-denominationalism and based their arguments on the possibility of attracting the large number of Baptists and Methodists in the Tidewater area, from which the college drew most of its students. The former viewpoint prevailed with the Visitors, most of whom were Episcopalians. At the same time they assured the public that sectarianism would not be practiced with regard to faculty or students. Ewell supported this position and endorsed Johns's appointment without reservation. As a Presbyterian he had never felt comfortable with his appointment.²⁴

On this occasion, the first of several faculty

reorganizations during Ewell's association with William and Mary, he was faced with what would become a recurring dilemma. Should he remain or seek a better position? In the summer of 1849 he applied for a position with the Coast Survey. Over the next two years he was offered more lucrative positions at other colleges, and with the Manassas Gap Railroad and the James River and Kanawha Canal Company. But in the end William and Mary cast its spell.²⁰

Over the years the institution had mysteriously seduced many of its professors and most of its students with an almost indefinable magnetism made up of antiquity, tradition, pride in past glories, and a sense of mission. Many of those intimately associated with the college--alumni, faculty, visitors, and students--attempted to articulate this special aura the school exuded, but none was completely successful. Ewell would have more opportunity than anyone to define this spiritual bond, but its exact composition escaped even his considerable rhetorical powers. Perhaps President Thomas Dew said it best in a letter to the Board of Visitors:

I have made my daily pilgrimage to that ancient building and wandered through her halls for so many years that the habit has grown into nature. . . . My very affections are entwined around that building and its rooms. A daily communion with them has almost become essential to my existence.

Ewell would remain and do what he could to insure the continued existence of the old school he had grown to love. Over the years this dedication would become an obsession, but for the present he was relieved to be able to serve the

institution without having to bear, as president, responsibility for any downturn in its precarious fortune.²⁶

Bishop John Johns held the presidency for five years. Unlike his predecessors, and in accord with the conditions of his appointment, Johns did not teach. So that he might lend his name and influence to the college and at the same time continue his episcopal duties, the Visitors had relieved him of classroom assignments. Johns's pastoral visitations throughout Virginia meant frequent absences from the campus, and on these occasions he left college affairs in the hands of Ewell and Dr. Silas Totten. Both had had experience in the role, although in Ewell's case it was more in form than substance. In the wake of the 1847-48 difficulties Ewell believed that the college could succeed only if it could attract more students and maintain proper discipline. "Many prejudices," he wrote Francis H. Smith at VMI, "had to be rescinded before the public, that many-headed monster thing, was at all willing to grant any favors." Following Ewell's lead, the faculty dedicated themselves to improving the college's image.²⁷

Ewell found William and Mary, as a working institution, to be much like the other colleges with which he had been associated, if a bit more liberal in terms of curriculum and discipline. In theory residential and paternalistic, the college provided rooms in the main

building for some students, but its dilapidated condition forced many to find lodging in Williamsburg, thus making the town a sort of extended campus. Many students, perhaps a majority, had ancestral connections with college alumni or were relatives of townspeople. A majority were Episcopalians, most came from Virginia, and almost all were Southerners.²⁶

Seeking to increase enrollment, college authorities adopted a number of measures. Because the condition of the buildings discouraged some prospective students, Ewell was--predictably--assigned the chore of supervising building repairs. To give the appearance of a prosperous and populous institution, each professor was allowed to bring in two free students, and about a dozen students attended at greatly reduced rates. The faculty even entertained, but rejected, the notion of making William and Mary a military school like the thriving Virginia Military Institute at Lexington. Student population increased from twenty in 1849-50 to eighty-two in 1853-54, the last year of Johns's presidency. Building repairs, free students, and remitted fees did nothing, however, to achieve financial solvency, and more students meant greater expenditures.²⁷

The course of study at William and Mary centered around classical studies. In 1779 Thomas Jefferson, as a member of the Board of Visitors, had attempted to introduce a more pragmatic curriculum which excluded Latin and Greek, but

he succeeded only in abolishing the chair of divinity and adding a few courses in modern languages, law, and science. From time to time William and Mary experimented with courses more in keeping with a changing society, but by 1840 only a slightly greater emphasis on science and on political economy--the latter a legacy of the Dew years--remained to distinguish college offerings from those of most of its sister institutions. William and Mary did offer, however, an elective system available at only a few other Southern colleges. Northern universities generally prescribed for students a rigid four-year curriculum which offered little or no choice of courses. William and Mary required that students earn a certain number of credits in each department, but within a particular department he could choose the lectures he wished to attend. This course required three years for completion, and non-degree students were welcome. A professor received a \$20 fee from every student attending each of his courses; under such a system popular instructors fared best financially.⁵⁰

Ewell's courses in mathematics, and after Hopkin's resignation in the fall of 1850, in natural philosophy as well, were always well-attended. Outgoing and amiable, Ewell was a favorite on campus with students and faculty alike. The one exception was professor of moral philosophy, the Reverend Silas Totten, who considered Ewell his chief rival for Johns's position. Their rivalry would not come to a head

until Johns's resignation in 1854, but from the beginning Totten considered Ewell a poor teacher and an unprincipled popularity-seeker, whose morals were questionable. Ewell's Presbyterianism, his failure to attend church regularly, and a fondness for wine and brandy caused Totten to brand him a "bad influence on student morals." Totten's opinion of Ewell is remarkable for its uniqueness. All other surviving accounts of his character and ability describe him as cooperative, tactful, honorable, and an excellent scholar and teacher³¹.

These same accounts, also without exception, mention Ewell's great success as a disciplinarian. Discipline was a major concern of all nineteenth-century colleges, and most had elaborate rules governing student behavior. These regulations were designed to protect the young men from the pleasures of the outside world and to aid the faculty in acting in loco parentis. William and Mary was an exception in this regard. Subscribing to the "treat-them-like-gentlemen" school, college authorities had long believed behavior was a matter of personal honor and that students should not be "harassed with petty regulation" nor "insulted and annoyed by impertinent surveillance." Despite his military training--or maybe because of it--Ewell agreed with this approach. Rigid rules, he believed, aroused resentment and encouraged violations and riots. A few rules, administered with parental kindness, tolerance, and

consistency, brought the best results. Johns left the disposition of disciplinary problems mainly to Ewell, and, despite a liberal policy and Ewell's leniency, the college suffered no major disruptions in the 1850s such as those that occurred at many other institutions. Ewell's informal approach to frequent, but seldom serious incidents of drunkenness, disorderly conduct, and absence without permission earned him the affection of the students and the confidence of parents who remembered the 1848 disturbances at William and Mary.²²

If life at the college was usually peaceful and his work there rewarding, the situation at home was worse than ever. Because of increased tensions in their personal relationship Julia Ewell chose to return to her parent's home at York, Pennsylvania, rather than accompany Benjamin to Williamsburg. She did not join him there until the fall of 1850. Eight-year-old Lizzy lived with her paternal grandmother at Stony Lonesome in Prince William County and occasionally visited York and Williamsburg. Julia pleaded with her Ewell relations to be allowed to remain with her daughter, but the family believed "the danger of her getting too intimate with the boys" and her generally erratic and indiscreet behavior would ruin a school for young men recently established at Stony Lonesome by Ben's younger brother William. It seems likely Benjamin refused to take Julia to Williamsburg for the same reason.²³

By the summer of 1850 Julia's apparently deteriorating emotional state and her violent displays of temper had adversely affected the peace of her parent's home. Finding that her welcome at York had worn extremely thin, she asked to be allowed to come to Williamsburg. Benjamin, deciding that his wife's presence would at least make it possible to bring Lizzy to Williamsburg, consented to a reconciliation. Upon leaving the President's House in the summer of 1849, Ewell had occupied a small house near the ruins of the colonial capitol. In September 1850 Julia and Lizzy joined him and the students who boarded in his home.³⁴

Peace reigned for only a short while. Soon the Ewells' "battles and brawls," in which friends and neighbors became involved, disturbed the neighborhood and became the talk of the town. Most residents sided with Ben and proclaimed Julia to be "half crazed" and "impossible to live with." Professor Silas Totten, never fond of Ewell, took a different view. He attributed Julia's behavior to Benjamin's unreasonable and tyrannical control of his young wife's activities, his refusal to allow her to dress in a manner commensurate with "her position in society," and his taking of a mulatto mistress. Totten's charges cannot be substantiated or denied. In any case the reconciliation, to the relief of everyone but Julia, was short-lived. In the late fall of 1851 Benjamin implored his mother or sister to

come to Williamsburg to care for Lizzy, noting that "[Julia] is so very violent and goes to such lengths, I do not know how to keep her indiscretions of speech & temper secret any longer." Ewell made no mention of Julia's behavior toward the students, but one student reputedly said she should be "drawn and quartered." Surviving sources do not allow definitive assessment of the Ewells' conjugal differences. They may simply have been the result of the ten-year age difference or of her vivacious and rebellious personality. On the other hand, her almost incoherent correspondence with friends in Williamsburg indicates a severe mental disorder, possibly depression or schizophrenia. In the fall of 1851 Julia returned to York. Over the years Lizzy visited her mother often and Ben visited occasionally, but Julia did not return to Williamsburg until after Benjamin's death.³⁰

In March 1854 Bishop Johns resigned the presidency of the college. To serve as president pro-tempore until the Visitors met in July, the faculty chose Silas Totten, the only other clergyman on the faculty and Johns's probable successor. At the time of Johns's appointment in 1849 college officials had hoped the college could make a new beginning accompanied by greater public support and closer ties to the Episcopal Church. Although competition with an increasing number of colleges for students, funds, and public

support continued, the college had achieved a sort of stability. Enrollment increased, and the dissensions of 1847-48 did not reappear. Johns's administration was considered a success, and the Visitors were anxious that these gains be continued. Totten, who believed he had been promised the presidency upon Johns's retirement, had every reason to believe he would receive approval from the Visitors. However, by the time the Board met in July, Totten had become a liability.³⁶

In May the Richmond Examiner, the capital's most extreme states' rights newspaper, published an attack on Totten by a Williamsburg resident which cited his Northern birth and education as evidence of his support for abolitionism. Faculty and students quickly came to Totten's defense, but as far as the Visitors were concerned the damage had been done. Totten may simply have been another victim of the increasing attacks on Northern-born academicians in the 1850s, but, in view of the college's struggle for survival, his credentials as an Episcopal clergyman were not enough to convince the Visitors to appoint a Northerner to the Presidency. The governing body, apparently having decided not to support an additional professorship, was forced to choose from the existing faculty. Of the 1849 appointments--those with long-term experience at the college--only Ewell and Morgan J. Smead, professor of languages, remained as logical choices. Smead, a German

scholar who was extremely unpopular with both students and faculty, would not do. With Johns's strong support the Visitors chose Ewell as the college's fifteenth president and only its third non-clerical executive.³⁷

Totten accused Ewell of deliberately flattering Johns in order to receive his support for appointment to the presidency, but the evidence is overwhelming that Ewell neither sought nor expected to be offered the position. Ewell's dedication to the college has probably been unsurpassed by any of its presidents, but his reluctance to assume the responsibilities of the office is also unsurpassed. During the summer of 1854 Ewell's good friend George E. Dabney of Richmond sought scores of letters in support of Ewell's appointment to the vacant chair of mathematics at the University of Virginia. Although Ewell refused actively to seek the position, he did not discourage Dabney's efforts. Meanwhile, Ewell unsuccessfully urged Bishop Johns to nominate a prominent Episcopal minister as his successor. Ewell obviously wished to remain at William and Mary, but as a professor, not as president. During this same period Ewell briefly entertained the possibility of joining his brother Richard, serving with the United States Army at Los Lunas, New Mexico, in a get-rich-quick scheme to sell "large heavy dray horses" in San Francisco. Relying on information from the legendary Kit Carson that such an undertaking would yield enormous profits, and planning to

borrow the necessary capital from William Tecumseh Sherman, a former West Point classmate and in 1854 an associate in a St. Louis banking house, Richard urged Benjamin to acquire horses in the States and drive them to his post at Los Lunas.³⁸

In the end the interests of William and Mary prevailed, as they would so often in the future. Refusing either to pursue the University of Virginia appointment or to join his brother in a risky enterprise, Ewell cast his lot with the old college in Williamsburg. The decision would prove irrevocable as William and Mary increasingly claimed his energies and his heart.

On 5 July 1854 Ewell took his seat as president of the college. Like his counterparts at other institutions in the antebellum era, he found his duties varied, numerous, and complex. To the students he was teacher, surrogate father, counselor, and disciplinarian. College administration required his services as chief executive, business manager, fund-raiser, and maintenance supervisor--the last an all too familiar function to Ewell. In the public sector he was lobbyist, public relations officer, and master of ceremonies on formal occasions. Perhaps the most important function of all was that of peacemaker among friends and patrons of the college; community, visitors, alumni, students, parents, and faculty represented varied and often conflicting interests. Often the recipient of adulation, the president was also a

ready target for criticism. In only one respect did Ewell's responsibilities differ significantly from most antebellum college presidents: his lay rather than clerical status. One scholar has concluded that of 288 pre-war presidents, 262 were ordained ministers. As a layman and mathematician Ewell did not serve as chaplain, conduct services at local churches, nor teach the important course in moral philosophy. Professor Totten assumed these duties.³⁷

The first five years of Ewell's presidency were dominated by the familiar and interrelated problems of attracting more students and more money. During his first term eighty-two students enrolled, the same number as during Johns's last year, but by 1858 the number had fallen to only forty-seven. Just why this decline occurred is not clear. Ewell believed it the result of the loss of Bishop Johns's influence as a clergyman and Episcopalian. Increasing development and popularity of colleges in more-prosperous western Virginia doubtless played a role, as did the fear generated by a severe yellow fever epidemic which claimed nearly 2000 lives in nearby Norfolk during the summer of 1855. Fewer students meant less income. Higher fees might only invite a further decline in enrollment and, because the college was already selling its product for less than cost, lower fees were unthinkable. To protect the college's endowment and assure its survival Ewell felt bound to find more students and additional sources of income.⁴⁰

In 1855 Ewell supervised the preparation and publication of the school's first general catalog which he hoped would provide much-needed publicity. This he supplemented with advertisements in all the state's major newspapers. At about this same time the faculty considered abandoning the college's liberal three-year elective system and acceptance of non-degree students in favor of the four-year curriculum track which prevailed at Northern universities. This move, some believed, would prove financially advantageous because it required fewer courses and tended to keep students in school for at least four years. Monetary considerations dictated a course less responsive to a growing and changing society but more in keeping with financial solvency. Ironically, several Northern universities, including Harvard, Union College, Amherst, the University of Vermont, and Brown University were considering the adoption of the elective system which William and Mary and the University of Virginia practiced. True to the resistance-to-change attitude which prevailed in all nineteenth century colleges, traditional practices continued at Northern universities and at William and Mary.⁴¹

Ewell turned next to the Virginia legislature for help. In July 1856 and August 1857 William and Mary joined Virginia's other private institutions in convention at Richmond to request aid from the state's Literary Fund. These conventions were dominated by the oratory of

Governor--and William and Mary visitor--Henry A. Wise who as an ardent advocate of state-supported schools at the primary, secondary, and collegiate level, asked support for all Virginia's educational institutions. Despite Wise's eloquence and the pleas of many college presidents, the General Assembly continued its policy of supporting only the state university at Charlottesville and the Virginia Military Institute at Lexington.⁴²

As enrollment continued to fall, and it became clear that neither private nor state sources would provide adequate support, Ewell turned to federal sources. On several occasions in the mid-nineteenth century William and Mary had unsuccessfully petitioned Congress for indemnity for rent and/or fire damage to college buildings while they were occupied by French troops during and after the surrender at Yorktown. In December 1854 Ewell renewed these claims, asking the Congressional Revolutionary Claims Committee to approve \$53,600 for use and abuse of college property. As in the past, Congress refused to take action on the request on grounds that responsibility lay with the State of Virginia.⁴³

Failing to obtain financial support, Ewell tried another approach, one involving an old problem: the college's decrepit buildings. If the physical plant could be substantially rather than superficially improved, perhaps more students could be encouraged to attend the college.

Student quarters, constructed in 1723 especially demanded attention. They were approachable only by narrow and unlighted stairways, lacked adequate ventilation, light, and heat. Beginning in early 1856 and working primarily with funds donated by members of the Board of Visitors, Ewell supervised a complete renovation of the interior of the college building. In addition to improvements to the living quarters, stairwells, and lecture rooms, the library and the literary society rooms received a complete facelift. Eighteenth century chimneys were scaled down and the interior of the colonial chapel completely refurbished.⁴⁴

Despite the added responsibilities Ewell assumed as president, his relations with other members of the college community remained essentially unchanged. With the students, all of whom he taught at one time or another, he encouraged an intimacy that did not compromise respect. Rules that were flexible, reasonable, and administered impartially led most of the young men to regard him with genuine affection. Students of the 1850s dubbed him "Old Buck," a nickname Ewell would carry the rest of his life. In his dealings with the faculty he assumed the role of associate rather than superior; no feuds of the 1848 genre occurred in the 1850s. When the situation demanded, Ewell could be eloquent and persuasive, but he generally preferred to avoid rather than solve problems. At least until 1858 peace reigned also with

the Board of Visitors who appreciated Ewell's confidence and faith in the future of William and Mary. Besides Ewell's contribution to harmony, he also convinced the Visitors to increase the number and quality of courses in chemistry and natural philosophy, subjects dear to his heart.⁴⁹

The tranquility of the academic realm in the mid-1850s contrasted sharply with the lively atmosphere of the President's House. Lizzy--pretty, independent, and willful like Julia but possessed of her father's charm and manners--was Ben's pride and joy. Small of stature, dark-haired, and spirited, she was a favorite on campus and in town but often a tribulation to her grandmother and her Aunt Rebecca who found her "opinionated and obstinate." Elizabeth Ewell had lived with Ben and Lizzy since Julia's departure; "Becca" supervised the family farm in Prince William County from spring through fall, returning to Williamsburg every winter. Elizabeth Ewell, with Lizzy's help, served as hostess to as many as six students who boarded in the attic and to faculty members who often moved in with their entire family and all their personal possessions in tow. Parents and other visitors came and went, as did Lizzy's many beau and numerous Ewell relatives. Official events, such as Commencement and meetings of the Board of Visitors, attracted overflow crowds of guests and required the planning and supervision of dinners, parties, and balls. These duties Elizabeth took in stride, although

she complained loudly about Ben's habit of inviting everyone in town--"a motley crew" in her opinion--to visit, and his disinclination to control the three hired servants whom she considered "the most provoking wretches in the world." Commenting on their laziness and slovenly work, Elizabeth remarked that she was "rather tired of being in a house where the servants are the most important members of the family and where their will and pleasure is the first thing considered."

Elizabeth, who favored the reopening of the slave trade, was always more comfortable with the institution of slavery than was Ben whose attitude was rather Jeffersonian.⁴²

The Ewells' somewhat chaotic but generally satisfying existence in the President's House threatened to come to an end in 1858 when the Visitors considered yet another "reorganization" of the college. Impetus for this move came from Virginia's fiery, energetic, and pugnacious governor, Henry Alexander Wise. An ardent states'-righter, Wise believed Virginia's best hope of regaining her former glory and retaining her character lay in internal development of her resources and institutions, the better to resist outside interference. A major tenet of his plan was an educational system that would include free public schools for all, free tuition for college students who would teach in the common schools, and a system of preparatory "colleges" that would act as feeders to the university at Charlottesville. Attempting to sell these ideas to the public and the General

Assembly, Wise had dominated statewide education conventions held in Richmond in 1856 and 1857.⁴⁷

When these efforts failed, Wise, a William and Mary Visitor since 1848, sought to implement at the college at least part of his plan. He proposed to standardize the curriculum for all students, add a grammar school and a preparatory department, and even suggested the college be relocated in his home county of Accomac where students could bathe in the sea and enjoy the view. Ewell strongly opposed Wise's scheme on grounds that it "might do very well for a new country where there are no good preparatory schools or academies," but in Williamsburg a grammar or secondary school under the same roof as the college could only cause trouble. He also believed the right of students to a limited choice of courses should be maintained. At issue in all these objections was Ewell's determination that the character of William and Mary be maintained.⁴⁸

The Visitors held their annual meeting at the college during the second week of July. After a stormy session in which Ewell and Wise engaged in "some sharp-shooting" and Ewell "resigned three times," the Board rejected Wise's plan despite his "commanding eloquence." Ewell, fearing for future enrollments, was displeased that the Visitors had even considered Wise's proposal in what proved to be a highly publicized session. Consequently, he resigned the presidency and requested that he retain only his mathematics

professorship. The poor health he suffered at the time may also have been a factor. A sharply divided Board finally accepted his resignation and offered the presidency to the Reverend Robert Barnwell, professor of moral philosophy and chaplain at South Carolina College. Ewell approved of this move because he believed with a majority of the Visitors that the college would be more likely to prosper with an Episcopal minister as its president.⁴⁷

During the summer of 1858 Ewell prepared to turn over the reins to the Reverend Barnwell. But once again his career took a sudden turn. In August Barnwell, unwilling to leave his native state of South Carolina, declined the Visitors' offer. At the request of the Board, Ewell agreed to remain as president until other arrangements could be made. Again sentiment triumphed over reluctance.⁴⁸

Meanwhile Elizabeth Ewell and Lizzy worried about where they would live if Benjamin left the house on campus. Their concern stemmed from the fact that the plantation house Ben had begun to build near Williamsburg was unfinished. In late 1856 and early 1857 Ewell had purchased nearly 500 acres lying on the main stage road to Richmond and about four miles from the college. In early summer 1858 he had begun building a brick and frame three-story dwelling which featured six fireplaces and upper and lower level porches extending around three sides of the house. He also planned to use sawdust and unplastered brick as insulation for the outer walls and

floors and to include two inside closet privies served by chemical chambers. Pear and apple orchards would provide landscaping and shade. In the pre-war years the farm's only permanent residents during the college session were a white manager and a score of hired slaves who raised chickens, potatoes, melons, corn, and oats. Ben was exceedingly fond of his farm and of the new house; its existence may go far in explaining his willingness to remain at William and Mary in 1858 despite loss of the presidency.⁸¹

With the reorganization issue settled and building renovations complete, Ewell began early the next fall to plan a special celebration in honor of the college's 166th anniversary on 8 February 1859. The event--to which alumni, parents, friends of the college, and most of the state's dignitaries were invited--would serve to publicize and show off the improved campus. Ewell also hoped it might encourage increased enrollment and financial support. A speech by former United States President John Tyler, the reading of a long narrative poem written for the occasion by St. George Tucker of Winchester, and Tyler's investiture as second chancellor of William and Mary were to be highlights. It was all scheduled for 19 February 1859. In the early morning of February eighth--the 166th anniversary of the college's founding--fire destroyed the newly-renovated college building.⁸²

The blaze, which began in the north wing of the building, destroyed the entire interior and the roof but left most of the two-foot-thick exterior walls standing. Ewell, awakened by Professor of History Robert Morrison who boarded at the President's House, rushed into the building to rescue several students as well as the college seal, portraits of former presidents, and some of the college records. Destroyed were the library and its 8000 volumes which had been acquired over 150 years; chemical apparatus collected nearly 100 years before by Jefferson's mentor, Dr. William Small; mural tablets in the chapel which crumbled from the heat; and the original of the charter transfer of William and Mary from the English crown to the President and Professors. A number of the college's ancient records escaped because Ewell had sent them to John Tyler that he might prepare his address for the celebration on February nineteenth.²³

Ewell, still mourning the death of Elizabeth Ewell on 18 January 1859, was faced with problems much more severe than the renovation and repairs he had supervised over the previous ten years. Possessed by a sense of urgency, the community, college, and Ewell proceeded with a speed uncharacteristic of any of them to collect the \$20,000 of insurance, to find temporary lecture rooms and accommodations, hire architects, and solicit funds for rebuilding. "To avoid all doubt," John Tyler sent out an urgent call for the Visitors to assemble at Williamsburg on

the eighteenth. Any suggestion that the college should not be rebuilt or that it should be resurrected on a new site had to be put to rest immediately. Despite this activity, Ewell and a majority of his faculty colleagues encountered opposition, notably from Professor Totten who believed a more commodious and convenient building should be constructed on a new site and that such a plan would be financially advantageous. Apparently Governor Wise, in his capacity as Visitor, also questioned the feasibility of retaining the old walls.⁶⁴

This opposition forced Ewell, perhaps for the first time, to articulate his feelings for the college, and he sounded a theme he would repeat with remarkable consistency many times in his long career as president. Like the sons of most old Virginia families, he took great pride in Virginia's past, in her contributions to the Revolution and the Union. Awareness of the decline of the state's elite, its economic stagnation, and decreased national influence only increased pride of heritage and place. William and Mary was, to him, a living monument to the state's golden age. In the college's past lay justification for its present and its future. To consider tearing down the old walls or building on a new site was to suggest that the institution's most tangible link to its past be abandoned. To buttress his argument Ewell cited evidence that the charred remains were indeed the original walls constructed in 1695. During recent replastering, beams

had been exposed which showed signs of extensive damage that could only have come from a previous fire in October 1705."⁶⁶

Ewell had his way. In late April 1859 rebuilding began. For six months, working with a committee of Visitors which included Tyler and Virginia historian Hugh Blair Grigsby, he pushed relentlessly for completion in time for the fall session. Meanwhile, determined that optimism would prevail, he went ahead on February nineteenth with the 166th anniversary celebration, an event he transformed into a fund-raiser. In October faculty and students occupied the gray brick, Italian Renaissance-style building, although it was far from completed. Flooring, plastering, and fireplaces remained unfinished, and the roof leaked. Some complained that the building was ugly and seemed out of place, but for Ewell it was a triumph. Not a single day had been lost from lectures, not a cent of the endowment fund expended, and best of all, "the prestige of its antiquity . . . [had been] retained in those old walls."⁶⁶

By February 1860, to everyone's relief, the college building was complete, although the roof still leaked. College authorities entertained high hopes for increased enrollment, especially after the Visitors re-established the Law chair, vacant since 1858. But William and Mary was still unable to attract large numbers of students, and Ewell faced a minor crisis in January 1861 when a number of Williamsburg

residents petitioned the Virginia General Assembly, in the interest of the Tidewater area and for the "dignity of the state," to assume management of the college and endow it as the University was endowed. Ewell opposed such a move and was, undoubtedly, resentful of charges that the college's administration was incompetent. He need not have worried about state control. The legislature refused to consider the petition, and the college went on as before. In the winter of 1860-61 the General Assembly, the college community, and most of the citizens of Williamsburg and the state had more important issues to consider.²⁷

On October 16, three days after the beginning of the 1859-60 session at William and Mary, John Brown--calling for a slave insurrection--attacked and briefly held the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry. Waves of panic swept through Virginia and the South as union or secession was debated furiously. Abraham Lincoln's election to the presidency and the failure of compromise proposals caused, by 1 February 1861, the secession of seven Deep South states. Meanwhile, considering "the threatening aspect of domestic politics," the faculty at William and Mary approved formation of a military company "composed of those connected with the college." Not intended as a permanent organization, the college military company elected Ewell its captain and proceeded to train students should their services be required in defense of the state. On 13 February 1861 a state

convention met at Richmond to consider Virginia's future in the Union. The convention pursued a restrained course until President Lincoln, in response to the firing by South Carolina troops on the federal garrison at Fort Sumter on 12 April 1861, issued a call for 75,000 volunteers. Unwilling to take up arms against sister Southern states, the Virginia convention passed an ordinance of secession.²⁰

For Benjamin Ewell and for the College of William and Mary it was the end of an era. Despite controversy, reorganizations, and requests for state control, Ewell had seen the college through the 1850s and survived as its president. Despite low enrollments, competition from other institutions, and a disastrous fire, the college had survived. Would the nation?

NOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

¹BSE to C. P. Dorman, 5 Feb. 1848, WM College Papers. The Ewell Papers, Ewell's Faculty File, and the College Papers at CWM contain numerous letters in support of his appointment. James Heath to BSE, 14 July 1848; Robert McCandlish to BSE, 15 July 1848; Corbin Braxton to BSE, 24 July 1848; all in Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

²"The Charter of the College of William and Mary in Virginia," Bulletin of the College of William and Mary 6(Jan. 1913):3.

³The early history of William and Mary is recorded in numerous sources, the best being Herbert Baxter Adams, The College of William and Mary: A Contribution to the History of Higher Education with Suggestions for its National Promotion (Bureau of Education Circular of Information No. 1-887, Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1887); John Esten Cooke, "William and Mary College," Scribner's Monthly 11(Nov. 1875): 1-15; History of the College of William and Mary from its Foundation, 1660-1874, (Richmond: Randolph & English, 1874); Lyon Gardiner Tyler, Colonial Capital. Morpurgo, Their Majesties' Royall Colledge, is a more recent and detailed study but is at times unreliable and inaccurate.

⁴Heatwole, Education in Virginia, p. 73; Tyler, Colonial Capital, pp. 174, 182, 202-203; Adams, College of William and Mary, pp. 56-57; Petition of the Visitors and Governors of William and Mary College to the Speakers and Members of the Two Houses of Assembly, [1845?], WM College Papers; Edmund Christian [bursar, CWM] to BSE, 12 Oct. 1848, Tyler Papers, CWM.

⁵In 1779 Thomas Jefferson, as a member of the Board of Visitors, introduced a bill in the General Assembly designed to make William and Mary a state university at the head of a state system of education. Jefferson argued that the college was part of the property transferred from the crown to the state and therefore public. Objections to the school's Anglican heritage and the expense of the scheme defeated the bill. Adams, College of William and Mary, pp.37-38. For a detailed but not entirely accurate discussion of the status of William and Mary with regard to

church and state see Sadie Bell, The Church, the State, and Education in Virginia (Philadelphia: Science Press Printing Co., 1930), pp. 117, 151-157, 171-214. David L. Holmes discusses the condition of the Virginia Episcopal Church in Up From Independence: The Episcopal Church in Virginia (Orange, Va.: Green Publishers, 1976), pp.53-109.

⁶Rudolph, American College, pp. 35-36.

47. In the 1850s students at the University of Virginia paid an average of \$332 per year. At William and Mary the average was \$215. For the 1855-56 session UVA had 645 students; W&M had 66. UVA received \$5000 per annum from the state minus \$3840 for 32 free "state" students. Philip Alexander Bruce, History of the University of Virginia: 1819-1919, 5 vols. (New York: MacMillan Co., 1921), 3:147; Laws and Regulations of William and Mary College: 1854-55 (Richmond, 1854), p. 7 (copy in WM College Papers); Matriculation Book, entry for 1855-65, CWN.

⁷Joseph Martin, ed. A New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of Virginia and the District of Columbia (Charlottesville: Joseph Martin, 1835); C. De La Pena to John A. Smith, 3 Nov. 1827, Tyler's Quarterly Magazine 3(Jan. 1922): 164-165; William Loiver Stevens, Old Williamsburg (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1938), pp. 76, 248-250.

⁸Richmond Enquirer, 8 Feb. 1825 [Tyler's Speech]; Virginia, Journal of the House of Delegates, 1824-25, "Report of the Committee on Schools and Colleges on the Subject of the Removal of the College of William and Mary," 3:3; Lyon Tyler, Letters and Times of the Tylers, 4 vols. (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1884) 1:344; Tyler, Colonial Capital, p. 184. John Tyler also argued on the basis of Chief Justice John Marshall's decision in the Dartmouth College case that William and Mary was a private corporation and that the state legislature had no power to change its location.

⁹Heatwole, Education in Virginia, pp. 75, 81; Schmidt, College President, pp. 46-48 and Liberal Arts College, pp. 20-21; Charles Franklin Thwing, The College President (New York: MacMillan Co., 1926), p. 49; Rudolph, American College, pp. 160-161.

¹⁰Tyler, Colonial Capital, pp. 186-188, 269. On Dew's administration see Stephen Mansfield, "Thomas Roderick Dew at William and Mary: A 'Main Prop of that Venerable Institution,'" VMHB 75(Oct. 1967): 429-442. Dew is perhaps best known for his Essay on Slavery, a review of the slavery debates in the Virginia Legislature of January 1832, in which he provided one of the first general

defenses of slavery. On 18 October 1843 the Richmond Daily Whig attacked Dew's political views as well as the college of which he was president and urged parents to avoid sending their sons there. The Richmond Enquirer, a Democratic organ, defended William and Mary, but the public controversy hurt enrollments. Mansfield, pp. 434, 440-441. As early as 1820 Tucker supported secession as a desirable solution for sectional differences. For Dew's support of Tyler see Henry A. Wise to Beverley Tucker, 29 Aug. 1841 in Tyler, Letters and Times, 2:91.

¹¹Catalogue of the Alumni and Alumnae for the Years 1866-1932 of William and Mary College (Richmond, 1941), pp. 25-26; George Frederick Holmes Faculty File, CWM; Journal of the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Virginia: 1847 (Lynchburg, Va., 1847), p. 24; T. Grayson Dashiell, A Digest of the Proceedings of the Conventions and Councils in the Diocese of Virginia (Richmond: William Ellis Jones, 1883), pp. 197-200; William Meade and John Johns to the Board of Visitors, CWM, 27 May 1847, WM College Papers; Archibald Cary Peachy to Nathaniel Beverley Tucker, 5 Feb. 1846, Tucker-Coleman Papers, CWM; Richmond Enquirer, 12 Nov. 1848; Robert Brugger, Beverley Tucker: Heart Over Head in the Old South (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 191; Percy Winfield Turrentine, "Life and Works of Nathaniel Beverley Tucker," Ph.D dissertation, Harvard, 1952, pp. 1161-1162.

¹²John Millington to [Edward Virginius] Valentine, 15 Jan. 1848, Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia, and to Joseph Henry, 10 Mar. 1848, WM College Papers; Richmond Enquirer, 12 Nov. 1847; Charles Minnegerode to L. C. Garland, 31 Aug. 1848, and Robert Saunders to Robert McCandlish, 9 Nov. 1847, WM College Papers, CWM.

¹³Turrentine, "Tucker," p. 1384; Richmond Enquirer, 23 Nov. 1847; John Millington to [Edward Virginius] Valentine, 15 Jan. 1848, Valentine Museum, Richmond, Va.; Nathaniel Beverley Tucker to Cynthia Beverley Tucker, 28 Nov. 1847 and 1 Mar. 1848, Tucker-Coleman Papers, CWM.

¹⁴Archibald Cary Peachy to the Board of Visitors, 1 Mar. 1848, WM College Papers, (quotation); Richmond Enquirer, 10 Dec. 1847; Faculty Minutes, 3, 11, 17 Jan. 1848, CWM; Nathaniel Beverley Tucker to Cynthia Beverley Tucker, 12 Jan. 1848, Tucker-Coleman Papers, CWM.

¹⁵Board of Visitors Communication, [?] Dec. 1847, and Faculty to the Board of Visitors, 3 Mar. 1848, WM

College Papers; Turrentine, "Tucker," p. 1389; John Millington to [Edward Virginius] Valentine, Valentine Museum, Richmond, Va.; Holmes to Board of Visitors and Millington to Board of Visitors, 4 Mar. 1848, WM College Papers.

¹⁶Faculty Minutes, 2-4 Mar. 1848, CWM; Mariana Saunders to Sally Galt, [3(?) Mar. 1848], Galt Papers, CWM; Faculty Minutes, 28 Mar. 1848, CWM; Resolutions of the Board of Visitors, 4 Mar. 1848, WM College Papers.

¹⁷Richmond Enquirer, 18 July 1848; Richmond Whig, June-July 1848 [clippings in WM College Papers]. On 14 July 1848 James Heath wrote Ewell: "You are the only individual whose selection as President would have given peace to the discords which have rent the institution." Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

¹⁸Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to BSE, [?] 1849, Ewell Papers, CWM; George Frederick Holmes to Robert McCandlish (Rector of the Board of Visitors), 14 Aug. 1848, WM College Papers; John Millington to Robert McCandlish, 15 Aug. 1848, Millington Faculty File, CWM; Archibald Cary Peachy to Robert McCandlish, 20 Sept. 1848, Peachy Faculty File, CWM.

¹⁹On the closing of the college see, for example, Lyon G. Tyler, The College of William and Mary in Virginia: 1693-1907 (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1907), p. 79. For Ewell's appointment at Hampden-Sydney see F. N. Watkins (for Hampden-Sydney Trustees) to BSE, 2 Aug. 1848, Ewell Papers, CWM.

²⁰Tyler, Colonial Capital, p. 198; Faculty Minutes, 11 Oct. 1848, 31 Jan. 1860, CWM.

Ewell Autobiography, and Robert McCandlish to BSE, 15 July 1848, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Benson John Lossing, Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Bros., 1859-60) 2:262.

²¹William Fenn Hopkins to BSE, 3 Apr. 1849, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Invoices for Purchase, May 1849, WM College Papers, CWM. Hopkins was at the time teaching at the Masonic University of Tennessee. Ewell spent a total of \$1600 on new apparatus.

²²For faculty appointments see Silas Totten's Journal, Archives, CWM. Totten's manuscript journal, written at intervals from 1849-1873, is composed of nine notebooks. Portions of notebooks five and six contain his account of life at William and Mary, 1849-59, and are transcribed in Anne W. Chapman, "The College of William and Mary, 1849-59:

The Memoirs of Silas Totten" (M.A., College of William and Mary, 1978). Because he was the only Northern-born member of the faculty in the immediate pre-war years, his account is valuable and interesting. Dashiell, Proceedings, pp. 197-205.

²⁴On the merits and demerits of Episcopal connections see, for example, Southern Churchman, 30 Oct. 1857; Richmond Enquirer, 24 Dec. 1847, 15, 26 Feb. 1848. John Johns to [Margaret Johns], 12 June 1849, Johns Faculty File, CWM.

²⁵J. F. Lee to BSE, 25 June 1849; Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to Rebecca Ewell, 4 Feb. 1850; J. MacDonald Goldsborough (Chief Engineer, Manassas Gap Railroad) to BSE, 3 Aug. 1850; all in Ewell Papers, CWM. C. Tompkins to BSE, 14 Feb. 1851, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

²⁶Block quotation is in Dew to the Board of Visitors, [?] 1845, Dew Papers, CWM.

²⁷Totten Journal, CWM; Faculty Minutes, 1849-54, passim.; John Johns to BSE, 14 Sept. 1850 and 26 Sept. 1853, Ewell Faculty File; Johns to BSE, 4 Sept. 1851, Ewell Papers; all at CWM. BSE to Francis H. Smith, 9 Sept. 1852, Smith Papers, VMI (quotation).

²⁸Woodson G. Moody (student) to Lucy F. Lumpkin, 24 Oct. 1846, WM College Papers; Matriculation Book, 1849-54, CWM.

²⁹Faculty Minutes, 1 Oct. 1849, CWM; BSE to Henry A. Washington, 23 Feb. 1850, Washington Papers, CWM; BSE to Francis H. Smith, 9 Sept. 1852, 25 Dec. 1850, Smith Papers, VMI; John Johns to Henry A. Washington, 9 Jan. 1851, Washington Papers, CWM; Matriculation Book, 1849-54, CWM.

³⁰Tyler, Colonial Capital, pp. 170, 268; Rudolph, Curriculum, pp. 49-50, 65-69; Robert J. Morrison, A Catalogue of the College of William and Mary from its Foundation to the Present Time (Richmond, 1859), pp. 99-101 [photocopy in Morrison Faculty File, CWM; Manuscript at Virginia Historical Society, Richmond]; Totten Journal, CWM.

³¹John Johns to BSE, 4 Sept. 1850, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Totten Journal, CWM (quotation).

³²Rudolph, American College, p. 107 (1st quotation); Tyler, Colonial Capital, p. 176 (2d quotation). Rudolph in American College and Schmidt in College President discuss discipline and student

behavior in the nineteenth century.

³³Julia Ewell to Rebecca Ewell, 11 May 1850; Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to BSE, 26 May 1850 (quotation); William Stoddert to BSE, 28 May, 12 June 1850; all in Ewell Papers, CWM.

³⁴William McIlvaine to BSE, [summer 1850], and Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to Rebecca Hubbard, 15 Jan. 1850, Ewell Papers, CWM; Morgan J. Smead to Henry A. Washington, 26 Sept. 1850, Washington Papers, CWM; U.S. Census, 1850, Manuscript Schedule of Free Inhabitants, James City County, Va.; Elizabeth Galt to John M. Galt, 17 June 1850, Galt Papers, CWM.

³⁵Totten Journal, CWM; BSE to Rebecca Ewell, 24 Nov. 1851, and Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to BSE, 17 Oct. 1852, Ewell Papers, CWM; Julia Ewell to Sally M. Galt, 23 July 1851, and n.d., Galt Papers, CWM. Julia Ewell returned to Williamsburg in 1901 and died there 1 Jan. 1905 at the age of eighty-four. She is buried at York, Pennsylvania. Jere Carl Scrapbook, Vol. 19, York Historical Society, York, Pa.

³⁶Faculty Minutes, Mar. 1854, CWM; Totten Journal, CWM.

³⁷Totten Journal, CWM. Nathaniel Beverley Tucker died 26 Aug. 1851 and was succeeded by Judge George Parker Scarborough who apparently took little interest in the college. DAB, s.v. "Nathaniel Beverley Tucker"; Scarborough Faculty File, CWM. William F. Hopkins resigned Sept. 1850 after only one session, and Professor of History and Political Economy Henry A. Washington was too ill to execute even his professorial duties. John Johns to BSE, 4 Sept. 1850, Ewell Faculty File, and Totten Journal, CWM. On Smead see Totten Journal and Faculty Minutes, 19 June 1852, 5 Feb. 1856, 16 June 1857, CWM. On Johns's support for Ewell see Totten Journal, CWM. See also Tyler, Colonial Capital, p. 94.

³⁸Totten Journal, CWM. Numerous letters in support of the University of Virginia appointment and reference to such letters are in Ewell Papers, CWM. See also BSE to Henry A. Wise, 15 June 1854, WM College Papers. Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Richard Stoddert Ewell to BSE, 25 Feb. 1854 in Hamlin, ed., Making of a Soldier, quotation p. 78; Hamlin, Old Bald Head, pp.44-45.

³⁹Faculty Minutes, 5 July 1854, CWM. For a detailed discussion of the duties of a nineteenth century college president see Schmidt, College President. See

also Schmidt, Liberal Arts College, pp. 103-105. On clergymen as presidents and their duties see Schmidt, College President, pp. 184, 107-110.

⁴⁰Matriculation Book, 1854-58, CWM; Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM. In 1860 Virginia had more colleges and more students enrolled than any other state. Eighth Census of the United States, Mortuary and Miscellaneous Statistics, p. 505.

⁴¹On the catalogue and other publicity see Tyler, Colonial Capital, p. 189, and Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM. A second edition of the general catalogue, edited by Professor of History Robert Morrison, appeared in 1859. Two more editions were published in 1870 and 1874. All may be found in William and Mary Archives. On curriculum changes see Totten Journal, CWM; Rudolph, Curriculum, pp. 79-89, 102; Schmidt, College President, pp. 154-162 and Liberal Arts College, pp. 60-63.

⁴²Bell, Education in Virginia, pp. 300-306; James L. Blair Buck, The Development of Public Schools in Virginia, 1607-1952 (Richmond: State Board of Education, Commonwealth of Virginia, 1952) passim; Governor Henry A. Wise, "Annual Message to the Virginia House of Delegates," 1857, Document No. 1, Journal of the House of Delegates. Virginia's "literary fund" was established in 1810 to provide elementary education for the poor but was eventually used primarily for support of the University at Charlottesville. On several occasions, notably in 1830, 1844, and frequently in the 1850s, the state's private colleges attempted without success to obtain some of the funds.

⁴³Faculty Minutes, 20 Dec. 1854, CWM. Copies of documents relating to the College's Revolutionary Claims are in the WM College Papers.

⁴⁴"Report of the Faculty to the Board of Visitors," 3 July 1854 in William and Mary Quarterly, ser. 2, 8 (Oct. 1928): 263-264 [hereafter cited as WMQ; Norfolk Southern Argus, 30 May 1856; Rules and Regulations of William and Mary College: 1856-57 (Richmond, 1856), pp. 24-26 [copy in WM College Papers]; Williamsburg Weekly Gazette, 28 Aug. 1856; BSE to Hugh Blair Grigsby, 10 Apr. 1857, WM College Papers; Faculty Minutes, 8 May 1855-Oct. 1859, CWM.

⁴⁵William Lamb Diary, 16 Apr. 1855, Lamb Papers; Robert McPhail Smith to BSE, 3 Oct. 1892, WM College Papers; Faculty Minutes, 1854-60; Resolution of the Board of

Visitors, 4 July 1854, WM College Papers; all at CWM.
Francis H. Smith to BSE, 12 Sept. 1856, Smith Papers, VMI.

⁴⁶Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to William Stoddert, 8 June 1858, 21 Dec. 1857 (1st quotation), 4 Sept 1856, Ewell Papers, CWM; Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to Lizzy Ewell, 1 Nov. 1858, William Tayloe Alumni File, CWM; Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to Rebecca Ewell, 11 Oct. 1858 and to William Stoddert, 18 Nov. 1858, Robert J. Morrison Faculty File, CWM; Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to William Stoddert, 28 Jun. 1856, 6 July 1856 (2d quotation), and to Rebecca Ewell, 23 Aug. 1857 (3rd quotation), and to William Stoddert, 8 July 1857 (4th quotation), 21 Dec. 1857, all in Ewell Papers, CWM.

⁴⁷Clement Eaton, The Mind of the Old South, revised ed. (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), pp. 90, 103-104; Southern Churchman, 30 Oct. 1857; Eaton, The Freedom of Thought Struggle in the Old South, revised ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 76.

⁴⁸Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to William Stoddert, 12 July 1858, Ewell Papers, CWM; Norfolk Examiner, 1 Sept. 1858; BSE to Hugh Blair Grigsby, 16 June 1858, Grigsby Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va. (quotation).

⁴⁹Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to William Stoddert, 12 July 1858, Ewell Papers, CWM, and 22 July 1858 (1st and 2d quotations), WM College Papers; Ibid. to Richard S. Ewell, 9 July 1858 (3rd quotation), WM College Papers; Williamsburg Weekly Gazette, 28 July 1858; Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to Rebecca Ewell, 11 Oct. 1858, Robert Morrison Faculty File, CWM; Ibid. to Lizzy Ewell, 1 Nov. 1858, William Tayloe Alumni File, CWM.

⁵⁰Central Presbyterian 7 Aug., 9 Oct. 1858; Totten Journal, CWM.

⁵¹Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to William Stoddert, 22 July 1858, WM College Papers; Ibid. 14 Sept. 1858, Ewell Papers, CWM; Williamsburg Virginia Gazette, 22 Jan. 1857; Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to William Stoddert, 8 June 1858, Ewell Papers, CWM; Richmond Times-Dispatch, 11 Mar. 1963; Elizabeth Ewell (mother) to William Stoddert, 8 July, 7 Aug., 21 Dec. 1857, Ewell Papers, CWM; United States Census, 1860, James City County, Virginia, Manuscript Slave Schedule. "Ewell Hall," located on U.S. Route 60 west of Williamsburg is still standing (1984) and serves as an administration building for Williamsburg Memorial Gardens. The building has been mistakenly dated from 1848 by the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission.

☞Numerous letters concerning this event are in Ewell Faculty File, CWM. Tyler, Letters and Times 2:546; Faculty Minutes, 12 Feb. 1859, CWM.

☞Faculty Minutes, 12 Feb. 1859, CWM; History of William and Mary (Randolph & English, 1874), pp. 54-55; Tyler, Colonial Capital, pp. 189, 198; John Tyler to BSE, 11 Feb. 1859 in "The Walls of the College," WMQ, ser. 1, 11(Jan. 1903): 175.

☞Ewell Family Bible (photograph), Ewell Papers, CWM; Faculty Minutes, 8 Feb., 11 Mar., 11 May 1859, CWM; Williamsburg Weekly Gazette, 2, 16 Mar. 1859; John Tyler to BSE, 11 Feb. 1859, WM College Papers (quotation); Totten Journal, CWM; Faculty Minutes, 1, 13 Mar. 1859, CWM; John Tyler to Henry A. Wise, 8 Mar. 1859, WM College Papers. Elizabeth Ewell (2 Sept. 1784-18 Jan. 1859) died in the President's House at the age of seventy-four. She is buried in the college cemetery near the President's House.

☞Faculty Minutes, 1 Mar. 1859, CWM; BSE to Francis H. Smith, 14 Feb. 1859, Smith Papers, VMI; WMQ, ser. 2, 8(Oct. 1928): 284; "Walls of the College," pp. 174-175.

☞Williamsburg Weekly Gazette, 5 Oct., 1 Sept. 1859; "Walls of the College," pp. 176-177; Faculty Minutes, 1 Mar., 12 Feb. 1859, CWM; Richmond Enquirer, 23 Sept. 1859; History of William and Mary (Randolph & English), p. 21; Faculty Minutes, 7 Feb. 1860 (quotation).

☞Faculty Minutes, 8 Feb., 13 Nov. 1860, 15 Jan. 1861, CWM; Williamsburg Weekly Gazette, 11 July 1860. There had been no law professor since Lucien Minor's death on 8 July 1858. "Petition to the Virginia General Assembly from Some Residents of Williamsburg," 5 Jan. 1860, Virginia State Library, Richmond. The petition contained 41 signatures; no faculty members signed. S. S. Griffin to James L. C. Griffin, 28 Jan. 1860, WM College Papers.

☞Faculty Minutes, 5 Mar. 1861 (2d quotation), CWM; Richard A. Wise (student) to Henry A. Wise, 9 Jan. 1861, WM College Papers.

CHAPTER V

THE WAR YEARS: 1861-1865

For Benjamin Ewell, as for so many Virginians, the choice was agonizing. Political extremism, he believed, had no future; secession was unconstitutional, imprudent, and unnecessary. Like so many Southern academicians, but unlike most residents of predominantly secessionist Tidewater, Ewell fervently hoped, until the last hour, that the Union could be preserved.¹

A diversity of opinion concerning secession prevailed among faculty and students at William and Mary, but Ewell made it clear where he stood. A group of students attempting to fly a Confederate flag from the college building were forced to remove it to a pole some distance away. When another student expressed concern that a speech he planned denouncing secession might create a disturbance, Ewell promised to "tell the audience that he . . . fully endorsed every word of it." Most students believed Ewell had accepted the captaincy of the college militia only to prevent its further organization. The pro-secession vote of the Virginia Convention on 17 April 1861 marked one of the darkest days of his life and forced him to make the difficult choice between allegiances.²

On 23 April 1861 Ewell offered his services, as a graduate of West Point, "for any purpose of local defense or

organization on the Peninsula." A week later Robert Edward Lee, commander-in-chief of Virginia forces, appointed him major of volunteers and requested he immediately organize a battalion for defense of the area between the James and York Rivers. Unlike most of his former classmates and students at West Point, Ewell's decision was not complicated by an active commission in the Army. He was, however, fifty-one years old, had always despised the military life, and had never commanded troops. Nor did he enthusiastically support the cause of Southern independence. All these arguments gave way to loyalty to Virginia and concern for her defense. In justification of his course he wrote that "when active war waged, resistance became a question of self defense and all, whatever were their views, united to defend the homes & firesides, their people & state."³

With the president in the army, most of the students having departed to enlist in their home counties, and the Virginia Peninsula vulnerable to invasion by Federal troops, the faculty, "guided by a sense of public duty," voted on 10 May 1861 to close the college. College bursar Tazewell Taylor of Norfolk assumed responsibility for the school's financial records, and a portion of the funds were invested in Confederate bonds. (After the occupation of Norfolk by Federal troops in 1862 the records were sent to Hugh Blair Grigsby's home in Charlotte County.) The President's House and Brafferton were entrusted to the care of faculty and

townspeople with provision they be opened to refugees from Hampton, a community adjacent to federally-controlled Fort Monroe on the lower peninsula. A statue of colonial governor Lord Botetourt, some books, chemical apparatus, and records were stored at the Lunatic Asylum while townspeople assumed responsibility for the college's portraits and silver. The main building became a barracks and later a hospital for Confederate troops. Ewell purchased insurance for the new building, and the Visitors took steps to guarantee that the Confederate government would pay rent and damages. Ewell and the Visitors, apparently expecting a short period of conflict, made it clear they planned to reopen the college in January 1862.⁴

Meanwhile Ewell attended to military duties. Commissioned Lieutenant Colonel of the 32nd Regiment of Virginia Volunteers in early May, he assumed temporary command of land forces for the Virginia Peninsula and was ordered by Lee to recruit and provide training for at least ten companies from James City, York, Warwick, and Elizabeth City counties and the towns of Williamsburg and Hampton. Authorities in Richmond, convinced that Federal forces would soon launch an attack on Richmond via the Peninsula, urged speed in the endeavor. Ewell found the task exasperating. Despite broad support on the Peninsula for secession, men were not readily persuaded to defend the cause. Those he convinced to enlist were raw--"as much so as possible"--and

did not take kindly to military discipline. Some had personal servants to carry their baggage while their parents followed with wagons loaded with clothing, food, and medical supplies. Richmond was slow to respond to requests for arms and ammunition. Beginning with only the Williamsburg Junior Guards, numbering forty-three rank and file, Ewell finally succeeded in raising twelve companies of volunteers and establishing for their training a temporary encampment called Camp Page, located on Capital Landing Road near Williamsburg.▫

The town of Hampton, also under Ewell's command, posed another major problem. Because the community was located just across Hampton River from the Federal garrison at Fortress Monroe on Old Point Comfort, hostilities between local patrols and Union pickets were a constant threat. (See Map A) Ewell and military authorities at Richmond hoped a serious confrontation could be avoided, at least until Virginia could better organize her defenses. Communications between Hampton and Williamsburg were poor, and Ewell traveled to Hampton several times during the first three weeks of May 1861 to investigate the situation there. On 24 May, having been informed of an attack on Hampton by the enemy at Fortress Monroe, he made the thirty-mile trip again. When he arrived he found that his commander at Hampton, Major John B. Cary, was in conference at the Fort with Major General Benjamin Franklin Butler, who had arrived that day

with regiments from Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont to assume command at Old Point. When Ewell attempted to join the interview, he was "unceremoniously dealt with; . . . taken prisoner and marched into the fort." Cary demanded Butler release Ewell, which he did the following morning; no reason was ever given for his arrest.⁶

It must have been with considerable relief that Ewell, upon his arrival at Williamsburg the next day, discovered that Colonel John Bankhead Magruder had arrived to take over command of the Department of the Peninsula. The courtly, polished, and vain Magruder, who wore a wig and dyed his mustache, had been at West Point with Ewell; the two Virginians knew one another well. "Prince John" established his headquarters at Yorktown, leaving Ewell in command of a small force at Williamsburg. Ewell's principal duty would be to plan and supervise the building of a line of earthworks at Williamsburg.⁷

Williamsburg's location at the narrowest point of the peninsula formed by the James and York Rivers, and its fifty-mile distance from Richmond, made it an important defensive position. Confederate military authorities planned to defend the capital from a Union advance up the Peninsula by erecting batteries on the James and York rivers and building two lines of fortifications across the Peninsula: one running from York River to Warwick Creek, which flowed into James River; the other at Williamsburg. The area around

the colonial capital was generally wooded and cut by tidal creeks which emptied into both rivers. Some of these streams ran almost to the center of the narrow strip of land and most were flanked by impassable swamps. The only passage an invading army could follow up the Peninsula was the streets of Williamsburg. (See Map A)²

Before Magruder's arrival Lee had ordered Ewell to locate and construct a line of fortifications across the Peninsula. Taking advantage of the topographical features, Ewell planned and began to survey a line running northward from Tutter's Neck Pond, a tributary of College Creek, to a point near the head of Queen's Creek. Lee accompanied Ewell on a tour of the terrain, approved the plan, and on 12 May sent a young engineer, Captain Alfred Landon Rives, to survey the sites of the proposed entrenchments. Rives refused to accept Ewell's line of defense on grounds that it was longer than Ewell had maintained, crossed unfavorable terrain, and required an unnecessary amount of labor. Rives then chose a line beginning at the same position on the right--at Tutter's Neck Pond--but placing the central work further below Williamsburg and the left terminus on Cub Creek, a tributary of Queen's Creek. Ewell objected that Rives's line was "double the necessary length" and strategically unsound. (See Map B) Ewell wrote Lee stating these objections and asking that the impertinent young engineer be overruled or that he (Ewell) "be relieved of all responsibility." Lee forwarded

Ewell's letter to Rives. In his reply to Lee, Rives criticized not only Ewell's judgement but his failure to begin work on the entrenchments near the right of the line. Lee took no action. Magruder approved Rives's plan, and construction began the last week of May 1861.⁷

Ewell never forgot the slight. He resented Lee's and Magruder's lack of confidence in his engineering ability as well as the fact that Magruder was given credit, then and later, for planning the fortifications of the right and center of the Williamsburg Line which he had first proposed and surveyed. When the defensive works on the left were not finished in time to meet the Union advance, he blamed the failure on Rives's plan for a line nearly twice as long as the one he had supported. Ewell received some consolation from Magruder's admission, in April 1862, that "he [Magruder] regretted he had not listened to my remonstance." As for Lee, Ewell wrote that "it is an unquestionable fact that General Lee, whose attentions had been by my letter finally called to the subject, is partly responsible." Ewell would always believe the Union advance on Richmond should and could have been arrested at Williamsburg.¹⁰

Despite his desire not to be held responsible, Ewell made peace with young Rives and with his old friend Magruder and set to work supervising construction of the entrenchments two miles east of Williamsburg. The defensive line, as surveyed by Rives, would consist of fourteen redoubts with

the principal work at "Fort Magruder," just west of the junction of the Yorktown and Hampton roads (See Map B). Trenches and rifle pits had to be dug, earthworks constructed, and, at some points, trees felled outward to form abatis. For nearly a year Ewell struggled to complete the fortifications before they were needed. Military authorities at Richmond constantly urged greater speed while Ewell and Magruder appealed almost daily for more men and supplies. Illness and death from disease decimated the troops. Convincing owners to part with their slaves, even for a short time, proved difficult. The use of slaves by the military was a constant source of tension between army commanders and slaveholders, and on at least one occasion Ewell was forced to impress all able-bodied slaves, and free Negroes, in the vicinity of Williamsburg. In February 1862, still desperate for labor, he asked Edward S. Joynes, a former faculty colleague at William and Mary and then chief civilian administrator in the Confederate War Department, to intercede on his behalf with Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin. Ewell asked Joynes to send him 1500 slaves from the counties west and south of Richmond. Horses, wagon, spades, and axes were also in short supply.¹¹

By late March 1862 the works at Williamsburg remained unfinished, but they would have to suffice. During the last week of March large numbers of Federal troops, under command of Major General George Brinton McClellan, began arriving at

Fortress Monroe. In early April Confederate President Jefferson Davis gave command of the Department of the Peninsula to General Joseph Eggleston Johnston, a close friend of Ewell's since their days together at West Point. Davis ordered Johnston to join Magruder at Yorktown, and on 6 April troops from five of Johnston's six divisions began arriving on the Yorktown line from their encampment along the Rapidan River. Magruder ordered Ewell, who knew the terrain as well as anyone, to meet these troops and urge them forward "in the most rapid manner." Ewell was also to move his regiment to Fort Magruder in case of a Confederate retreat from the Yorktown line. Meanwhile, on 3 April, McClellan began to move up the Peninsula and initiated a siege of Yorktown. On the afternoon of 5 April McClellan's forces halted at the Warwick River-Yorktown line. For a month his army of 101,000 faced Confederate forces of approximately 56,000 along this line about twelve miles east of Williamsburg. Frequent skirmishes occurred, but there was no general engagement, partly because of incessant rains which turned the roads to quagmires. Finally Johnston, after having inspected the defenses at Yorktown and determining that they could no longer be defended, ordered Confederate forces to evacuate the Peninsula and move west to Richmond.¹²

At sundown on Saturday, 3 May 1862, in a heavy rain, Confederate troops began a slow retreat toward Richmond, and

by mid-day of the 4th most had reached Williamsburg or beyond. Now that York River was open, Johnston was anxious to interpose as much of his army as possible between Union troops and Richmond, but movement was slow in the steady downpour that made roads almost impassable. About 1:00 P.M. word reached Johnston in Williamsburg that Federal pursuers were near Fort Magruder and threatening his rear. Johnston rode to the field, located Ewell whose 32nd Regiment of Volunteers was still at Fort Magruder, and ordered him to tell General Lafayette McLaws to bring up two brigades to check the enemy pursuit. McLaws quickly complied. Ewell conducted his troops to a redoubt to the left of Fort Magruder where they received some artillery fire. From this vantage point Ewell realized the enemy was arriving in greater numbers than expected and so informed McLaws. Later Johnston told Ewell he never received such a message from McLaws and thus expected only a skirmish on the following day. McLaws held the Federal forces in check, but at dark Johnston recalled his embattled brigades, sent them on to Richmond, and replaced them with two brigades from Longstreet's division. Ewell pleaded to be allowed to remain at the works below Williamsburg, but McLaws ordered him to go with his regiment, which was part of McLaws's division. Convinced that a major battle was imminent, Ewell left his adjutant behind "so a message to return could be sent."¹²

Early the next morning, 5 May, General Joseph Hooker's forces attacked the Confederates at Fort Magruder. By 1:00 P.M. a real battle raged as Johnston sent reinforcements from the troops marching toward Richmond. Fighting continued all day, but when darkness fell the struggle ceased as regiment by regiment the Southerners moved west. On the morning of 6 May Union troops marched into Williamsburg. General Charles C. Jameson, whose 5th Pennsylvania Cavalry would garrison the town, established his headquarters in the Brafferton building at the college. The main building at William and Mary became a hospital for both Confederate and Union wounded. Though never securely held, Williamsburg remained under Union occupation for the remainder of the war.¹⁴

When Ewell heard of the events at Williamsburg his reaction was a mixture of disappointment, worry, and resentment. He was disappointed not to have been on the scene and that the fortifications that had been his nemesis for so long had been so readily abandoned. He worried about college property and his own farm outside Williamsburg. Most of all he thought the strategy on the Peninsula ill-conceived and the conduct of the battle, faulty. General Johnston had never favored mass movement of troops to the Peninsula, preferring instead to concentrate his divisions in front of Richmond. Concerned for the shipyards at Norfolk, Davis and Lee had overruled Johnston and ordered the defense of Norfolk

and the Lower Peninsula. Once the decision was made to abandon the Peninsula, it was not Johnston's intention to fight at Williamsburg unless it became necessary to delay the Federals with a rear-guard action until the main body of Confederate troops had moved closer to Richmond. Ewell believed, then and later, that Johnston should have made the defense of Williamsburg a priority. Such a strategy, he insisted, could have provided adequate defense for Richmond as well as serious discouragement for Federal forces and an excellent chance for Confederate success. With a front of only two miles to defend at the works east of Williamsburg, taking into account the terrain, Confederate troops could have, by attacking on the night of 4 May, taken advantage of the confusion McClellan's large numbers would have created and of Union commanders' unfamiliarity with the territory to "convert an attack . . . into a retreat." Because of his failure to make a stand at Williamsburg, Ewell thought Johnston had "missed an opportunity not often afforded to Military Commanders." Ewell alleged that Johnston had

. . . enough men to man the redoubts, to resist McClellan in front, to send a flanking force to attack both his flanks, to form a sufficient reserve, & furnish a detachment to repel any threatened movement up York River.

This was perhaps the last time Ewell would agree with Jefferson Davis or with Lee. In any case, the deed was done; Williamsburg was surrendered. Perhaps his only consolation was that he had had time to bury his supply of homemade

madeira "before the Yankz came."¹⁸

Several days after Confederate troops abandoned the Lower Peninsula east of Williamsburg, Ewell's period of enlistment expired, and he surrendered the records of the 32nd Regiment of Virginia Volunteers to its new commander. Like many Williamsburg residents, he preferred to take up residence in Richmond than live under Union occupation. Shortly before the battle at Williamsburg he had arranged for Lizzy to board in Richmond with the Reverend Moses Drury Hoge, pastor of Richmond's Second Presbyterian Church and chaplain to the Confederate Congress. Hoge was Ewell's close friend and former student at Hampden-Sydney College. For most of the war Lizzy remained with the Hoges and spent much of her time ministering to Confederate soldiers at the celebrated Officers' Hospital at Richmond. Lizzy did not share her father's abhorrence of the war, seeing it as a chivalrous and romantic conflict. Benjamin's sister Rebecca chose to wait out the crisis with relatives in Baltimore. Upon reaching Richmond, Colonel Ewell joined his daughter at the Hoge's home on 5th Street.¹⁹

By the end of May Johnston's army had reached the countryside east of Richmond with McClellan in pursuit. On 31 May 1862 Johnston attacked two corps of McClellan's army at Seven Pines, five miles east of the Confederate capital. In the early evening of the 31st, Ewell and the Reverend Hoge

braved violent thunderstorms and torrential rain to travel to the battlefield so that Ewell might offer to Johnston his services as a staff officer. After making their way through heavy artillery fire near the Confederate entrenchments, the two men reached Johnston's camp only to find that the general had been severely wounded and could not see them. The next day General Robert E. Lee assumed command of Johnston's army, soon to be called the Army of Northern Virginia. Ewell postponed his plans for re-enlistment.¹⁷

Later in the month Benjamin was reunited with his younger brother Richard whom he had not seen for some time. Major General Richard Stoddert Ewell was a division commander in "Stonewall" Jackson's army which, in late June, moved from the Shenandoah Valley to the battleground between the Chickahominy River and Richmond. When Lee and Jackson joined forces to push McClellan's army back to Harrison's Landing on James River, Benjamin became a camp follower in order to be near his brother. After witnessing, in the last week of June and on the first of July, the battles at Gaines' Mill, Savage's Station, Frayser's Farm, and Malvern Hill, Ewell was severely critical of the Confederate commanders who he believed unnecessarily risked defeat and capture of the Confederate capital. Neither side, he asserted, had any strategy; they simply fought "when they stumbled into each other." Under such conditions, less caution and better planning could have guaranteed Confederate success. He would

always believe the war could have been won in 1862 before Richmond.¹⁶

In early August, as McClellan prepared to evacuate the Peninsula, Jackson's army moved toward Gordonsville, Virginia, to cut off the advance of Union forces under General John Pope. Richard Ewell's division fought with Jackson at Cedar Mountain near Gordonsville, Virginia, on 9 August and at Manassas Junction and Bristoe Station on 26-27 August. During this campaign the three surviving Ewell brothers were united for the last time. Benjamin continued to follow on the outskirts of the army while William served as chaplain to the 58th Virginia Regiment of Richard Ewell's division. On 28 August at Groveton, the day before the battle of Second Manassas, Richard Ewell's right knee was shattered by a bullet; he was taken to the home of his cousin, Jesse Ewell, in Prince William County, where the leg was amputated. Benjamin and William remained in Prince William with Richard until his recovery seemed assured.¹⁷

In mid-September Ewell returned to Richmond to learn that on 9 September 1862 the college building in Williamsburg had been almost totally destroyed by fire. In a conflict between a detachment of Confederate Cavalry under former governor Henry A. Wise and the United States garrison (5th Regiment, Pennsylvania Cavalry) headquartered at the college, the Confederates had taken temporary control of Williamsburg.

When the garrison troops returned, apparently rather disorganized and somewhat intoxicated, they burned the building. On 7 October Ewell and John W. Custis, a former resident of Williamsburg and a member of the House of Delegates, attempted under a flag of truce and armed with a commission from Virginia governor John Letcher, to investigate the situation at William and Mary and Union treatment of inmates at the Lunatic Asylum in Williamsburg. Ewell and Custis were refused passage through Union lines and forced to return to Richmond. In early November 1862 Union authorities allowed Ewell to remove some of his possessions from his farm west of Williamsburg, but he was not granted access to college buildings.²⁰

During this sojourn in Richmond, Ewell's disillusionment with the war deepened. Richmond was full of sick and wounded soldiers, many suffering from exposure or malaria contracted in the Chickahominy swamps. The smell of dead horses was everywhere. Supplies were low and prices exorbitant. On a short train ride to Richmond from some point west Ewell was appalled to be

. . . locked up with wounded and sick soldiers who were shamefully neglected--but who took advantage of the opportunity to divest their heads and other parts of their bodies of the insects favoring each locality--and to crush between the thumbnails each unfortunate captive with a skill that indicated practice--the whole performance rendering me not a little nervous, lest some of the stragglers might wander to my vicinity.

Romanticism faded as reality intruded.²¹

Despite this lack of enthusiasm and his disgust with

the conduct of the Confederate defense, Ewell still determined to offer his services as aide to the convalescing Johnston. On 24 November 1862 President Davis assigned Johnston to command of the Department of the West. On this same date Ewell was commissioned a colonel in the Adjutant and Inspector General's department and ordered to report for duty to Johnston. On this occasion Johnston repeated a request both he and Magruder had made earlier: that Ewell be promoted to the rank of brigadier-general. President Davis refused on grounds that there was no provision in Confederate military organization for staff officers to hold such a rank. Retaining the rank of colonel, Ewell served as Johnston's chief-of-staff until early 1864.²²

Johnston and his staff immediately left Richmond by rail for Chattanooga, Tennessee, headquarters of the general's new command. Shortly after midnight on 4 December, after a trip marred by three rail accidents, the party arrived at Chattanooga. From that date until early 1864 all Johnston's correspondence, dispatches, telegrams, orders, and personal letters went through Ewell's hands. Because of the nature of Johnston's Department of the West, correspondence was voluminous. A geographical rather than a field command, Johnston's area of responsibility extended from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Mississippi River; included the states of Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, and parts of Louisiana, Georgia, and North Carolina; and encompassed the commands of

Generals Braxton Bragg in Tennessee, Edmund Kirby Smith in the Trans-Mississippi Department, and John Clifford Pemberton in Mississippi.²³

While Johnston set up headquarters in Tennessee, Pemberton in Mississippi watched nervously as the army of Ulysses Simpson Grant moved ever closer to Vicksburg, key to control of the Mississippi River. In Tennessee, Bragg, having retreated in October 1862 from central Kentucky, faced Union forces under Major General William Starke Rosecrans outside Murfreesboro. Awaiting Johnston at Chattanooga was a telegram from Richmond ordering the dispatch of a large force from Bragg's army to aid Pemberton, a move both Bragg and Johnston opposed because it might mean surrender of Tennessee. President Davis went ahead with the transfer of 9000 troops but decided to travel to Mississippi, accompanied by Johnston, to investigate the situation near Vicksburg. Once in Mississippi, Johnston--complaining to Davis that he could "not direct both parts of my command at once"--set up headquarters at Jackson, leaving Ewell at Chattanooga to act as liaison to Bragg and Richmond. In correspondence that was brief, concise, and clear, Ewell kept Johnston informed of troop movements, scouting reports, and the status of supplies, ammunition, and the weather.²⁴

Johnston and Ewell made a good team. Fellow Virginians, they had been close friends since their days together at West Point. Ewell greatly admired Johnston whom

he believed "had more the appearance of a soldier than anyone I ever met . . . [and] the highest order of physical and . . . moral courage." Johnston trusted Ewell, and a fellow staff officer described the colonel as "the General's closest personal and official friend, consulting with him as no one else did." Even this close friendship must have, at times, been sorely tested. Douglas Southall Freeman has succinctly characterized the general as "a generous superior, a carping equal, an impossible subordinate. . . . Generous today, he would be exacting tomorrow. . . . Reasonable and patient in one mood, he was irascible the moment he felt his prerogative challenged." To close friends he was affectionate, gentlemanly, and generous; with military peers and civilian superiors he was unpredictable--sometimes conciliatory but often super-sensitive and jealous of his authority. To such a commander Ewell, as chief-of-staff, had several assets to offer. His skill in dialectics offset Johnston's direct and blunt manner. Superbly suited by nature to the role of peacemaker, Ewell despised unpleasantness and dissension and, on occasion, was able to temper Johnston's reaction to criticism. Ewell was also well-acquainted with many of the major actors in the Western Theatre from his days at the Military Academy as student and instructor. Pemberton, Hardee, and Bragg had been his students.²⁰

Even these assets did not make the job at Chattanooga easy. Telegraph lines often did not work. Dispatches from

the War Department at Richmond sometimes could not be deciphered because the keys kept changing and signal officers were not furnished with new ones. The Chattanooga Rebel publicly proclaimed the plan to dispatch several thousand of Bragg's troops to Pemberton, thereby affording Rosecrans crucial information. Ewell insisted there be no recurrence of such publicity. Local residents of Chattanooga often resented the Confederate military presence in their town, and Ewell judged most of the whites to be "coarse, . . . very peculiar," and "not as refined as well-bred colored individuals." Accommodations were poor and prices extravagant. All these problems paled, however, beside the conflict between Bragg, a favorite student of Ewell's at West Point, and his generals.²⁶

At Murfreesboro on 31 December 1862 Rosecrans struck at Bragg, and on 3 January 1863 Bragg was forced to retire to Tullahoma, Tennessee, for winter quarters. Several days later the Chattanooga Rebel published reports that Bragg's army and the public no longer had confidence in him and that the retreat had been against the advice of his subordinate generals. On the advice of his staff Bragg sent letters to his corps commanders asking written assessments of the retreat from Murfreesboro and offering, if their confidence had been lost, to resign. Meanwhile he wrote Ewell--"my dear old preceptor"--for advice. In an obvious reference to Jefferson Davis, Ewell gave his opinion that "there are too

many small men already in places entirely too great for them." Ewell urged his former student not to resign and advised him to be "thick-skinned," "criticism proof," and never to "interfere with a [news]paper." By way of encouragement Ewell pointed to the criticism Lee had received in the press in 1862. Meanwhile some of Bragg's general officers expressed their dissatisfaction with Bragg, and word of the dissension reached Richmond. In late January Davis ordered Johnston back to Tennessee to investigate the situation in Bragg's command. Johnston reported considerable disaffection with Bragg. On 9 March 1863 Davis ordered Johnston to assume command of the Army of Tennessee, a move Johnston opposed. To the relief of Johnston, Ewell, and presumably Bragg, the transfer did not take place at that time because of complications from Johnston's previous injury and the illness of Bragg's wife.²⁷

Johnston remained in Tennessee until early May. Meanwhile, Grant had crossed to the east bank of the Mississippi River south of Vicksburg and begun to move northeast toward Jackson. On 9 May 1863 Davis ordered Johnston back to Mississippi to assume command there. This time Ewell went with him to establish a permanent headquarters at Jackson. The Johnston party arrived at Jackson on 13 May to find themselves cut off from Pemberton by William Tecumseh Sherman's army at Clinton, Mississippi. The next day Jackson fell to the Federals, forcing Pemberton

to fall back to Vicksburg and Johnston to move his headquarters to Canton, leaving Ewell and part of his staff near Jackson to transmit messages from Pemberton. On 17 May and again on 29 May Johnston ordered Pemberton, in order to save his troops, to abandon Vicksburg and march northeast to a point twenty miles from Jackson where their two armies would rendezvous.²⁰

In the interim Pemberton, apparently by virtue of the uncertainty of Johnston's geographical command, transmitted his reports directly to Richmond and was ordered by Davis to hold Vicksburg at all hazards. On 18 May he refused the rendezvous with Johnston and announced he would hold Vicksburg. The siege of Vicksburg began on that date; on 4 July 1863 Pemberton surrendered to Grant. With the fall of Port Hudson on 8 July the Mississippi River was opened to Union troops. The Southern press and public generally tended to blame Pemberton who was a Pennsylvanian. Davis blamed Johnston. In the controversy that followed, Ewell played a major, if intermediate, role.²¹

Difficulties between Davis and Johnston began in the summer of 1861, heated to the boiling point after Vicksburg, and climaxed in July 1864 during the Atlanta Campaign. In the early days of the war Davis had refused to recognize Johnston's claim that, by virtue of his rank in the United States Army, he held the rank of first general in the Confederate Army. Some of Johnston's supporters believed

Davis' reluctance was a result of friction during their West Point days and of social tensions between their wives. Davis and Johnston also clashed over what Davis considered to be a waste of supplies in the retreat from Manassas in March 1862 and over strategy for the defense of Richmond in the Peninsula Campaign of 1862. Militarily Johnston favored the temporary sacrifice of territory so that troops might be concentrated at strategically important positions. He believed that Davis, for political reasons, wished the dispersal of troops in order to hold the greatest amount of territory. Both men were temperamental, quick to take offense, and not inclined to conciliation. For some in the Confederate hierarchy, and to many in the population at large, Johnston became the spearhead of opposition to Davis. Johnston's partisans defended him as a brilliant strategist and popular commander hampered by Davis' interference and petty jealousy. His detractors criticized his hesitancy to take the offensive and frequent failure to communicate his intentions to Davis. After the war Davis would assert that "the Southern people [should] attribute their overthrow" to Johnston's failure to take the offensive at Vicksburg and Atlanta. Johnston wrote that "with any other president the South might have won."³⁰

On 15 July 1863 Davis sent Johnston a fifteen-page letter severely critical of Johnston's military conduct at Vicksburg. Davis cited Johnston's failure to raise the siege

or to order support troops from Tennessee. On 2 August 1863 Pemberton, bypassing Johnston, filed an elaborate 175 page report with authorities in Richmond blaming Johnston for the capture of Vicksburg. Meanwhile Johnston learned that Davis planned to call a Court of Inquiry on the events at Vicksburg. He threatened to resign and "give up the fight" over this attempt to ruin his reputation. At Ewell's instigation Johnston's military family, now at Morton, Mississippi, urged Johnston to reply to Davis' charges. Ewell, believing an attempt had been made to prove Johnston "all wrong and the government all right," persuaded Johnston to "allow me to compile a proper report of the Vicksburg Campaign." He consented and I prepared a full and fair report which was, with a few changes, adopted by the General." In his customary role as peacemaker, Ewell, to placate Davis, attempted to soften the blame Pemberton had incurred for his mistakes while explaining that Johnston had felt he had no authority to call troops from Tennessee. In any case, Johnston's troops were too few and communications too poor to allow for an attack at Vicksburg. After the war Ewell, who knew Pemberton well, defended his loyalty and placed most of the blame for the fall of Vicksburg on Davis and on the contradictory orders given Pemberton. As the first recipient of communications between the parties in the dispute, Ewell also denied Davis ever issued definite orders for Johnston to attack at Vicksburg.³¹

Throughout the fall of 1863 the dispute continued, although Davis cancelled the Court of Inquiry. Ewell was kept busy with correspondence, charges, counter-charges, and a running argument between the parties and in the press over whether Pemberton was guilty of violating Johnston's orders. Johnston still insisted Davis was trying to strengthen Pemberton's cause at his expense.³²

Headquarters remained at Morton until late December 1863 when Johnston assumed command of Bragg's army in Tennessee. By 7 July 1863 Rosecrans had outmaneuvered Bragg and pushed his army back toward Chattanooga. In late August and early September Rosecrans crossed the Tennessee River in a flanking movement through the mountain passes south of Chattanooga and, on 8 September, forced Bragg to abandon Chattanooga. During September, October, and November Bragg, with help from Longstreet, fought back, but on 25 November 1863 Missionary Ridge fell to Federal troops, and Bragg withdrew into Georgia. On 1 December Davis, yielding to public pressure, accepted Bragg's resignation and called him to Richmond as military advisor. On 16 December Davis reluctantly appointed Johnston to command of the Army of Tennessee with headquarters at Dalton, Georgia.³³

Soon after Johnston and his staff arrived at Dalton, Ewell resigned as chief-of-staff. He suggested Johnston appoint Brigadier General William W. Mackall, another Ewell

student from West Point and former chief-of-staff to General Bragg, as his replacement. Johnston concurred. Ill health--a result of chronic digestive problems--and a belief that the large number of volunteer regiments in Johnston's command required a better disciplinarian and a younger man than himself, prompted his resignation. Ewell planned to return to Virginia, but Mackall urged him to establish a liaison office at Atlanta so that Johnston might have there "an officer to whom he can entrust large authority." Mackall added that Ewell's absence would be a loss to Johnston's command because the general, especially in one of his many moods, listened to Ewell as he did few others. The new chief-of-staff knew there would be trouble with authorities in Richmond and especially with Davis; Ewell had a reputation as a peacemaker. Ewell agreed to remain at Atlanta as assistant adjutant-general.³⁴

The trouble Mackall had expected was not long in coming. The relatively small army Johnston inherited in Georgia suffered the ever-present Confederate problems of deficient numbers, stores, and transportation. Rifles, bayonets, clothing, blankets, and rations were in short supply; artillery horses were too malnourished to be useful. By the end of March Johnston's army of approximately 45,000 faced nearly 90,000 Union troops under General William T. Sherman gathered around Chattanooga. Throughout February, March, and early April, Davis, through Bragg, constantly

urged Johnston to take the offensive and regain territory surrendered in Tennessee. Johnston affirmed his willingness to do so but only with sufficient men and supplies. These Davis said could not be spared from other areas except for the purpose of a strong offensive. Johnston was convinced that Confederate officials at Richmond were more concerned about the impending struggle in Virginia between Lee and Grant than about his situation in north Georgia. He also believed Union forces could be bested in Georgia only if they were allowed to advance first so that Southern troops could meet them "on our own ground." By the second week of April Johnston had become convinced that his numerous letters and telegrams to Richmond had failed to communicate his arguments adequately or explain the plight of his army. He decided to send Ewell to Richmond as his personal emissary. Perhaps by virtue of his friendship with Bragg, Davis' chief advisor, Ewell would be successful in explaining Johnston's position to Davis and Confederate military authorities.²⁹

In Richmond, on 13 April 1864, Ewell, still in ill health, met with Bragg and explained his mission. He expressed hope that his long relationship with Bragg and Johnston would allow him to "act as a shield" to prevent any misunderstanding that could be--under the circumstances--a "national calamity." Ewell assured Bragg of Johnston's willingness to undertake an advance as soon as his numbers, supplies, and transportation allowed. He also sought to

justify, from personal observation, Johnston's argument that the enemy should be engaged south of the Tennessee River where a victory would be more favorable and a defeat less disastrous. He stressed the need for immediate reinforcements and expressed Johnston's desire that Longstreet's corps be sent. Bragg informed Ewell that Longstreet had been ordered to Virginia but asked Ewell to ascertain, before an interview with Davis the next day, whether Johnston would take the offensive if he received 15,000 additional troops. Ewell telegraphed Johnston but received no immediate reply.³⁰

The following day Davis was "affable and courteous" but not helpful. Ewell, not having heard from Johnston, took a chance and gave a "decided affirmative answer" to the question concerning additional troops. Davis thought it too late for an offensive in Georgia to prevent Union preparations for a full scale attack in Virginia and would promise no reinforcements. Hoping that Davis and Bragg would reconsider, Ewell spent several more days in Virginia. After a visit to his brother, General Richard Ewell, near Orange Court House, he inspected the Confederate lines along the Rapidan River and met briefly with General Lee. Lee reaffirmed Davis' assertion that no reinforcements for Johnston could be spared. Ewell returned to Richmond on 19 April to learn from Bragg that Johnston could expect little help at that time. Before leaving Richmond on 20 April,

Ewell, not entirely trusting Davis and Bragg and as proof that he had adequately carried out his mission, wrote a full report of his instructions and the outcome of his efforts. He asked that Bragg approve its content and lay it before Davis and the Secretary of War before he returned to Georgia.³⁷

Ewell arrived back at Atlanta with his discouraging message on 29 April. In the first week of May, Sherman's large, well-equipped army moved forward to meet the Confederates in front of Dalton. Johnston repeated his pleas for help and General Leonidas Polk's infantry was sent from Mississippi. It was not enough. Step by step, for seventy days, the Army of Tennessee was forced back toward Atlanta as Johnston employed a strategy of evasion and delay. On several occasions Johnston requested that Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry be sent to cut Federal supply and communication lines, but Davis refused. Fighting only when an advantage could counteract superior numbers, Johnston's army was, by 9 July, forced to retreat south of the Chattahoochie River to the last defenses of Atlanta.³⁸

Like Johnston, Ewell believed the daring Forrest and his expert cavalry of 10,000 offered the best hope for Confederate success in north Georgia. He persuaded Governor Joseph E. Brown of Georgia to write President Davis requesting these troops be sent from Mississippi and Louisiana. Brown's request was also refused. On the night

of 30 June, Ewell, frustrated and angry, wrote his impressions of the campaign to that date. His "report," presumably, was never sent to Richmond; he probably never intended it should be. Beginning with a comparison of the current campaigns in Virginia and Georgia intended to show that Johnston, although more outnumbered than Lee, had suffered fewer casualties, he detailed the problems of the Confederates who fought to protect Atlanta. His bitter indictment of Davis was perhaps the most severe verbal attack he would ever make on anyone:

Should disaster overtake the Army of Tennessee; should Atlanta fall; should this Empire state of the South, Georgia, be overrun; should the Confederacy East of the Mississippi be cut in two by a hostile army--the authorities, by whom Forrest's aid was refused, will and ought to be held responsible by an injured people and by posterity.

Despite Ewell's initial lack of enthusiasm for Southern independence and his abhorrence of the war, the cause was contagious.³⁷

On 17 July, Davis--convinced that Johnston's failure to take the offensive had destroyed troop morale and public confidence in his ability and allowed the enemy to advance to the vicinity of Atlanta--relieved Johnston and offered command of the Army of Tennessee to General John Bell Hood. Johnston accused military authorities in Richmond of delaying reinforcements too long and of an overwhelming concern for Lee's plight in Virginia. He especially resented the praise Lee received and contended the circumstances in Virginia, as

the Army of Northern Virginia retreated toward Richmond, were similar to those in Georgia. He pointed out that his Army of Tennessee had retarded Sherman's advance more than had Lee that of Grant. After relinquishing command to Hood, Johnston and his military family, including Ewell, retired to Macon, Georgia.⁴⁰

Sherman continued to pursue Hood's army and to inflict even greater losses than Johnston had suffered. On 3 August 1864, Ewell, having failed as peacemaker in the Davis-Johnston conflict and inclined to be highly critical of Davis, undertook to defend his old friend and military superior. In a letter to General Samuel S. Cooper, Adjutant General of the Confederate Army, Ewell pointed out that Hood had in seventeen days suffered many more casualties than Johnston had lost from 6 May until 17 July. He continued:

General Hood it was supposed had more dash and would force a battle at all hazards. He attempted it--lost a fifth of his army in making the attempt--gained no advantage, & has since quietly subsided in the course pursued by General Johnston. Had he persisted, doubtless ere this his army would have been destroyed. A more triumphal vindication of General Johnston's policy could not be offered.

Ewell pointed out that while Johnston had been refused reinforcements, Hood had immediately received 4000 men. He observed that "other things than kissing go by favor." Later he would criticize Davis for his refusal to allow the substitution of Negroes for noncombat duties, a request Johnston made on several occasions, and deny that Davis ever ordered Johnston to attack Sherman before Atlanta. "The . . .

. executive that did this is responsible clearly & fully. We are now in imminent peril from the folly and incompetency of our rulers." His one consolation was a confidential report by Major General Custis Lee that Robert E. Lee had observed, with reference to Hood's activities, that "Johnston would at least have kept an efficient army between Sherman and the rest of the Confederacy." On 2 September 1864 Atlanta fell to Union troops.⁴¹

Several days later, Ewell, still suffering from chronic diarrhea and other digestive difficulties, received sixty days medical leave and returned to Richmond. In the last weeks of the war Johnston again assumed command, but Ewell's health did not allow a return to his service. The two men remained lifelong friends. Ewell retained possession of the dispatch books he had kept for Johnston and, after the war, annotated some of his entries with statements in defense of Johnston's military decisions. Nevertheless, when, in 1891, Johnston asked Ewell to write his biography for the "Great Commanders" series, Ewell declined. To Johnston he justified his refusal on grounds that others were better qualified. To his sister Elizabeth he confided the real reason: to write of Johnston's military career would necessitate comparing Lee unfavorably with Johnston. Soon after the war he had confided to Richard Ewell that

There never was a more erroneous supposition than that of General Lee's being a great leader. With as fine material as ever there was commanded he achieved no great results with many opportunities.

But by 1891 the "war of the reminiscences" and the cult of the Confederacy had made of Lee a symbol, and Ewell, then eighty-one years old, did not wish to paddle against that current.⁴²

In late September 1864, after a period of recuperation, Ewell requested and received assignment to the Department of Richmond then commanded by Richard Ewell. After "Stonewall" Jackson's death in May 1863, General Ewell had assumed command of Jackson's 2nd Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia and had fought with Lee at Gettysburg, in the Wilderness campaign, and at Spotsylvania. On 29 May 1864--apparently for reasons of health--Lee relieved Ewell, replaced him with Jubal Early, and assigned Ewell to command the garrison troops at Richmond. On at least two occasions Johnston tried, unsuccessfully, to reunite the Ewell brothers in his command. In December 1863 Johnston suggested that Richard Ewell replace Bragg in Tennessee, and in July 1864 that he replace the late General Leonidas Polk. Lee and Davis refused. Richard Ewell felt he had been "laid on the shelf" and welcomed Ben's arrival. Benjamin Ewell served as his brother's adjutant until 20 March 1865. On that date his declining health forced him to resign from military service.⁴³

Ewell remained in Richmond until late May. On the evening of 2-3 April he watched as fires--set by Confederate troops retreating west toward Amelia Court House--consumed

most of Richmond's business district. On 7 April word arrived that Richard Ewell, captured when his troops surrendered to Federal forces at Saylor's Creek, would be imprisoned at Fort Warren in Boston Harbor. Two days later the soldiers in gray stacked their arms at Appomattox Court House.⁴⁴

NOTES FOR CHAPTER FIVE

¹Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM. For attitudes of Southern professors and college presidents see Godbold, Church College, p. 92 and Crenshaw, General Lee's College, p. 18.

²"Deposition of William Reynold," [student, 1860-61] 27 Feb. 1872, Tyler Papers, CWM (quotation); Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM. Students at the University of Virginia and at Washington College were also denied permission to fly a Confederate banner prior to Virginia's vote for secession. Bruce, UVA 3: 267-269; Crenshaw, General Lee's College, p. 118.

³H. W. Fourney, ed. Calendar of Virginia State Papers, 1836-1896 (Richmond: Commonwealth of Virginia, 1893) 11: 114 (1st quotation); Robert S. Garnett [Adjutant-general to Robert E. Lee] to BSE, 27 Apr. 1861, Ewell Papers, CWM; Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM (2d quotation).

⁴Faculty Minutes, 10 May (quotation), 28 Sept. 1861 and 28 Feb. 1862, CWM; William and Mary Alumni Gazette, 4 Nov. 1935, copy in Archives, CWM; Board of Visitors Minutes, 9 Oct. 1861, 5 July 1865, CWM; Charles F. Richardson, "An Old Colonial College," Magazine of American History 12(Nov. 1884): 419. In Virginia only Washington College, the University, Hampden-Sydney, and Roanoke College remained open during the war. William W. Pusey III, The Interrupted Dream: The Educational Program at Washington College, 1850-1880 (Lexington, Va.: Liberty Hall Press, 1976), pp. 15-16.

⁵"Reminiscences of John Bankhead Magruder," MS of an address by BSE to Magruder-Ewell Camp of Confederate Veterans, n.d., Ewell Papers, CWM; BSE to Colonel George Deas, 6 July 1861, Ewell Papers, CWM; The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington, D.C., 1880-1902), Series 1, 51(part 2):88-89 (quotation, p. 88) [hereafter cited as OR followed by volume, part, and page numbers; all citations are from Series 1]. E. H. Lively, "Williamsburg Junior Guards," Southern Historical Society Papers, 18(1890): 276; Robert Saunders to Robert Page Saunders, 13 May 1861, Page-Saunders Papers, CWM.

⁶OR, 51:88-89; Ibid. 2:838-839, 853-854, 159, 862-863, 35-36, 870-871, 612, 640-648 (quotation p. 870).

⁷OR, 2(pt. 1):865, 878, 875, 902-903; Ibid., 11(pt. 3):480-481; Ewell, "Reminiscences of Magruder," Ewell Papers, CWM.

⁸History of William and Mary (Randolph & English), p. 61.

⁹Ewell Diary, Joseph Eggleston Johnston Papers, CWM (also 2d quotation); Ewell, "Reminiscences of Magruder," Ewell Papers, CWM (1st quotation); OR, 51(pt. 2):174-175 and 2:970-971.

¹⁰Ewell, "Reminiscences of Magruder," Ewell Papers, CWM; Ewell Diary, Johnston Papers, CWM (1st and 2d quotations). Ewell was especially disturbed that Johnston in his Narrative of Military Operations Directed During the Late War Between the States (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959 [originally published in 1874]), p. 487, gave full credit for the defensive works at Williamsburg to Magruder.

¹¹OR, 11(pt. 3):389, 437, 440 and (pt. 1):19; Ibid., 2:875-876, 891-892, 902-903; Ibid., 51(pt. 2):144, 149; BSE to Citizens of James City, York, and Warwick Counties, n.d., Ewell Papers, CWM; OR, 9:42-43; George Magruder, Jr. to BSE, 8 June 1861, Ewell Papers, CWM. Ewell was promoted to the rank of colonel on 27 June 1861, Commission in Ewell Papers, CWM. Edward S. Joynes, a graduate of the University of Virginia, joined the William and Mary faculty as professor of Greek and German in the reorganization of 1858. From 1866-1875 Joynes taught at Washington College (Washington and Lee University). In 1875 he joined the Vanderbilt University faculty. The last twenty-six years of his long and distinguished academic career were spent at the University of South Carolina.

¹²Ewell Diary, Johnston Papers, CWM; Alexander S. Webb, The Peninsula: McClellan's Campaign of 1862 (New York: Jack Brussel, Publisher, 1881), pp. 108-110; OR, 11(pt. 3): 445-446, 421. On 22 April Johnston wrote Lee that "labor enough has been expended here to make a very strong position, but it has been wretchedly misapplied by the young engineer officers. No one but McClellan could have hesitated to attack." OR, 2(pt. 3):456.

¹³Douglas Southall Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command, 3 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942) 1: 155, 175; Earl C. and David S. Hastings, "Encounter in the Rain," Virginia

Cavalcade 22(Winter 1973): 23; Ewell Diary, Johnston Papers, CWM (quotation); Johnston, Narrative, p. 119.

¹⁴Hastings, "Encounter," pp. 22-27; Frank Moore, ed., The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events (New York: 1866) 5: 19-27.

¹⁵Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, 1: 148-151; Robert M. Hughes, General Johnston (New York: D. Appleton Co., 1893), pp. 123, 131; BSE to Thomas Tasker Gantt, 17 Aug. 1885 (all quotations) and Thomas T. Gantt to BSE, 26 July 1886, Ewell Papers, CWM; Richard S. Ewell to Rebecca Ewell, 23 April 1862 [mistakenly dated 23 May] in Hamlin, Making of a Soldier, p. 56

¹⁶Ewell, "Reminiscences of Magruder," Ewell Papers, CWM; Richard S. Ewell to Lizzy Ewell, 13 May, 20 July, 14 Aug. 1862 in Hamlin, Making of a Soldier, pp. 107-115; Peyton Harrison Hoge, Moses Drury Hoge: Life and Letters (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1899), pp. 42, 149, 167, 367; Bradshaw, Hampden-Sydney, 1: 236; Virginus Dabney, Richmond: The Story of a City (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1963), p. 138; Elizabeth Ewell Scott [Lizzy] to Elizabeth Ewell, 1 Apr. 1896, Ewell Papers, CWM.

¹⁷"Account of the Battle at Seven Pines, May 31-June 1, 1862" in P. N. Hoge, Moses Drury Hoge, pp. 157-167.

¹⁸BSE to Lizzy Ewell, 9 July 1862, Ewell Papers, CWM; "Interview with BSE," Richmond Times, 12 June 1892; BSE to Thomas T. Gantt, 17 Aug. 1885, Ewell Papers, CWM (quotation).

¹⁹In November 1862 Richard Ewell was moved to the home of Dr. F. M. Hancock in Richmond, and Lizzy came to be his nurse. Shortly after the Battle of Second Manassas, William Stoddert [Ewell] took the oath of allegiance and became a "government man." Hamlin, Making of a Soldier, pp. 102-104, 112 and Old Bald Head. pp. 129-130; Alice Maud Ewell, A Virginia Scene, or Life in Old Prince William (Lynchburg, Va.: J. P. Bell, 1931), p. 64.

²⁰History of William and Mary (Randolph & English), p. 61; Tyler, Colonial Capital, p. 190; Calendar of Virginia State Papers, 11: 227-228; Sally Munford to Lizzy Ewell, 22 Oct. 1862, Ewell Papers, CWM.

²¹Hamlin, Making of a Soldier, p. 113; BSE to Lizzy Ewell, 16 Oct. 1862, Ewell Papers, CWM

(quotation).

≈Hughes, General Johnston, p. 318; Certificate of Appointment to Inspector General's Department, 24 Nov. 1862, Ewell Papers, CWM; OR, 51(pt. 2):650 and 11(pt. 3):547; J. B. Magruder to Secretary of War George W. Randolph, 29 May 1862 and Joseph E. Johnston to General Samuel Cooper, 14 Nov. 1862, Confederate War Records, War Department Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

≈Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, A Different Valor: The Story of General Joseph E. Johnston, C.S.A. (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), pp. 163-164; BSE to Lizzy Ewell, 10 Dec. 1862, Ewell Papers, CWM; Johnston, Narrative, pp. 491-492; OR, 17(pt.2):782; BSE to General Samuel Cooper, 18, 20 Dec. 1862, Letters Received by Confederate War Department, Adjutant and Inspector General's Office, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

≈Johnston, Narrative, pp. 150-151, 492-493, 496 (quotation); Govan and Livingood, Valor, pp. 167-173; OR, 20(pt. 2):463, 497, 494, (pt. 1):657 and 52(pt. 2):401-407; BSE to Lizzy Ewell, 24 Dec. 1862, Ewell Papers, CWM.

≈BSE, "Reminiscences of Magruder," Ewell Papers, CWM (1st quotation); E. J. Harvie, Benjamin Stoddert Ewell Obituary, Annual Reunion of Graduate of the United States Military Academy, 1895 USMA Archives, p. 12 (2d quotation); Foreword by Douglas Southall Freeman in John C. Pemberton, Pemberton: Defender of Vicksburg (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), pp. viii-ix (3rd quotation); Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, 1: 111-112.

≈OR, 52(pt. 2):400-401; G. W. C. Lee to BSE, 6 Aug. 1863, OR, 24(pt. 1):236, also in Johnston Letters, Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.; OR, 20(pt. 2):479; BSE to Lizzy Ewell, 10, 18, 24 Dec. 1862, Ewell Papers, CWM.

≈Nathaniel Cheairs Hughs, Jr., W. J. Hardee: Old Reliable (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965). pp. 147-148; Braxton Bragg to BSE, 14 Jan. 1863, Bragg Papers, Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Va. (1st quotation); BSE to Braxton Bragg, 17 June 1863, Brock Papers, Huntington Library (2d quotation); BSE to Braxton Bragg, 19 Jan. 1863 in Eliot, West Point in the Confederacy, p. 135 (3rd quotation); Govan and Livingood, Valor, pp. 175-182, 185; Johnston, Narrative, pp. 163-164, 452, 499.

²⁶Pemberton, Pemberton, pp. 92, 154-176;
Johnston, Narrative, pp. 506-507; OR, 24(pt. 1):193,
287-292.

²⁷Govan and Livingood, Valor, pp. 188,
204-205; Pemberton, Pemberton, pp. 167, 179-180,
242-243; OR, 24(pt. 1): 272-273.

³⁰Govan and Livingood, Valor, pp. 63,
70. For an excellent summary of the Davis-Johnston
controversy see Frank Vandiver, Introduction to Johnston,
Narrative (Indiana University Press, 1959), pp. vii-xi.
For Johnston's and Davis' post-war attitudes see John J.
Craven, Prison Life of Jefferson Davis (New York: G. W.
Dillingham, 1905), p. 117 (1st quotation) and Joseph E.
Johnston to Thomas Tasker Gantt, 2 Feb. 1884, Johnston
Papers, CWM (2d quotation).

³¹Johnston, Narrative, pp. 214, 229-241;
Govan and Livingood, Valor, pp. 211-227, passim.; BSE
Dispatch Book, May-Aug. 1863, Johnston Papers, CWM
(quotations). In an attempt to correct the record of the
Davis-Johnston-Pemberton dispute, Ewell--soon after the
war--annotated entries in this record. See also BSE,
"Reminiscences of Magruder," Ewell Papers, CWM.

³²Govan and Livingood, Valor, pp.
229-239; Johnston, Narrative, pp. 215-216.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Elizabeth S. Ewell (sister) to the Very
Reverend J. R. Richard, 10 Dec. 1891, Georgetown University
Archives, Washington, D.C.; Medical Director's Office, C.S.A.
to BSE, 29 April 1864, Ewell Papers, CWM; BSE to W.W.
Mackall, 24 Feb. 1864, in OR, 52(pt. 2):629; Mackall to BSE,
22 Mar. 1864, Ibid. pp. 645-646 (quotation).

³⁵Johnston, Narrative, pp. 272-276,
287-301; Govan and Livingood, Valor, pp. 240-244,
248-255; OR, 32(pt. 3):584, 613-615, 636, 649, 653-654
(quotation), 666.

³⁶BSE, Diary of the Richmond Mission, April
1864, Johnston Papers, CWM; OR, 1(pt. 3):839-842 and 52(pt.
2):657.

³⁷BSE, Diary of the Richmond Mission, April
1864, Johnston Papers, CWM (1st quotation). While in
Richmond Ewell was disturbed by an article in the Richmond

Enquirer (15 Apr. 1863) sharply critical of Johnston's conduct at Vicksburg. When he inquired of its origin, editor Nathaniel Tyler told him the article had been published at the request of a member of Davis' cabinet. Ewell's full report to Johnston on his mission is in OR, 32(pt. 3):839-842 (2d quotation); BSE to General Braxton Bragg, 20 Apr. 1864, OR, 38(pt. 3):626; BSE to Joseph E. Johnston, 29 Apr. 1864, Johnston Letters, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

³⁰Johnston, Narrative, pp. 305-348.

³⁷BSE, "Campaigns in Virginia and Georgia in the Spring and Summer of '64 Compared: Statement of Colonel Benjamin S. Ewell, Atlanta, Ga., June 30, 1864," Johnston Papers, CWM.

⁴⁰Govan and Livingood, Valor, pp. 317-323, 349, 355-369; OR, 52(pt. 2):709.

⁴¹Report of Benjamin S. Ewell to General Samuel S. Cooper, 5 Aug. 1864, Johnston Papers, CWM (1st and 2d quotations); Johnston Narrative, p.276. Ewell's comments on the use of Negroes is in the back of his MS Diary of the Richmond Mission, Johnston Papers, CWM; BSE, Dispatch Book and "Report of Benjamin S. Ewell, 20 February 1865," (3rd and 4th quotations), Johnston Papers, CWM.

⁴²BSE to General Samuel S. Cooper, 13 Sept. 1864 and certificate of Dr. A. J. Foard, Medical Director, Confederate War Records, War Department, Group 109, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; BSE to Elizabeth S. Ewell (sister), 22 May 1868, Ewell Papers, CWM. Johnston's Dispatch books are in Johnston Papers, CWM; Elizabeth S. Ewell to the Very Reverend J. R. Richards, 10 Dec. 1891, and BSE to Richard S. Ewell, 2 May 1866, Ewell Papers, CWM. Johnston's biography for the Great Commander Series was written by Robert Morton Hughes (New York: 1893).

⁴³OR, 42(pt. 2): 1293; Hamlin, Old Bald Head, p. 184; Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants 3:330; Govan and Livingood, Valor, p. 293; Richard S. Ewell to BSE, 20 July 1864 in Hamlin, Making of a Soldier, pp. 130-131 (quotation). On 26 May 1863 Richard Ewell married his first cousin, Lizinka Campbell Brown, of Tennessee. A widow, Mrs. Brown was a granddaughter of Benjamin Stoddert.

⁴⁴Hamlin, Making of a Soldier, p. 105. After the war many Richmonders would blame Richard Ewell for the burning of Richmond and claim that he acted without orders. Richard Ewell remained at Fort Warren until late July 1865.

CHAPTER VI

REBUILDING: 1865-1870

Benjamin Ewell did not return permanently to Williamsburg until the early fall of 1865. Not until 20 September did United States' troops give up possession of the college buildings. The home Ewell had built outside Williamsburg in 1868 was structurally undamaged but not immediately habitable. Furniture and bedding, as well as silver and other valuables, had disappeared and could not be recovered. Only the madeira he had buried in the spring of 1862 seemed unaffected. Concerned about the extent of damage to the college from the fire of 1862 and three years occupation by Union troops, he made several brief trips to Williamsburg during the summer. Meanwhile, he communicated with as many William and Mary Visitors as could be located and attempted to bring order to the chaos of college affairs.¹

Ewell was determined that--in the disarray and confusion that afflicted higher education as severely as other elements of Southern society in 1865--the College of William and Mary should not end its existence by default. During the war the college and its future had never been far from his thoughts. In October 1864, in an emotional letter

to his close friend, Virginia historian Hugh Blair Grigsby, he had declared that: "If I could contribute to . . . [the rebuilding of William and Mary] I should think I had lived to some purpose." In late June Ewell reclaimed the college's records from Lewis Evarts Harvie, president of the Richmond and Danville Railroad, who in Ewell's absence had assumed responsibility for the institution's business affairs. Grigsby, who had safeguarded the school's remaining documents at his home in Charlotte County, surrendered these and pledged strong support for Ewell's efforts to revive the colonial college. In the post-war years Grigsby would assume the role John Tyler had played in the antebellum period--that of the college's most influential defender and benefactor. Thus armed with the records, Ewell prepared to do battle with the Visitors, some of whom doubted the possibility of reviving the college or preferred to rebuild it on another site.²

During July and August 1865, Ewell made two lengthy reports to the Visitors detailing the status of William and Mary and urging immediate consideration of its future. These he delivered in person, trusting his oratorical powers to convince a majority of the Board to accept his views. He focused on three familiar--but increasingly more crucial--concerns which, as it happened, would plague his days and haunt his nights until the end of his presidency twenty-three years hence. First, he reported on the

college's financial standing and its property losses during the war. Secondly, he attempted to head off any suggestion that William and Mary be removed from its "time-honored" site at Williamsburg. Finally, he argued that the college should be rebuilt as soon as possible to convince its friends that it still lived.³

The college's financial condition was a microcosm of circumstances in Virginia and in most of the South in 1865. Of the school's \$153,000 endowment in 1861, \$32,000 had been lost in Confederate bonds. Arrears of interest and dividends on other bonds amounted to \$18,000, but stay laws enacted in 1865 forbade any attempt to collect, as did the poverty of the debtors themselves. Also of dubious value was the \$27,400 invested in State of Virginia stock and in the Dismal Swamp Canal Company. Ewell informed the Visitors that the college could depend only on the \$53,000 invested in private bonds and secured by real estate, and on the college's stock in the Richmond and Danville Railroad Company, the James River Canal Company, and municipal bonds of Petersburg and Lynchburg, totalling \$21,500.⁴

Ewell estimated property damage to the college plant at \$70,000 but maintained that an acceptable restoration could be effected for \$40,000. At the same time, in the interest of revival, he attempted to put the best possible face on damages sustained during the war. The walls of the main building, he declared, were "strong and sound." The

President's House was "habitable," and the Brafferton "in good condition." Although some records had been destroyed, the chemical apparatus and most library volumes were safe. Later, when Ewell pleaded the college's cause to the public and especially to potential donors, he would characterize the college as "penniless" and correctly claim that its losses had been greater than those of any other collegiate institution:

The material condition was as bad as it well could be: the main building a ruin, the Brafferton gutted, . . . the President's House much pulled to pieces and all outhouses destroyed or carried off, the grounds defaced by defensive works, enclosures gone, & it might be said as far as Williamsburg was concerned that the College had lost all save its reputation and memory of its services to Virginia as educator of its youth.

Despite this desire to convince the Visitors of the college's viability, Ewell was forced to admit that insurance on the building would be impossible to collect. With more bravado than confidence, he countered this admission with assurances that funds would not be difficult to raise.²

Ewell was also forced to deal with a question that surfaced every time the college faced unusual adversity: Should it be removed from Williamsburg? Several Visitors--on the assumption that William and Mary could perform its function anywhere--suggested that in view of the condition of the buildings, the college be reopened at a temporary site in Richmond. Believing that any relocation would prove to be permanent, Ewell argued that the essence of William and Mary was not that of a business or a service but a tangible thing

that could not exist outside its associations of heritage, time, and place:

Alumni and other friends of the College oppose the removal of such an historical landmark with all its associations and recollections in the present transition state of the country--assuming as they seem to do that William and Mary could not retain its identity out of Williamsburg.

Furthermore, if funds were to be collected for revival, the college must at all costs retain its traditional site and its historic connections. At this point, Visitor and former governor of Virginia Henry A. Wise came to Ewell's rescue. In 1858 Wise had suggested that William and Mary be removed to Accomac; now, in the face of Confederate defeat, the school represented one of the last living relics of Virginia's past and a connecting link between past and present. Wise used his influence with the reluctant Visitors to stifle, albeit temporarily, any resolution to remove the old college from the colonial capital.⁶

On the question of rebuilding, Ewell was not as successful. With a sense of deja vu--it seemed only yesterday that he had struggled with the reconstruction required after the fire of 1859--he urged that the college be rebuilt immediately in order to restore public confidence. Again he leaned heavily on the college's past and its proven ability to recover from "utter prostration" as justification for preserving its present. The Visitors, fearing to commit the college's remaining endowment to such an undertaking while Virginia suffered economic and political chaos, were

not convinced. Believing that opening William and Mary on any terms would be preferable to its closing and the resulting threat to the charter, Ewell suggested the college struggle along with a reduced faculty and establish an elementary preparatory department that would attract local boys and provide sufficient income to prevent further diminution of capital funds. The Visitors voted to reopen the college in October 1865 with full instruction in the grammar school and "as much of the college course as . . . expedient." One thousand dollars would have to suffice for renovation of the Brafferton--the least injured building--which would serve for classrooms. The President's House would be used as a library and chemical laboratory. Attention to the main building would have to wait. The faculty could expect, as salary, to divide whatever remained of income after expenses were paid.?

Ewell, perhaps adhering to Grigsby's advice not to "be discouraged with small beginnings," publicly supported the Visitors' decision to "let the College linger . . . for a time . . . [rather] than to weaken its vitality by investing its capital stock in bricks and mortar." Privately he would always believe that failure to rebuild in 1865 was the root of the college's problems for years to come. This opinion was reinforced by the withdrawal of an offer by Washington banker and philanthropist William W. Corcoran to lend money at low interest rates for the reconstruction effort. Corcoran

directed his funds to Washington College after Robert E. Lee's election to the presidency and in face of what seemed a lack of commitment on the part of William and Mary Visitors. Ewell knew a confident and viable institution could attract more liberal aid. But at least William and Mary had not been closed. He could be patient. Reconstruction was a new experience for Virginia; it certainly was not for Ewell or for the college that had claimed his heart.⁹

If the Visitors refused to dip into the college's endowment for its reconstruction, funds would have to be raised elsewhere. Economic conditions in Virginia in 1865 did not augur well in this regard. No other state or people suffered as much from the physical destruction and impoverishment of the war. Houses, barns, bridges, and fences had been destroyed and livestock herds depleted. Interrupted rail and postal services were slow to be restored. Fortunes were lost in Confederate bonds, and land values fell sharply as 451,000 slaves valued at \$225 million were released from bondage. Not until 1900 did the value of farm property reach the level of 1860. Mounting debts and taxes forced many to sell their property at a loss or to borrow heavily at high interest rates.⁷

Hardest hit were Virginia's Southside and Tidewater counties, the area of greatest slave concentration. The land was exhausted. Prices of livestock, fertilizer, seed, and

farm implements were inflated, and capital scarce. Prices of tobacco and agricultural products remained depressed through the 1880s, further affecting falling land prices and the ability of farmers to attract and keep labor. Ewell described the country as "wasted, unproductive, and impoverished," and Williamsburg as "torn to pieces." Of his own financial prospects he wrote: "I am in the condition somewhat as to means of living that a plucked chicken is as to feathers." From the devastated Tidewater region William and Mary had traditionally received most of its support--in terms of students and endowment.¹⁰

As serious as the economic situation was, Ewell felt greater concern for Virginia's political plight and the recalcitrant attitude of many citizens and officials. Several days after the surrender, President Abraham Lincoln had recognized Virginia's former Confederate officials and legislature as its rightful government. Andrew Johnson, however, legitimized the government at Alexandria under Francis H. Pierpont which had been established during the war, inside Federal lines. Pierpont, adhering to Johnson's plan for leniency and an early restoration of Southern home rule, urged a course of moderation and conciliation. However, the first post-war legislature--elected in October 1865 and composed primarily of former Whigs--took a traditional approach, enacting harsh vagrancy laws and asking repeal of test oath requirements and Jefferson Davis' release

from prison. In December 1865 Congress refused to seat Virginia's recently elected Congressmen. Late in the month, Radicals in Congress began a tenacious resistance to Johnson's policies, making it clear that their version of reconstruction would include full citizenship for Negroes and denial of the vote to a large number of Southern whites. The Fourteenth Amendment, proposed in June 1866, threatened loss of representation to states that denied Negro suffrage. At the last session of Virginia's "Johnson" legislature in December 1866, Pierpont urged ratification of the constitutional amendment and warned that failure to do so--in light of increasing Radical Republican strength in Congress--might mean a long delay in Virginia's readmission to the Union. The legislature, unable to stomach the possibility of "Negro rule," voted overwhelmingly to refuse ratification.⁴¹

Ewell was deeply distressed at these developments. The war was finished, the cause dead, the cost of continuing the fight too high. He joined with many other Unionist Whigs to counsel acceptance of defeat, a policy of moderation, and quick reunion as the best paths to Virginia's future. While most Southerners tended to blame continuing sectional hostility on politics and the Northern press, Ewell found the cause closer to home:

I have to the utmost of my ability urged the adoption of the Constitutional Amendment & of all the other measures tending to harmony & real peace without much success--beyond that of making people call me ugly names

such as Abolitionist. We are, in this county, declining everyday, &, as I tell the people, nothing but a giving up of our foolish--because injurious--prejudices, & setting to work to convince the Northern people of our willingness to accept the past & to harmonize can relieve us. Yet for all this they will go on talking the same way. Although . . . they may be depriving themselves & families of bread, & precipitating the country into another gulf deeper than that we are now in . . . [The Northern people] are bitter more so [now] by far than when the war terminated. . . .Some who were our friends have been alienated by our obstinacy in this Amendment matter & are as ferocious as any of the Radicals. . . . I believe the whole difficulties might have been settled 3 months after the close of the war, had a greater spirit of moderation prevailed.

He urged all ex-Confederate generals to follow the lead of General Richard Taylor and publicly support acceptance of the Fourteenth Amendment, pointing out that as conquered people it was no degradation to accept the terms of the conquerors--especially if they were the best attainable.¹²

Believing both sides guilty of a lack of moderation and attempting to alleviate some of the bitterness, Ewell also made, through the New York Times, a public appeal to the people of the North. He admitted that hostile feelings were "justified by the temper of the South," but asked understanding for "the sweeping loss of property," the beggary, and the misery that prevailed there. "The slave traders of New Orleans," he wrote, "were wont to punish a slave just torn from all dear for any exhibition of his sad feelings. Is it magnanimous in the victorious North thus to behave to the conquered South?"¹³

In public and private statements Ewell urged Eastern

Virginians to throw off the apathy that reigned everywhere, forget their bitterness, learn to support themselves, and make peace with "waiting on themselves rather than being waited on by a reverential, and obsequious, darky." He also counseled encouragement to Northern investment: "The best thing to be done here is to assimilate in industry, enterprise, and economy to the Yankees at once, and to encourage them to come in and settle among us." In yet another article in the New York Times, Ewell made a plea for Northern investment, taking care to assure his readers they would encounter no hostility--a statement he did not for a moment believe.¹⁴

Ewell's most controversial, and least popular, verbal crusade was his strong support for Negro suffrage and the establishment of schools for former slaves. Capitulation on the issue of Negro suffrage, Ewell believed, would allow Virginia to control her own reconstruction and would do the state less harm than would continued lack of co-operation with the federal government. Failure to approve this measure would surely result in more severe treatment and retard resumption of normal relations with the national government. If Negroes were to vote they must become responsible citizens. Ewell, to the horror of many Williamsburg residents, welcomed teachers sent by the Friends' Association of Philadelphia and pledged his full support for their efforts. He also insisted that Pauline, his only remaining

Negro servant whom he had taught to read and write, conduct a school for Negroes.¹⁹

All Ewell's efforts came to naught when Virginia failed to head off Radical Reconstruction and, in March 1867, became Military District Number One. His reaction to Virginia's post-war economic, political, and social problems had been markedly out-of-character. Never having made a practice of voicing his views publicly, he did so on this occasion in the belief that educators had a moral responsibility to rise above sectional, political, or personal concerns in the cause of national interests. His counsel to fellow Virginians to forget the past and look to the future was in line with his Unionist sentiments but seem contradictory when placed beside his tradition-oriented arguments for the preservation of William and Mary. No real paradox existed. Ewell encouraged the "new," a break with tradition and compromise with reality, because it seemed the only way to retain the "old." Not to accept the terms of the present might have meant the going out forever of the best of the past.²⁰

Meanwhile Ewell had become increasingly convinced that it would be many years before Virginia's physical, economic, or political health would be such that the College of William and Mary could expect public or private support at home. If the school was to be rebuilt and its endowment to remain

intact, funds would have to be raised elsewhere. He ignored no promising source and even made extensive efforts to raise funds in England.

In December 1865 Ewell continued efforts begun in 1859 to claim what would come to be called the "Matty Fund." In 1741 Mary Whaley of Williamsburg had bequeathed to Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg ten acres of land, fifty pounds sterling, and part of her estate for establishment of a school for needy students. She requested the school be dedicated to the memory of her deceased son Matthew. When, upon her death in 1742, her executor failed to comply with the terms of the will, the funds were invested in English securities. In 1859, C. M. Fisher, an English lawyer, advised the college of the existence of the fund and suggested that, because the Episcopal church no longer had connection with the state, William and Mary claim the funds and execute the trust. Here matters stood until late 1865. At that time Ewell asked John R. Thompson, a noted Virginia literary figure, former editor of the Southern Literary Messenger, and currently a resident of London, to intercede on behalf of William and Mary. He also sent Visitor William H. MacFarland to England, with power of attorney from the faculty, to help Thompson prepare his case. Thompson, with support from Fisher and Charles Francis Adams, United States Minister at the Court of St. James, petitioned for the fund in an English Court of Chancery on grounds that

the college currently operated a grammar school in Bruton Parish and could thereby fulfill the terms of the bequest. In mid-September 1866 the English court awarded William and Mary a trust of \$8470 on condition that the grammar school educate fifteen free students and the preparatory department be renamed the "Grammar and Matty School."¹⁷

Hoping to tap a former source of support for the Confederacy, Ewell also urged Thompson to appeal for help to the English gentry, high churchmen, and the universities. Armed with an elaborate history of William and Mary which Ewell had prepared and which stressed the school's early associations with England, he presented the college's case in a variety of public and university organs. Thompson also planned a series of lectures under the patronage of Thomas Carlyle and Alfred, Lord Tennyson, but soon found he was too little known to be successful on the lecture circuit. His only gains were seventy-five volumes donated by British publishers and small monetary contributions from the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Earl of Derby which had to be used to pay shipping costs for the books. Thompson attributed his failure to "the waning interest felt by the English people in the affairs of any of the late Confederate States . . . and the fearfully depressed monetary condition in England." Resentment among holders of now-worthless Confederate bonds, and the claims of the United States for damage done by the Alabama and other British built

commerce destroyers, also affected English attitudes.¹⁶

Meanwhile Ewell prepared for publication a pamphlet he entitled An Historical Sketch of the College of William and Mary in Virginia. He repeated the arguments he had made to the Visitors for the college's preservation, but this time--in an obvious appeal for contributions--he exaggerated the damage William and Mary had sustained while occupied by Union troops as well as the school's success since the war. In preparation for what he termed "a begging tour," Ewell sent copies of his brochure to prominent businessmen and philanthropists in Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston--cities where great fortunes were reputedly being made. With the same object in mind, he sent more than a score of articles to newspapers in these cities appealing for the college's restoration as a "relic of the past" and asserting that "such an outward and visible sign of civil war . . . ought not to remain."¹⁷

In the late winter and early spring of 1867 Ewell made several trips to the North to plead for funds to rebuild William and Mary. The success of Washington College president Robert E. Lee in a similar endeavor encouraged him to make the trip at that time. If Lee's prominence was both an asset and a disadvantage perhaps Ewell's obscurity could claim the same balance. Ewell was also encouraged by Henry A. Wise's assurance that his friend Henry Ward Beecher, who

was "in earnest [about] repairing the break from the war," could be counted on for support.²⁰

In spite of all his preparations and optimism, Ewell's tour was disappointing. He was ill much of the time and found the bitterness toward the South that he had so feared to be prevalent everywhere. Beecher offered no help, explaining that the condition of the freedmen and the unsettled questions in Congress prevented many in the North from expressing sympathy for Southern institutions. Residents of New York City, a former hotbed of Southern sympathy where Ewell expected a warm reception, proved equally as resistant to his appeals. His only success among the Gothamites was with the ladies, who frequently mistook him for his brother Richard. Richard had, in Benjamin's words, "a reputation of un humane galant." Ben took full advantage of the mistake "to cultivate the pretty girls . . . & to visit saloons where waiter girls predominate." The only monetary gain from his tour was a \$1000 scholarship pledged by Washington banker William W. Corcoran.²¹

While in New York Ewell also made a personal appeal for aid to the trustees of the Peabody Fund. Established in 1866 by George Peabody, this fund invested \$2 million with an annual income of \$120,000 for promotion of public education in the South and aimed specifically to aid in the establishment of state normal schools. Having failed in an earlier attempt to obtain Peabody funds, Ewell presented the

trustees with a letter of endorsement from Ulysses S. Grant, himself a member of the Board, and attempted to persuade them that William and Mary could provide normal instruction. Barnas Sears, president of Brown University and General Agent of the Peabody Fund, expressed his regrets but explained that only state-supported schools were eligible. In any case, he continued, Peabody had had no thought of giving a college education to the sons of gentlemen.²²

During the winter of 1867 Ewell had also made the first of what would prove to be many appeals to Congress for reimbursement of the college's losses at the hands of Federal troops. On 12 March 1867, with desperation but little hope, he filed with the House Committee on Southern Claims a memorial detailing the college's historical precedents, its distinguished graduates, and giving the facts of the school's destruction in 1862. He included a number of affidavits from townspeople and--for good measure--one from a freedman, but the Committee refused to honor the petition.²⁴

All else having failed, Ewell even attempted--perhaps somewhat in jest--to convince Lizinka Campbell Brown Ewell, the wealthy widow whom Richard Ewell had married in 1863, to contribute \$10,000 in Richard's name. He even offered to hand over the presidency of the college to General Ewell. When Mrs. Ewell refused, Benjamin scolded her for having missed "an opportunity of immortalizing" her husband and connecting his name with kings, nobles, and the founding

fathers. The story was by now an old one. Those with means would not help; those who wished to help had no means.²⁴

As Benjamin Ewell attempted to ferret out every possible means of support, the rebuilding of William and Mary in Williamsburg threatened to become a hypothetical issue. The question of removing the college to another site refused to die. Many of the college's friends, some alumni, and an increasing number of Visitors, believed the devastation in Eastern Virginia and especially in Williamsburg dictated reopening the school in a city that could give it financial support and a local patronage. Some persons suggested that uprisings by freedmen were an ever-present threat in the heavily-Black Tidewater region and served to discourage enrollment. A riot in Norfolk in April 1866 involving black and white citizens, as well as the suspicions of some Williamsburg residents that teachers in the Quaker schools for freedmen were setting blacks against white citizens, added credibility to the charge. Public pressure was sufficient to prompt Governor Pierpont to suggest to the General Assembly that William and Mary be moved. Meanwhile the city fathers of Norfolk attempted to head off the school's removal from Eastern Virginia by offering the use of property formerly belonging to the Norfolk Academy, a co-educational, Episcopal preparatory school no longer in operation.²⁵

In every available public forum Ewell answered those who maintained that William and Mary should seek its future elsewhere than in Williamsburg. The Peninsula, he was confident, would flourish in the near future and become "the garden spot of Virginia" and "the most densely populated part of the country." Because Virginia had no common center of population, each section of the state required and possessed its local institution; William and Mary was the only one located in Tidewater Virginia. As to the possibility of racial conflict, Ewell assured the public that Williamsburg's black population had been and would remain docile and orderly. The overtures from Norfolk evoked a defense of the classical boarding-school and its rural setting. Proper academic atmosphere, control, and supervision were rendered more difficult, he asserted, in an urban setting.²⁰

Governor Pierpont's suggestion to the legislature concerning a new site for the old college forced Ewell to reverse an argument he had made to the Visitors in August 1865 and reflected the continuing debate concerning the school's status as a public or private institution. On that occasion he had maintained that only the legislature had the power to change the site of a chartered institution. Now, two years later, he denied that authority on grounds that the charter precluded removal by either the General Assembly or the Visitors; by such a move the College would cease to exist. His position thus returned to that of John Marshall

in 1787 (Bracken vs. the College of William and Mary) and of John Tyler in 1824. Both had argued that the college was a private corporation and its affairs not subject to regulation by the state.²⁷

These premises notwithstanding, Ewell's central focus remained on the college's "sacred" surroundings, and its ancient connections. "Virginians," he observed, "are bound by considerations of the past . . . to continue the college where it is." The Visitors grudgingly consented to retain the college's "time-honored" site, but Ewell had succeeded in silencing the voices of dissent only for a time. They would surface again.²⁸

For two years after the war William and Mary limped along in its wounded state, reflecting the economic, political, and social confusion of the state at large. Enrollment averaged about sixty students, all of whom were local and most of whom were in the preparatory department. Half of the students attended without charge. Only Ewell and two professors remained to provide instruction, the others having been granted compulsory leaves of absence. These three received salaries only after all expenses were paid and spent most of their time instructing elementary students. The Visitors, occupied with the reconstruction of their own affairs, gave Ewell license to "conduct the college as economically and however he thinks best." Working with an

appropriation of only \$1000 he authorized only those repairs absolutely necessary for use of the remaining college buildings. Ewell paid particular attention to the large bell which had called students to class since colonial times and which was badly cracked. The bell had become to him and to the residents of Williamsburg a symbol that William and Mary still lived. The bell was recast and hung in the bell tower of the severely damaged college building.²⁷

Ewell also attempted to increase the college's annual income which had fallen from approximately \$8000 in 1860 to \$3500 in 1866. Prior to passage by the Virginia General Assembly, in March 1866, of stay laws placing a moratorium on collection of private debts, Ewell brought suit against several of the eighteen debtors who owed a total of \$57,377 to the college with arrears of interest totalling \$13,752. Few could afford to pay and, in most cases, the college was forced to renew these loans. What little could be collected was offset by the costs of litigation. Also, in March 1866, the General Assembly ordered payment on arrears of interest on state stocks, bonds, and guaranteed loans held by institutions of learning. Ewell had reason for hope, but dividends actually collected amounted to little as state authorities debated what course should be taken in resolving the problem of Virginia's large state debt. Ewell refused to honor Henry Wise's suggestion that the college lawn be plowed up and planted in cowpeas which could be sold for

revenue.³⁰

As chances for the college's revival appeared to diminish daily, circumstances in Ewell's personal life seemed to mirror the school's misfortunes. His debts mounted as severe drought in the summer of 1866 followed by the earliest and hardest winter of recent memory combined with the general poverty of the area to make farming unprofitable. College legend has it that Ewell lost his "entire fortune" in Confederate bonds. No evidence supports this claim, and, in any case, he never had a fortune to lose. By 1868 his assets amounted to only \$7000 in land and personal property; debts totalled nearly twice as much. He attempted to convince his brothers and sisters to sell the family farm in Prince William County, which he thought might bring \$6000, but sentiment prevailed. Ewell was finally forced to sell small parcels of land from his farm near Williamsburg to meet his immediate obligations.³¹

Family affairs were also a source of distress. In May 1867 his daughter Lizzy was engaged to Beverley Scott of Prince Edward County, Virginia. Benjamin did not dislike Scott but opposed the union because the couple planned to live with the Scotts at Prince Edward. He had hoped Lizzy would marry Professor Thomas T. L. Snead and remain in Williamsburg. When Richard and Lizinka Ewell suggested that, because of the absence of Lizzy's mother, she be married at

their home, Springhill, in Tennessee, Benjamin was quick to accept. He would, however, not attend the ceremony. To Lizzy and Beverley he pleaded a lack of time. To Lizinka he confessed the real reason:

It was not indifference that made me want her to marry in Tennessee but a wish to escape the pain. It is not the parting but the forming of new ties that must . . . undermine and weaken all that are older.

Since Julia Ewell's return to York, Pennsylvania, in 1861, Benjamin and his daughter had become very close. Lizzy pleaded with him to come to Tennessee for her wedding on 12 December 1867, but he refused.³²

Lizzy and Beverley remained in Prince Edward for only a year. In late 1868 they returned to Williamsburg where Beverley assumed responsibility for the operation of Ewell's farm. The move was apparently precipitated by Lizzy's inability to make peace with her in-laws. Meanwhile Ewell's pain over her marriage was exacerbated by the death on 9 August 1867 of his sister Rebecca who had returned to Williamsburg after the war.³³

In July 1867 Ewell put aside his personal problems for a time to make one last plea for rebuilding the college. In a report to the Visitors he optimistically stated his case:

. . . it may be safely asserted that nothing worthy its name or history can be done until its Buildings are restored. . . . an impression prevails to a great extent that the college is closed. This will continue . . . so long as the main building is in ruins. . . .

[Reconstruction] done, the future is secure. . . . That it will in time demand its just share of patronage I do not doubt.

He estimated the cost at less than \$20,000 and suggested that, in order to avoid premature sale of college bonds at a sacrifice, part of the fund be obtained by borrowing from the Matty Trust, using the bonds as security. Remembering the difficulties encountered after the fire of 1859, Ewell urged the Visitors not to give out the work in general contract. It would be better to hire a competent architect, secure quality materials, and make partial contracts. This done, he was sure he could direct the construction himself. He would live to regret this confidence in his ability as a construction superintendent.³⁴

On 3 July 1867 the Visitors voted to rebuild William and Mary. They agreed to Ewell's general plan and pledged \$10,000 from college funds, most of which would be borrowed from the Matty fund. The remainder would have to be raised by subscription. The Board's reversal seems to have been the result of the availability of the Matty trust and pressure from those members who did not wish to see the school removed from Williamsburg. As enrollment in the collegiate course continued to fall, there had once again been a public clamor to establish the college elsewhere. It was hoped a definite commitment to rebuild in the colonial capital would silence the detractors.³⁵

During the summer of 1867 a building committee,

composed of Ewell, Hugh Blair Grigsby, and several Visitors who lived nearby, appointed Alfred Landon Rives as architect, approved plans for the new building, and ordered the necessary lumber, brick, and slate for an early beginning. Rives was the same young engineer with whom Ewell had disagreed so violently concerning the placement of fortifications below Williamsburg in 1861; the two had apparently forgotten their personal differences. Ewell, fearful that the Visitors might have a change of heart, urged Rives to prepare his plans as soon as possible. He also cautioned Rives that want of money dictated completing the work as cheaply as possible.³⁶

Because most of the old walls of the building would be used in constructing a new building, elaborate preparations were necessary. Unsound interior and exterior walls had to be pulled down and the bricks, which would be reused, cleaned. Ewell hoped this work could be completed before winter so that rebuilding could begin in early spring. As luck would have it, it rained incessantly that summer and into the fall. A late spring in 1868 further delayed the work, as did the failure of some constructors to deliver materials, and the necessity to perform twice as much brickwork as had been anticipated.³⁷

Discouragement replaced optimism as problems multiplied. The roof was a case in point. Ewell would rue the day he convinced the Buckingham Slate Company of Richmond

to reduce the price of 133 squares of slate by \$266 as a contribution to the rebuilding effort. By October 1867 the slate was available, but Ewell was unable to hire a boat at a reasonable price to bring it down James River. Most boat captains bound for Norfolk were unwilling to stop at Williamsburg to unload. Two months later the slate still had not arrived, and the roof timbers had begun to suffer from exposure. Finally in January 1868 Ewell located a suitable vessel, but when it arrived, ice on the river prevented unloading of the slate. By July he had managed to get the slate squares to Williamsburg, but the slaters could not begin work because bricklayers hired to replace the chimneys had failed to report to work. By January 1869 the roof was in place, but inferior workmanship caused it to leak. Wind drove rain under the slate, severely damaging the new plaster. The slating contractor refused to remedy the defects on grounds that Ewell's interference with the workers was responsible for the problem. Another slater was hired, but he was unable to stop the leaks. Ewell must have regretted, at least temporarily, his decision not to accept the recently created Jackson Professorship of Mathematics at Hampden-Sydney College which had been offered him. When Ewell retired in 1888, the roof still leaked.³⁰

Ewell had hoped the reconstruction would be complete by late summer 1868. Instead, by August 1868, the work was not half finished and funds had been depleted. To avoid

further compromise of the college's endowment, the faculty--composed now only of Ewell and Thomas T. L. Snead--voted to suspend all collegiate exercises for the 1868-69 session. The grammar school would remain open to preserve a nucleus of organization and avoid forfeiture of the Matty trust. In the fall and winter of 1868-69 Ewell once again visited major cities in the North hoping to raise approximately \$5000 to complete the college building.⁸⁷

This time he prepared carefully. Armed with letters of endorsement from Union generals Ulysses S. Grant, George Meade, George B. McClellan, and Ambrose Burnside, as well as from General O. O. Howard, director of the Freedman's Bureau, and President Frederick Barnard of Columbia College, he prepared to do battle with the moneyed interests. Optimism was quickly quenched. In New York City Ewell encountered rain, snow, fog, and "an abundance of good wishes but nothing like currency." Elsewhere the story was the same. In Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore several large publishing houses donated books valued at a total of \$1200, but no money. Bitterness toward the South, if anything, had increased since 1867.⁸⁸

Only one small glimmer of hope remained with regard to outside sources of support. A number of Virginia's pre-war social and political leaders had promised contributions if the outcome of state elections in the summer

of 1869 proved favorable to their interests. They were especially anxious that conservative officials friendly to the funding of Virginia's large state debt be elected. Beginning in December 1867 a convention composed primarily of Radical Republicans had prepared a new constitution for Virginia. The document, as submitted, granted suffrage to Negroes and denied both the vote and the right to hold public office to thousands of former Confederate leaders. Fearful that Virginians would fail to approve such a plan and thereby delay the state's readmission to the Union, a coalition of moderate White Republicans and old-line Democrats and Whigs convinced President-elect Grant to allow a separate vote on the disfranchising and disqualifying clauses. In July 1869, Virginia voters rejected both clauses, approved the "Underwood" Constitution, and elected a predominantly conservative legislature. The new legislature moved quickly to fund the entire state debt. These successes, however, failed to translate into dollars for Ewell's rebuilding efforts.⁴¹

Unwilling to see the college's credibility further damaged by suspension of the college course for another session, Ewell loaned the college \$2000--presumably his share of Rebecca Ewell's estate--to finish the main building. William and Mary borrowed money where it could and obtained materials on credit from Williamsburg businessman W. W. Vest for the rest. After an expenditure of \$23,500, of which

\$9000 remained unpaid, the main building was ready in the fall of 1869. Although work remained to be done on the Brafferton building and the ground enclosures, William and Mary resumed collegiate exercises on 13 October 1869.⁴²

President Ewell assured the public that the college would "at once retake her place among the first Institutions of Learning in our Country." Personally, he was less optimistic about the school's future. Inferior materials and workmanship dictated constant repairs to the main building. Furnishings consisted only of long wooden benches; the library shelves remained only partially filled. Nor was Ewell pleased with the quality of the faculty William and Mary had been able to attract with its offering of only \$666 per annum. He also requested and received the Visitors' approval of a curriculum which, while it remained basically classical, was adjusted to accommodate non-degree student and would, he hoped, attract larger numbers.⁴³

These difficulties notwithstanding, Ewell was satisfied that at least two of the three major problems he had faced four years earlier had been resolved. Rebuilding was essentially complete and the college remained in Williamsburg, the only site where, in his opinion, it legitimately could exist. Financial problems remained and would not be solved for many years. Having achieved a degree of success, Ewell followed through on a promise he had made

to himself many months earlier: he again resigned the presidency of William and Mary, asking to retain only the professorship of mathematics and natural philosophy. He was tired, his health had not been good since 1864, and he believed the college required a president with more prestige and influence than he could offer. Richard Ewell urged him to make a new start in Tennessee, but after Lizzy's return to Williamsburg, he looked forward to devoting more time to his farm west of Williamsburg. With an eye to Robert E. Lee's success at Washington College, Ewell suggested the Visitors offer the presidency to Joseph E. Johnston. The Visitors refused to accept Ewell's resignation. Flattered, despite his reluctance to carry on the fight, Ewell believed he "had no alternative to accepting & to do all in my power to justify the confidence put in me." He found it impossible to let go the institutional mistress that exerted such a magnetic hold on his affections. Benjamin Ewell would remain to face the problems of the 1870s.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER VI

¹Report of the Faculty and President of William and Mary College to the Board of Visitors, 3 July 1866, WM College Papers; BSE to Rebecca Ewell, 20 June 1865, Ewell Papers, CWM; Richard S. Ewell to Lizzy Ewell, 28 May 1865 in Hamlin, Making of a Soldier, p. 140; BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 1 Aug. 1865, WM College Papers.

²BSE to Hugh Blair Grigsby, 24 Oct. 1864, Ewell Faculty File, CWM (quotation); Lewis E. Harvie to BSE, [?] 1863, Ewell Papers, CWM. Grigsby (1806-1881) was a college visitor, 1855-1881, and its third chancellor, 1871-1881. A graduate of Yale University, he practiced law in Norfolk and, for a few years before the war, was owner and editor of the Norfolk American Beacon. Grigsby was the acknowledged expert on Virginia history of his day and served as president of the Virginia Historical Society, 1870-1881. John Tyler died on 18 Jan 1862.

³BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 5 July, 1 Aug. 1865, WM College Papers.

⁴Ibid.; Board of Visitors Minutes, 18 Sept. 1866, CWM. Later Ewell would declare that in 1860 William and Mary was the richest college in Virginia. BSE to Editor, Richmond State, 15 Feb. 1883.

⁵BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 5 July 1865, WM College Papers; BSE to Sydney Smith, 3 Jan. 1867, newspaper clipping in Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Faculty Minutes, 2 Aug. 1865, CWM (1st, 2d, 3rd quotations); Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM (block quotation); Board of Visitors Minutes, 18 Sept. 1866, CWM; Richmond Whig, 16 Sept. 1868.

⁶Board of Visitors Minutes, 6 July, 2 Aug. 1865, CWM (quotation); Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

⁷Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Board of Visitors Minutes, 2 Aug. 1865, CWM (1st quotation); BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 3 July 1869, Faculty Minutes, CWM (2d quotation); History of William and

Mary (Randolph & English), pp. 64-66, 182. William and Mary had not supported a grammar school since about 1840, but in the reorganization of 1865 the college followed the lead of most American colleges in the immediate post-war era in establishing a preparatory department. Such schools were designed to attract and keep every possible student and, in the South, to fill the gap in educational systems that offered no public secondary schools. One scholar has determined that only twenty-six colleges in the United States--twenty-three of them in the Northeast--did not operate preparatory schools in the fifteen years following the war. Rudolph, Curriculum, p.160; Jack P. Maddex, Jr., The Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1979: A Study in Reconstruction Politics (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), passim.

⁹Hugh Blair Grigsby to BSE, 26 Oct. 1865 (1st quotation); BSE to Sydney Smith, 3 Jan. 1867 [newspaper clipping] (2d quotation); BSE to Judge William W. Crump, 27 Aug. 1890; Ewell Autobiography; all in Ewell Faculty File, CWM. BSE to Lyon Gardiner Tyler, 28 Jan. 1893, Tyler Papers, CWM. W. W. Corcoran was founder of the "Louise Home" for Southern women reduced to poverty by war losses and of the Corcoran Art Gallery, Washington, D.C. He reputedly gave \$5,000,000 in gifts to colleges, churches, theological seminaries, and charitable institutions. Tyler, ed., Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography 3: 148-149.

⁷Allen W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), p. 78.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 79; BSE to Tazewell Taylor, 29 Oct. 1866, Ewell Faculty File, CWM (1st quotation); BSE to Thomas T. Gantt, 6 Aug. 1865, Ewell Papers, CWM (2d quotation).

¹¹Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 37-44.

¹²BSE to Richard S. Ewell, 7 Feb. 1867, Brown-Ewell Papers, TSLA (quotation); [BSE] to the editor, New York Times, 26 Mar. 1867, newspaper clipping signed "An Officer of the late Confederate Army" in Ewell Papers, CWM; BSE to Richard Taylor, 27 Apr. 1867, Brock Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Many of Virginia's "Unionist Whigs" later formed a native faction of Virginia's Republican Party.

¹³Newspaper clipping from New York Times signed "Southerner," n.d., Ewell Papers, CWM. These clippings are clearly publications of Ewell's communications

with the New York press.

¹⁴BSE to Richard S. Ewell, 2 May 1866, Ewell Papers, CWM (1st and 2d quotations); New York Times, 8 Apr. 1867.

¹⁵Hampton True Southerner, 24 Nov. 1865; Richard L. Morton, "'Contrabands' and Quakers in the Virginia Peninsula" VMHB 61 (Oct. 1963): 427; BSE to Lizinka C. B. Ewell, 3 Oct. 1866, Brown-Ewell Papers, TSLA.

¹⁶BSE to Francis H. Smith, 29 Jan. 1868, Smith Papers, VMI. Robert E. Lee, president of Washington College, 1865-1870, also counseled Virginians not to oppose federal policy and commented on the special responsibility of educators: "It is particularly incumbent on those charged with the instruction of the young to set them an example of submission to authority." Crenshaw, General Lee's College, p. 147.

¹⁷[Lyon G. Tyler], "Grammar and Matty Practice and Model School," WMQ, ser. 1, 4 (July 1895): pp. 7-11; History of William and Mary (Randolph & English), pp. 66-67; [BSE], President's Report to the Board of Visitors and Supplementary Report, 14 Sept. 1866, WM College Papers. Thompson's biography may be found in Lyon G. Tyler, Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography 3: 148. William H. MacFarland (1799-1872) of Richmond, president of the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad and the Farmer's Bank of Richmond, served on the Board of Visitors, 1848-1871, and as its Rector, 1869-1871.

¹⁸Faculty Minutes, 25 Oct., 27 Dec. 1865; John R. Thompson to BSE, 1 June 1866 (quotation), and the Archbishop of Canterbury to John R. Thompson, 6 Mar. 1866, Ewell Faculty File; all at CWM.

¹⁹An Historical Sketch of the College of William and Mary in Virginia (Richmond: Gary & Clemmett, Apr. 1866); BSE to Hugh Blair Grigsby, 27 Apr. 1866 and Grigsby to Ewell, 11 May 1866, Ewell Faculty File, CWM. The William and Mary College Papers contain twenty-three newspaper clippings of Ewell's articles which were published in Northern newspapers. Quotation is from an undated and unidentified clipping.

²⁰Hugh Blair Grigsby to BSE, 9 Apr. 1866 and Henry A. Wise to BSE, 9 Aug. 1866 (quotation), Ewell Faculty File, CWM. During Lee's presidency of Washington College (1865-1870), the school received contributions from Beecher, Samuel J. Tilden, Thomas A. Scott of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Washington banker W. W. Corcoran, George Peabody,

and the family of Cyrus McCormick. Washington College, like William and Mary, had lost more than \$20,000 in Confederate bonds and suffered some damage to its buildings. These contributions and support from Southern states in terms of enrollment allowed the college in Lexington to become relatively prosperous during Lee's administration. Crenshaw, General Lee's College, pp. 166-169.

²¹BSE to Richard S. Ewell, 18 Nov. 1867, Ewell Papers, CWM; Henry Ward Beecher to [Henry A. Wise], 29 Jan. 1866, WM College Papers; BSE to Richard S. Ewell, 23 May 1867, Brown-Ewell Papers, TSLA (quotations); History of William and Mar (Randolph & English), p. 65.

²²[BSE], Report of the President and Faculty to the Board of Visitors, 1 July 1867, WM College Papers; Buck, Public Schools in Virginia, p. 85; Ulysses S. Grant to BSE, 30 Apr. 1867, and Barnus Sears to BSE, 24 Apr. 1867, Tyler Papers, CWM; J. L. M. Curry, A Brief Sketch of George Peabody and a History of the Peabody Education Fund Through Thirty Years (Cambridge, Mass.: University Press: John Wilson & Son, 1898), pp. 26-39. From 1868-1884 Virginia received \$216,000 from the Peabody Fund. See Buck, p. 106.

²³BSE for the College of William and Mary, "Memorial to Congress," 12 Mar. 1867, WM College Papers.

²⁴BSE to Richard S. Ewell, 29 Nov. 1865, 24 June 1868, Ewell Papers, CWM.

²⁵Newspaper clipping dated 1866 in WM College Papers and identified by Ewell as written by Hugh Blair Grigsby; Richmond Enquirer, 17 Apr. 1866; Morton, "'Contrabands' and Quakers," pp. 420-422; C. W. Newton to the Rt. Rev. John Johns, Rector of the Board of Visitors, 20 Jan. 1866, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Norfolk Journal, 20 Jan. 1868; Edward W. Joynes, "The Norfolk Academy," WMQ, ser. 1, 3(July 1894): 3-8.

²⁶Norfolk Journal, 20 Jan. 1868 (quotations); BSE to Sydney Smith, 3 Jan. 1867, newspaper clipping in Ewell Faculty File, CWM; newspaper article attributed by Ewell to Hugh Blair Grigsby in WM College Papers.

²⁷BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 1 Aug. 1865, WM College Papers; BSE to Sydney Smith, delegate to the General Assembly from Williamsburg and Elizabeth City County, 3 Jan. 1867, newspaper clipping in Ewell Faculty File, CWM. In 1787 former grammar school master John Bracken had brought suit against the college seeking restitution of his position which had been eliminated in Jefferson's reorganization of

1779. John Marshall represented William and Mary in the case. In 1790 the Virginia Court of Appeals agreed with Marshall's contention that because the college was a private institution, the power to hire and release employees lay with the college, not with the state. In 1824, before the General Assembly, John Tyler had cited the Dartmouth College case in successfully opposing the removal of William and Mary from Williamsburg. Tyler argued that the institution's status as a private corporation denied such authority to the state. Vital Facts: A Chronology of the College of William and Mary, 1978 ed. published by the College of William and Mary; History of William and Mary (Randolph & English), p. 59.

²⁰BSE to Sydney Smith, 3 Jan. 1867, newspaper clipping, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

²⁷BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 3 July 1866, 1 July 1867, WM College Papers; BSE, "William and Mary College," Richmond Whig, 16 Sept. 1868; Faculty Minutes, 11 Oct. 1867, CWM; BSE to Tazewell Taylor (College Bursar), 21 June, 29 Oct. 1866, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Board of Visitors Minutes, 3 July 1867, CWM (quotation).

³⁰BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 3 July 1866, WM College Papers; Board of Visitors Minutes, 3 July 1867, CWM; Charles Chilton Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1969 [reprint of Yale University Press edition, 1917], p. 14. Stay laws were passed 2 March 1866 and extended annually until declared unconstitutional when Virginia re-entered the Union in 1869. On private and state debts see Thomas Giles to BSE, 5, 9, 13 Mar. 1866, Tyler Papers, CWM; Faculty Minutes, 3 Mar. 1866, CWM. On Wise see "Virginia Principles," Tyler's Historical and Genealogical Quarterly 9 (Jan. 1928): 181.

³¹BSE to Richard S. Ewell, 7 Feb. 1867, Brown-Ewell Papers, TSLA; Land and Property Books, James City County, Virginia, 1866, Earl G. Swem Library, Special Collections, CWM; Benjamin S. Ewell, "Schedule of Property Held or Managed, 12 December 1868," Ewell Papers, CWM; BSE to Elizabeth Ewell (sister), 28 Jan. 1868 and to Richard S. Ewell, 22 July 1868, Ewell Papers, CWM.

³²BSE to Richard S. Ewell, 8 Jan. 1868; Maria Munford to Lizzy Ewell, 5 Aug. 1867; BSE to Lizinka C. B. Ewell, 1 Jan. 1868 (quotation); Lizinka Ewell to Lizzy Ewell, 22 Feb. 1867; all in Ewell Papers, CWM.

³³Harriet Stoddert Turner to Elizabeth S. E. Scott [Lizzy], 8 Dec. 1867, Ewell Papers, CWM; BSE to Richard

S. Ewell, 9 Aug. 1867, Brown-Ewell Papers, TSLA. Rebecca Ewell, like her mother Elizabeth is buried in the college cemetery.

³⁴[BSE], Report to the Board of Visitors, 1 July 1867, WM College Papers.

³⁵Board of Visitors Minutes, 3 July 1867, CWM.

³⁶BSE, "Report of the Building Committee of William and Mary College to the Board of Visitors," 3 July 1868, WM College Papers; BSE to Alfred Landon Rives, 6 July 1867, A. L. Rives Papers, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

³⁷BSE to Alfred Landon Rives, 9 Oct. 1867, Rives Papers, Duke University; BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 1 July 1867, WM College Papers; BSE, "Report of the Building Committee to the Board of Visitors," 3 July 1868, Faculty Minutes, CWM.

³⁸Faculty Minutes, 16 Jan. 1868, CWM; BSE to Colonel Albert Ordway, 23 July, 3, 9, 16 Oct., 2, 30 Dec, 1867, 9, 17, 18 Jan., 4 June, 21, 29 July, 17 Aug., 12 Nov. 1868, 18 Feb., 4, 25 Aug., 5, 13, 27 Sept. 1869, William Patterson Papers, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina [copies in Archives, Chronology File, CWM]; Moses D. Hoge, A. G. McUlwaive, and A. D. Dickerson to BSE, 16 May 1866, Ewell Papers, CWM.

³⁹Board of Visitors Minutes, 2, 3 July 1869, CWM; BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 3 July 1868, 28 June 1869, WM College Papers.

⁴⁰Ulysses S. Grant to BSE, 22 Dec. 1868, WM College Papers; New York Times, 5 Jan. 1869; George B. McClellan to BSE, 6 Dec. 1869, Archives Chronology File, CWM; O. O. Howard to BSE, 24 Dec. 1868, Frederick Barnard to BSE, 13 Dec. 1869, and BSE to Lizzy Ewell Scott, 4 Jan. 1869 (quotation); all in Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Faculty Minutes, 13 Jan. 1870, CWM; BSE, "Report to the Board of Visitors," 3 July 1869, Faculty Minutes, CWM.

⁴¹In October 1869 the General Assembly approved the 14th and 15th Amendments. On 26 January 1870 Congress voted to re-admit Virginia to the Union. For discussions of Virginia Reconstruction politics see Maddex, Virginia Conservatives; Moger, Bourbonism to Byrd; Hamilton James Eckenrode, The Political History of Virginia During the Reconstruction (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1904).

*²BSE, "Report of the Building Committee to the Board of Visitors," 3 July 1868, 28 June 1869, 4 July 1870, WM College Papers; Norfolk Virginian, n.d., clipping in WM College Papers.

*³Advertisement circular [1869], Thomas P. McCandlish Faculty File, CWM (quotation); Robert M. Hughes, "Baccalaureate Address at the College of William and Mary," 12 June 1933, Hughes Alumni File, CWM; BSE, Commencement Address, July 1869, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

CHAPTER VII

FINANCIAL CRISIS: 1870-1882

As the turbulent 1860s decade ended, Benjamin Ewell looked ahead hopefully to better days for the College of William and Mary. Although the grounds and several buildings still required attention, the ordeal of reconstructing the main building was essentially over. If the school could attract an adequate faculty, he believed, students would soon flock to the colonial college. The resulting prosperity would also, he hoped, increase his own financial resources which had been severely drained during the reconstruction years. Disappointment, however, quickly replaced optimism. Students in large numbers did not come, and the college's debts continued to mount. The 1870s would be dominated by a wide and unsuccessful search for funds to enable William and Mary to remain open.¹

During the early years of the new decade the college's ancient buildings, as well as its "new" one, required extensive repairs just to avoid further deterioration and damage. The roof of the main building still leaked and slates had to be replaced at a cost of \$600. Construction of a grammar school building on the old site of the Governor's Palace required expenditure of \$4700.

Necessity to repay funds borrowed from the Matty trust, as well as Ewell's determination to remove grammar school students from the campus where they frequently disrupted college activities, prompted this addition to the physical plant. By late 1872 post-war expenditures amounted to \$44,000, and the college's debts, including arrears of faculty salaries, totalled \$22,500. Pressure from lenders for payment presented Ewell with a dilemma. To delay settlement meant increased debt as interest on post-war loans--often at rates of 12 percent or more--rapidly accumulated. On the other hand, immediate payment would necessitate dipping deeply into the endowment with the resulting loss of both assets and income.²

The college's inability to attract students compounded its financial difficulties. As was the case with nearly all colleges, William and Mary had never been self-supporting but depended on adequate enrollment plus income from endowments to provide necessary services. In the 1870s neither enrollment nor income reached acceptable levels. Annual admission of fifteen "free" students--that is, those who paid no tuition--further complicated the problem. The college, after all, had to boast sufficient enrollment to justify its existence. Low tuition and fee rates might have been expected to attract students but did not. At William and Mary students paid \$230 or less per session as compared to more than \$500 at the University of

Virginia, Yale, Princeton, and Harvard, to name only a few. Despite this economy, enrollment in the college course fell from forty-one in 1870-71 to only twenty in 1877-78. In the 1870s income from fees and investments averaged less than \$4,000 annually.³

Why should the College of William and Mary, with its longevity, its historic connections, and its status as the only college in Tidewater Virginia have had so much more difficulty attracting students in the post-war era than it had experienced before the war? Until the founding of the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical Institute in 1872 the number of colleges in Virginia for white males remained at ten. Some friends of William and Mary attributed its lack of appeal to its inaccessibility. From Richmond one had a choice of a steamer down James River to Kingsmill Wharf--with a stop at every wharf along the way--and a four mile trip by wagon to Williamsburg, or a trip by rail to West Point, a steamer down York River to Claybank and a wagon ride from there to the college. Either mode of travel required from five to eight hours. Other observers suggested that the economic necessity to reduce the number of faculty members hurt the college's ability to compete. James Lyons, Rector of the Board of Visitors, observed that "the . . . increase of Negro population in the country around [the college]" was an impediment to its success. These factors doubtless contributed to the woes of William and Mary. They do not,

however, address a much more important and more basic problem: the college's location in the economically depressed Tidewater region.⁴

As Ewell had pointed out to the Visitors in his appeal for the college's continuance in Williamsburg, every Virginia college--with the possible exception of the University at Charlottesville--tended over time to draw consistently from the same area of the state. Of the 1,356 students who attended William and Mary from 1825 to 1861, 1,154 were Virginia residents and 871, or seventy-five percent, came from the Tidewater, Southside, or Eastern Shore counties which suffered the severest economic depression after the war. According to one student of Virginia's post-war economy, fifty-two Virginia counties had a decrease of greater than twenty-five percent in assessed realty values from 1860 to 1875; most of these counties were in Virginia's Tidewater or Southside regions. Many young men who might have been expected to attend William and Mary simply did not have the necessary resources. Of the 292 students who attended William and Mary from 1865 until 1881, 251 were Virginia residents; 199 of these, or seventy-nine percent, came from depressed counties. These figures indicate that the pattern of attraction had not changed. For the 1876-77 academic session the University of Virginia enrolled 179 students; Richmond College, 142; Randolph-Macon, 167; Washington and Lee, 133; and Hampden-Sydney, 86. William and

Mary had only 27. With so little income from tuition and fees, college officials were forced to compromise capital assets to meet expenses.²

Benjamin Ewell recognized that the college's location in eastern Virginia was a severe handicap to its rejuvenation, but he consistently claimed, at least publicly, that the region would be in the future the richest in the state. Meanwhile, present realities dictated that outside funds be found before debt payments, interest, and expenses ate deeper into the endowment. Recurrent suggestions that William and Mary be removed to a more favorable site added urgency to the quest. Admitting that his efforts to acquire donations from private sources had been dismal failures, Ewell attempted to tap public revenues.³

In October 1870 Ewell spent several days in Richmond in an attempt to persuade Virginia's legislators that William and Mary should receive at least a share of the funds available to Virginia under the Morrill Act of 1862. That legislation granted each state 30,000 acres of land from the public domain or the equivalent in scrip, for each Senator and Representative, to be used for the support of at least one agricultural and mechanical institute. Assignment of funds fell to the states with the option of establishing new colleges or altering the mission of one or more existing institutions. When hearings began at Richmond in 1870 a wild

scramble ensued, as all ten of Virginia's white colleges--as well as the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute founded in 1868 for Negroes--vied for at least a part of the appropriation.⁷

The lengthy memorial Ewell prepared for presentation to the legislative committees repeated the arguments he had made to the Visitors in 1865 in his plea for the school's restoration and added an appeal for justice to Tidewater Virginia. He stressed the college's history, its antiquity, its distinguished graduates. Again he expressed confidence in the future of the Virginia Peninsula and assured the legislators of its healthful climate. In an attempt to prick their consciences, he reminded them that the Tidewater region had been more injured during the war than any other section; that it contributed more than its share to the state treasury and had received the least in return; that William and Mary was the area's only college. Would it not be simple justice--if William and Mary established a chair of agriculture--to grant the college an equitable portion of the land scrip funds?⁸

Ewell depended on former Virginia governor Henry A. Wise to present these arguments to the proper committees and ask that William and Mary be awarded all the funds. But Wise, as eccentric, unpredictable, and eloquent as ever, suggested that all Virginia's colleges share equally--each to receive about \$30,000. Forced to present his own case, Ewell

summarized the points made in the memorial. Then, in a statement that was both an apology for his emphasis on the past and a reflection of his belief that an acceptance of progress should not displace a reverence for the past, he concluded:

It is hoped that this reference to the past of the College . . . will not be considered inappropriate. It is true that old things have passed away; but his culture must be contracted who refuses to profit by the teachings of the past, or neglects to cherish and admire its memories.▼

Despite Ewell's efforts and eloquence, the college's petition died in the Senate Committee on Public Instruction. In March 1872, after nearly two years of debate, the state legislature appropriated two-thirds of the land scrip for the establishment of the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical Institute at Blacksburg in western Virginia; it granted the remaining one-third to Hampton Institute for the education of Negroes. As in most states where local interests were sharply divided, the most satisfactory answer proved to be the founding of a new college rather than the conversion of old ones.¹⁰

Long before he learned of the General Assembly's decision, Ewell followed the lead of Washington College and the Virginia Military Institute and began planning a campaign to convince Congress that William and Mary should receive reparations from the federal government for damages inflicted by federal troops during the war. He had wished to initiate

these efforts before reconstruction of the main building began, but believed any such appeal to Congress would have to await Virginia's official reconstruction. In late January 1870 Congress approved the state's readmission to the Union, and for the next six years Ewell's efforts to persuade Congress that William and Mary deserved indemnification for its losses claimed a lion's share of his time and energy.¹¹

In July 1870, Henry A. Wise attempted once again to use his influence on behalf of the school he served as Visitor. Wise offered to contact Representative Benjamin Franklin Butler of Massachusetts and ask his sponsorship of a bill requesting reparations for the college. Before the war Wise and Butler, both Democrats and supporters of John Breckinridge in 1860, had been political allies. Since the war Butler had become the most radical of Republicans; Wise, nonetheless, hoped to call in some old political debts. Butler was familiar with the college from his days as post commander at Fortress Monroe during the war and was known as a strong supporter of bills to aid education. He also had a reputation for undertaking political fights with vigor, vindictiveness, and great relish. As a prominent Radical Republican and a formidable figure in the House of Representatives, Butler could never be accused of sentimental conciliationism. Butler agreed to act as patron for William and Mary, but warned Wise that the college should ask only

for an endowment and avoid "raising issues of the war."¹²

Ewell began immediately to plan his assault on the pinnacles of national power. Ignoring Butler's advice, he prepared a memorial to Congress emphasizing the unnecessary character of the fire which had virtually destroyed the main college building in 1862. Success of the appeal, however, demanded that expediency triumph over emotion. In his first draft Ewell wrote that "[the fire] was done by the accident or design of a few drunken and brutal soldiers." He crossed this out and finally wrote:

It was an unauthorized act or accident of [a] war, the end of which was to save everything precious to the care of a parental Government. . . . The very end and aim of the Union was to save, not to destroy. . . . Congress never contemplated the idea of warring upon venerable institutions of learning.

An appropriation to William and Mary would aid in the restoration of "harmony and peace" between North and South. At Ewell's request, Union Generals Grant, Meade, Sherman, McClellan, Burnside, and Schofield--all West Pointers--wrote letters of support. Members of the Virginia General Assembly, relieved no doubt that they were not the target of Ewell's latest campaign, voted unanimous approval of the college's petition. Federal Judge Robert W. Hughes of Norfolk, one of Virginia's leading Republicans and Ewell's close friend, added his support, declaring that he sent his son to William and Mary "in confident belief that he will not be insulted because of my well-known politics."¹³

In late December 1870 Butler introduced the college's petition in the House of Representatives where it was referred, with supporting papers, to the Committee on Education and Labor. Butler's bill asked that Congress approve \$69,000 as reparation for war losses. In late February Ewell borrowed \$500 from Williamsburg merchant W. W. Vest that he might go to Washington and present his case in person. In a speech that rivaled the passionate pronouncements of the most dedicated Radical, Ewell recounted at length the college's early history and stressed the institution's contributions to the nation's independence and to its leadership. He reminded the committee that belligerents had traditionally respected institutions of learning and that General Philip Sheridan, in his passage through Charlottesville, had taken steps to protect the University of Virginia:

Thus this noble institution, which Thomas Jefferson gave to our country, was fortunately preserved, although the more venerable college which gave him to America had fallen victim to the Moloch of war.

Furthermore, William and Mary could help supply the teachers so desperately needed by both blacks and whites in Virginia's fledgling public school system. In answer to those Congressmen who feared a grant to William and Mary would set a precedent and justify large demands on the treasury, Ewell argued that the college's case was unique: no other college had contributed so much to the nation nor suffered so much damage. Reparations of \$69,000 was a small price to pay for

preservation of "the memories of the past, the necessities of the present, and a wise care for the future."¹⁴

In lobbying for the bill Ewell attempted to assure that it would not become a party measure. "Literature and science," he asserted, "know no politics, and recognize and claim all parties as their protectors and friends." The petition received support from both parties, and, on 3 May 1871, committee chairman Samuel Arnell, a Radical Republican from Tennessee, reported it favorably to the House. Congress adjourned, however, before the House could act.¹⁵

As soon as the 1870-71 college session ended, Ewell, disappointed but not discouraged, began to prepare for another appeal to Congress. To the papers he had previously filed in support of the college's cause he added affidavits of several Williamsburg residents who had witnessed the burning of the college. All attested to the responsibility of Union soldiers for the destruction. Ewell's action was apparently precipitated by the objections of at least one former Union soldier--who had been present at the building's conflagration--that local residents had been responsible. Because Congress would not make an appropriation in aid of a private institution, William and Mary was forced to ask for indemnity; thus the need to prove that the building had been burned by Federal troops. For good measure Ewell also solicited a letter of support from Samuel Chapman Armstrong, first president of Hampton Institute and a former official of

the Freedman's Bureau. Armstrong characterized Ewell--and by implication the college he represented--as "liberal, polite, and kind to all kinds of Northern people and enterprises" and mentioned his support for Negro schools "at much sacrifice of his comfort."¹⁶

On 24 January 1872, Ewell made the second of four personal appeals to the House Committee on Education and Labor. His argument was identical to the one he had made in 1871, and again he won over the committee. When debate began in the House in early February the bill received strong support from several Radical Republicans, among them Legrand W. Perce of Mississippi, chairman of the Committee on Education and Labor, and George Frisbee Hoar of Massachusetts. Hoar would for the next twenty years remain the most influential champion of federal aid for William and Mary.¹⁷

That Hoar assumed Butler's role as chief patron of the college's petition can only be explained by their common interest in education. Although both men were Massachusetts Republicans, Butler was always at odds with the state's elite Republican leadership, and especially with Hoar who had compared him to such political villains as Benedict Arnold, Aaron Burr, and Robespierre. In any case, as far as William and Mary was concerned, Hoar's support was more to be desired. Butler was perhaps the most unpopular figure in the House, even among members of his own party.¹⁸

Hoar, Perce, and others who favored the bill generally made the same points. Occupation of William and Mary by Union forces carried responsibility for its protection; destruction of buildings and property belonging to an educational institution--especially by disorderly soldiers--was a clear violation of the rules of civilized warfare. Hoar dubbed the college a national shrine--"like Monticello and Mount Vernon"--and expressed confidence that its sister college, Harvard, "mother of the Otises and the Adames would gladly extend her right hand to the mother of Jefferson and Marshall." The rhetoric and partisanship of these Congressmen would not, however, be enough.¹⁷

As debate continued on the floor of the House, word reached opponents of the bill that recent events in Richmond and Williamsburg cast serious doubt on the college's loyalty to the Union. The episodes involved a volunteer militia company organized by Professor Richard Alsop Wise, son of former governor Henry A. Wise. Most of Williamsburg's young men--including several students--were members of "Wise's Light Infantry." Rumor had it that Wise's Infantry had disrupted a racially-mixed Republican meeting in Williamsburg and, at a state fair in Richmond, had made a public display of disloyalty to the government by tearing the initials "U.S." from their uniforms. Although both Ewell and Wise indignantly denied the charges--and Wise offered to resign if his presence on the faculty jeopardized the college's chances

at reparations--the bloody shirt waved furiously on the floor of the House.²⁰

Opposition came from many quarters, but Representative John B. Hawley, a Republican from Illinois, made the most impassioned plea for rejection of the bill to aid William and Mary. In answer to the report of the Committee on Education and Labor, he observed that it would "require a good deal of education and more labor to get this bill through the House." The college's cause, he believed, had no support in law, justice, or precedent. Pointing out that the institution's president, professors, and students had "enlisted under the banner of treason and rebellion," Hawley urged Congress to pay just claims rather than deplete the treasury to reward disloyalty. The college had been mother to Confederates, and its destruction was part of the price the South had to pay for its rebellion. Other Republican congressmen expressed fears that passage of the bill would create a dangerous precedent to rebuild "every school or church or institution of charity destroyed during the war." The college's appeal was not destined to escape the partisan politics Ewell had labored hard to avoid.²¹

He did his best, however, to limit the damage done by the "bloody shirt" arguments. On 12 February 1872 Ewell wrote Chairman Perce to explain that the disruption of the Republican meeting in Williamsburg had been the result of a

simple misunderstanding. Several of Wise's men, returning home from their weekly drill, had seen a light in the courthouse and stopped to investigate. Because the men were armed, their presence was misinterpreted by some of those attending the meeting and "things got out of hand." Wise had quickly ordered his men out. Ewell also produced affidavits from two members of Wise's company--both former Union soldiers--that no exhibition of disloyalty to the Union had occurred at the state fair at Richmond. After Hawley's speech, Ewell again wrote Perce to point out that no secession flag had ever flown from the college buildings. In his own defense, he cited his strong protests against efforts to exclude any but sectional textbooks--that is, those favorable to the South--in Southern educational institutions. Relations in Williamsburg between the races, between Northerners and Southerners, and between Democrats and Republicans were, he maintained, good. In any case, William and Mary educated young men regardless of their father's politics. Ewell's friend, Robert W. Hughes, also tried to help. He wrote Ebenezer Rockwell Hoar, brother of George Hoar and President Grant's former Attorney General, that Republicanism in Virginia was "ready to develop itself on the first encouragement given by Congress." Virginia, he believed, could be carried for Grant if people could be convinced that Republican policy was "not greedy partisanship but . . . statesmanship."²²

Ewell remained in Washington until mid-May, lobbying for his bill wherever he could and listening to debates in the House. As he listened, he also grieved. On 24 January 1872, the same day Benjamin made his appeal to the House Committee, his brother Richard had died of pneumonia. Richard survived his wife Lizinka by only three days. Benjamin's agony can only have been exacerbated by the opposition of Radical Republicans to aid for William and Mary--opposition that seemed the fulfillment of his fears that Virginia's attitude toward the federal government in the immediate post-war period would reap a bitter harvest.²³

On 13 December 1872 the House rejected the college's request for reparations. On 17 February 1873, passions having cooled somewhat, the House approved, by a vote of 117-70, an almost identical measure. The Senate adjourned without considering the bill. William and Mary had once again become the victim of parliamentary stratagems.²⁴

While the bill to indemnify William and Mary for its war losses hung in the balance, Ewell turned his energies to support of another cause: President Ulysses S. Grant's bid for re-election. He had supported the former Union general in 1868 on the strength of Grant's leniency at Appomattox and his intercession on behalf of General Richard Ewell's release in June 1865 from Fort Warren where he had been imprisoned

since the Confederate surrender. In 1872 Grant's opponent was Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Tribune and a former anti-slavery crusader. Candidate of both the Liberal Republicans and the Democrats, Greeley ran on a platform that promised reform, interment of the "bloody shirt," and an end to military reconstruction.²⁰

In a letter to the editor of the Washington Daily Morning Chronicle Ewell urged the president's re-election on grounds that Grant could reunite the country as no one else could. If there was to be peace in the South, there had to be peace in the Union; only a president acceptable to both houses of Congress and to all factions of the Republican Party could bring this result. Grant fit the bill better than Greeley. Ewell also cited Grant's efforts to "relieve the Southern people to the extent of his ability" and asserted that Virginia would have been "no better off than the worse governed Southern State" had Grant not interceded in 1869 to return control of the state to native Virginians. As to the allegations of corruption in the Grant administration, such cries, Ewell declared, had been worse in the days of Jackson.²¹

Students of the Ewell era at William and Mary have almost unanimously assumed that Ewell's endorsement of Grant was unusual among Virginia leaders and a direct extension of his efforts to obtain relief for the college. Neither seems to have been the case. Many Virginia Republicans and

Conservatives, and a few traditional Democrats--including Henry A. Wise--supported Grant as the lesser of two evils and with hope that he would break with the Radical wing of his party. If Ewell's stand was remarkable, it was only because he so rarely made public his political opinions. As far as aid for the college was concerned, no evidence exists that Ewell expected the president to intercede beyond a rather general letter Grant had written to him expressing support for aid to education in the South. Certainly if Grant's continuance in office was in the best interest of Virginia and the South, William and Mary might benefit, but Ewell's motives were more personal than political. The experience with Congress had deepened his distress over the continued sectional bitterness and bickering which seemed to have increased since the immediate post-war period. Perhaps Grant's oft-repeated wish that the country "have peace" would have some effect.²⁷

Ewell's "Grant" letter was widely reprinted in both the Northern and Southern press. Several friends in the North wrote to congratulate him on his public pronouncement. Some Southern newspapers, especially those favoring Greeley, passed severe judgment. One such paper dismissed Ewell as an "aristocrat by nature and instinct--ergo favoring Grant as a prospective monarch." Another reported that Ewell, in addition to his support for Grant, had suggested Negro students be received at William and Mary. Ewell labeled the

accusation "a malicious falsehood" but refused to denounce the author publicly for fear of alienating supporters of the bill to compensate William and Mary which was still pending in Congress. Whether Ewell's support for Grant had any effect nationally or in Virginia is impossible to determine. In any case, Grant defeated Greeley in Virginia by a narrow popular margin, carrying the state by less than 2,000 votes when Conservatives were unable to deliver the traditional vote for Greeley.²⁶

In late 1873 Ewell, still sustaining a faint hope that William and Mary might yet receive help from the federal government, returned to Washington to set the stage for another try. Virginia's Democratic senator, John Warfield Johnston, advised Ewell to turn the bill over to "some influential northern member & leave it in his hands," but Ewell preferred--characteristically--to trust his own powers of oratory and persuasion. On 1 April 1874 Ewell made his third appearance before the House Committee on Education and Labor. This time he summarized his previous arguments but leaned more heavily on the college's contributions to the Revolution and the founding of the republic than on the facts of its burning by Union troops in 1862. William and Mary, he asserted, had given to the nation "more than two hundred sages and heroes pre-eminently distinguished in public service and place." He reminded the legislators that the

college had never been compensated for use and abuse of its buildings by American troops during the siege at Yorktown, although the federal government had honored similar claims by Rhode Island College and Princeton University. The French government had paid for reconstruction of the President's House after it burned while in use as a hospital for Lafayette's troops. Believing his most effective argument was still the contribution a grant to William and Mary could make to reconciliation between North and South, he concluded:

Grant the prayers of petitions like this, and no more ever will the Union need arms to save the people, or their families, or their schools, or their houses of charity and learning, or their houses of God from the ravages of civil war. This mode of treating the wounds of the past would be a salve indeed, and heal them. . . . And the college. . . . [will] repay any beneficence which Congress may bestow, by giving again back to the Union, what money cannot buy, another host of mighty men to guard constitutions and laws, and the law of the nation.²⁷

Legrand Perce had lost his seat in the House, but George Hoar continued to give Ewell his unqualified support. On 13 April 1874 the committee again submitted a favorable report to the House. Despite this approval and a joint resolution by the Virginia Senate and House of Delegates urging passage of the Bill, opponents blocked consideration on the floor of the House.³⁰

Ewell was discouraged but not defeated. Perhaps the centennial celebration of the nation's independence would encourage support for the college's continued existence. Perhaps a House of Representatives dominated since early 1875

by Democrats would prove more supportive than in the past. Evidence of a growing volume of sympathy in the North for the Southern people and their institutions also offered hope. In late February Ewell presented his case for the fourth time before the House Committee on Education and Labor. Whether the committee was influenced by the centennial spirit or impressed by Ewell's perseverance is impossible to say, but on 3 March 1876, Representative Hoar--on behalf of the committee--made a favorable report to the House. Hoar insisted that after May 1862 federal authorities had not considered the Virginia Peninsula hostile territory; thus "the case should be treated as if it had happened in Washington or Philadelphia." He also stressed the college's status as a national monument and again reminded the House that were the site in question Mount Vernon or Independence Hall "we should hasten to repair the injury." On 7 April 1876 the House passed the measure, but its friends could not persuade the Senate, still dominated by Radical Republicans, to appropriate \$65,000 to compensate a former rebel institution.³¹

The college's last attempt in the 1870s to obtain reparations from the federal government came in the 45th Congress (1877-78). This time Ewell did not go to Washington. Volumes had already been spoken, and he was needed in Williamsburg. Instead he trusted the bill to Virginia congressman John Goode of Norfolk who had recently

been appointed chairman of the Committee on Education and Labor and who also served on the college's Board of Visitors. Again the measure survived the committee and was ably represented on the floor of the House by Goode, John Randolph Tucker of Virginia, and George B. Loring of Massachusetts. George Hoar now held a seat in the Senate. Loring, who held Benjamin Butler's former seat, wondered how Congress could refuse aid to an institution which had trained "in patriotic defiance" so many Virginia statesmen of the Revolutionary era. Tucker labeled the bill "a simple demand of justice" and asserted that government confiscation of private property in loyal territory without due process of law or just compensation constituted a violation of the Fifth Amendment. Such premises were only sustenance for those prone to wave the bloody shirt. William and Mary was "a nest of treason" and, while the school might claim connection with Washington and Jefferson, it had violated their teachings by encouraging secession and rebellion. Representative Martin I. Townsend of New York ridiculed the Massachusetts delegation for its overwhelming support of the bill; Thomas B. Reed of Maine warned that passage would create "a bill of rights for the whole list of southern war claims" and encourage a fierce attack on the treasury. The House voted 127 to 87 to reject the claim. Ewell had expected this result and once again expressed his regret that the bill had been "allowed to become a party measure." Despite his dedication,

perseverance, and eloquence--and the unwavering support of a handful of congressmen--the decade ended with no federal help for the College of William and Mary. That he had at least kept the cause before the public was his only consolation.²²

While Congress repeatedly debated the bill to pay reparations to William and Mary, Ewell maintained publicly his faith in its success. Privately he doubted Congress could ever be convinced to thus compensate a Southern institution. Consequently, he attempted to follow up every promising source of support and encouraged every effort to publicize the college's mission and assure the public of its continued life. In a number of these schemes his most active ally was George Hoar, who did not limit his efforts on behalf of William and Mary to the halls of Congress.

During the early days of his congressional career Hoar had been an avid supporter of Radical Republican principles and a vocal critic of Southern society in general and of its treatment of freedmen in particular. By the early 1870s Hoar had come to believe that a nationally administered system of compulsory education offered the best remedy for the "evils of the South" and would serve best to diminish sectional differences and expand the role of the Negro in the economic and political life of the region. From 1870 to 1874 Hoar tried on at least three occasions to secure enactment of

a national education bill; his advocacy of federal aid to William and Mary seems to have been an extension of this campaign. The college, with its claims of antiquity and Revolutionary connections presented a special appeal to a politician who has been described by his biographer as almost obsessed by the "heritage and ideals of the past." Hoar believed a special bond existed between Virginia and Massachusetts, and between his alma mater, Harvard, and the colonial college at Williamsburg. Just as the experiences of Bunker Hill and Yorktown irrevocably joined Massachusetts and Virginia, the nation's two oldest collegiate institutions shared the distinction of having educated many leading statesmen of the Revolution. Despite its location in the rebellious South, could Massachusetts or Harvard now forget Virginia's oldest college?³³

In 1872 Hoar gathered from the citizens of Massachusetts pledges of aid to William and Mary totalling more than \$100,000. Before the money could be collected, the twin blows of the disastrous Boston fire of November 1872--which devoured sixty-five acres of the business district--and the business panic of 1873 destroyed the financial resources of most of those who had promised to help. Refusing to give up, Hoar suggested in March 1875 that Ewell come to Boston and make a personal appeal for aid. To prepare the way, Hoar published a lengthy article in the Boston Daily Advertiser reminding Bostonians of the

impending centennial of Concord and Lexington and urging them not to forget that it had been the sons of Harvard and William and Mary who had "educated the American people in the principles of civil liberty and of constitutional government." Generous contributions would also demonstrate an end to the bitterness of the war. In a series of public lectures in April 1875 Ewell reminded Bostonians that Virginia had been most generous to Boston in 1775 when that city suffered retaliation for its resistance to English policies. Although he received few offers of help--a result he attributed to the continued financial depression--he professed to have found New Englanders more respectful of the college's "historical record and associations" than were Virginians.³⁴

While Ewell was in Boston, Hoar and his good friend Edward Everett Hale, minister of Boston's South Congregational Church, suggested he extend his appeal by preparing a pamphlet urging alumni of Northern colleges to aid William and Mary. The two Bostonians would see to its publication and distribution. Having secured the endorsement of a number of Harvard officials--including James Russell Lowell, president of the alumni association--Hoar and Everett distributed in the fall of 1875, six hundred copies of An Appeal for William and Mary College. The pamphlet, predictably, recounted the college's Revolutionary experience and stressed the soothing effect on sectional feeling help

might bring. Despite its distinguished sponsors, the Appeal yielded no more results than had Ewell's other campaigns. New Englanders might be more sympathetic than Virginians, but they would not, or could not, be more generous.³⁵

Meanwhile Ewell initiated or encouraged publications he hoped would dispel a commonly held opinion that William and Mary was no longer a viable institution. In 1871, at Ewell's suggestion, the Board of Visitors commissioned Henry A. Wise to write a memoir of his old friend and political colleague, John Tyler. Tyler had served as a college Visitor for more than forty years and in 1859 had become the institution's second chancellor. William and Mary officials hoped Wise's work, entitled Seven Decades of the Union, would increase public awareness of the college's past and its uncertain future. In 1873 Ewell provided his close friend and West Point classmate Francis H. Smith, Superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute, with the historical information necessary for an article on the college Smith planned to publish in the Southern Churchman, organ of the Virginia Episcopal Church. Smith was unwavering in his championship of Virginia's oldest college and on numerous occasions gave Ewell much-needed moral support.³⁶

A year later, with an eye to the approaching centennial of the nation's independence, Ewell published the college's most complete catalog to date. The History of

the College of William and Mary from its Foundation, 1660, to 1824 included--in addition to a description of academic courses--a history of the college, lists of former students and of contributors to the endowment, profiles of its most distinguished graduates, and a defense of Williamsburg's climate. All subsequent accounts of the history of William and Mary have relied heavily for historical fact on this catalog, usually designated the "Randolph and English Catalogue" in reference to its Richmond publishers. Ewell forwarded a copy of the History to Virginia novelist and biographer John Esten Cooke for use in preparing an article about the college. Cooke's elaborately illustrated piece appeared in the November 1875 issue of Scribner's Monthly, a magazine which had consistently supported reconciliation and harmony between North and South.³⁷

A number of the college's graduates also attempted to aid Ewell in his everlasting quest for financial contributions and his desperate attempts to convince the public that William and Mary still lived. In 1875, former Confederate general William Booth Taliaferro of Gloucester County, Virginia, a college visitor and delegate to the General Assembly, called for reorganization of the college's long-defunct alumni society and offered to serve as the organization's president. The society held its first official meeting on 1 July 1875, during college commencement exercises. Its fifty members were reminded of their duty to

"actively press forward . . . [the college's] interests in every way." Other alumni served as agents to solicit funds. The Reverend Robert J. Graves of Pennsylvania, an 1856 graduate, was especially active. On a lecture tour of New York, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Chicago, he pleaded the cause. He also lobbied for the bill before Congress. None of these efforts yielded fruit in the form of dollars. Most alumni were Southerners and few had the resources to help. Graves informed Ewell that most potential donors believed the college closed and would not contribute to "a sinking ship."³⁶

The only substantial support Ewell was able to acquire in these bleak years of the 1870s proved short-lived and provided only a few students and no enhancement of the dwindling endowment. From 1874 to 1876 the Southern Orphans Educational Association and the Southern Association for the Benefit of Widows and Orphans provided funds for the education of approximately eighteen young men whose fathers had died in service to the Confederacy. By late 1877 funds of both organizations, provided principally by lotteries, had dried up.³⁷

Since the early 1870s Ewell's hopes for the financial future of William and Mary had been raised over and over again, only to be thwarted. Neither the public forum nor private sources would provide support for a school many believed to be moribund. "The College," Ewell observed,

"was, is, but always to be endowed."⁴⁰

While Ewell attempted, unsuccessfully, to tap any source which might increase the college's endowment, that fund suffered further damage. He had trusted that income from student fees, public or private contributions, and interest on the endowment would suffice to pay the building debt, meet operating expenses, provide funds for necessary repairs, and increase the school's assets. Above all, the endowment fund should not be compromised. As students and contributions proved elusive and the public and private bonds which made up the endowment yielded little or no interest, Ewell was unable to prevent either erosion of the remaining assets or increased debts. By 1876 the endowment totalled approximately \$67,000, down from \$85,000 in 1870, and debts had increased from \$10,000 to \$20,000. Annual income amounted to only \$4,500 compared to \$5,500 in 1870. Ewell refused to consider suggestions that William and Mary suspend exercises to prevent further compromise of its capital assets. But if the college was to remain open, he had to find a solution to its financial difficulties.⁴¹

Nearly half the college's endowment consisted of fifteen private bonds. These loans were secured by land, which was declining in value, and only five had yielded any income since the war. Some of these debts had accrued interest since 1861. If these unproductive bonds could be

called in, perhaps reinvestment would produce enough income to keep William and Mary alive. From 1865 to 1870 stay laws had prohibited suits against private debtors, but the first legislature under the Underwood Constitution had declared such laws unconstitutional. With the Visitors' approval, Ewell ordered the college bursar to collect the largest of the debts owed the college. It might seem a needless digression in the story of Ewell's struggle to save William and Mary to offer here detailed accounts of the efforts to call in several of these bonds. However, the history of these debts demonstrates, perhaps more pointedly than anything else could, the frustrations and discouragement Ewell felt, emotions shared by debtors and lenders all over the South.⁴²

A case in point was the debt of William Shands of Prince George County, Virginia. Shortly before the war, Shands had borrowed \$2,947 from the college; by 1877, principal and interest totalled nearly \$4800, and Shands had conveyed, as payment to William and Mary, a lien on land he owned in Prince George County. In October 1871 the college received a five-year note for \$912 at 8 percent interest, secured by property in Petersburg, for sale of a portion of the land. Declining land values prevented sale of the remainder of Shands's real estate. In 1872 the college brought suit against one John Wingfield, surety for Shands's bond. The court decided for William and Mary but declared

that Wingfield had "no effects." In 1876 William and Mary obtained a decree for sale of a tract of land Wingfield owned in Sussex County, but the buyer proved insolvent. Five years later, to prevent sale of Shands's property at public auction for non-payment of taxes, the college purchased the 101 acre tract for \$6 an acre. Ewell hoped to hold the property for private sale at a more favorable price. In 1883 college officials declared the debt settled when the land was sold to one William Long for \$2,500, even though the amount outstanding on the original debt totalled nearly \$5,200. Long gave his bonds for deferred payment, and these bonds were signed over to creditors who held college bonds and to professors for arrears of salary. A year later Long defaulted on his debt and the land was resold; the new purchaser also gave notes for deferred payment. The college realized not a penny of liquid capital from the Shands loan and was forced to pay a considerable sum in lawyer's fees for sales and collections.⁴³

The "Mayo debt" presented a somewhat different problem but produced no more income than had the Shands bonds. On 30 March 1876 the college accepted a \$10,000 bond, at 6 percent interest and payable in full by March 1881, from William C. Mayo of Richmond. In exchange the college signed over to Mayo its stock in the Richmond and Danville Railroad and municipal bonds of the cities of Petersburg, Lynchburg, and Norfolk--all of which were unproductive. College bursar

John Sargent Wise agreed to serve as security, and Mayo also secured the debt by a deed of trust conveying his interest in the estate of his father, Edward C. Mayo, deceased. Before William and Mary could collect any of the interest or principal, Edward Mayo's estate, which included Richmond's Mayo Bridge, was tied up in a chancery proceeding. Meanwhile, Wise, in a fit of guilt over his endorsement of what appeared to be a bad investment, applied all of his \$250 a year salary plus his commissions to payment of interest on the debt. To complicate matters further, the college assigned the Mayo bond to Williamsburg merchant W. W. Vest as security for a large debt the college had owed him since 1869.**

When Ewell retired in 1888 the Mayo debt totalled \$13,431 (crediting Wise's contributions), the estate remained unsettled, and many large claims took precedence over the college's debt. Most of the other claimants were represented by counsel, a luxury William and Mary could not afford. In twelve years the college had collected nothing. Like bursar John Wise, Ewell felt personally responsible for the college's losses. Having been given authority by the Visitors to make investments ad libitum, and believing the Mayo transaction a safe one, he had authorized the business without consulting the Visitors. Ewell considered "the Mayo affair" the greatest mistake of his administration, and in his last years often brooded that he had "thus shared

in adding to the financial difficulties of the College."⁴⁹

Perhaps the most interesting and certainly the most long-standing debt owed the college was that of Thomas Jefferson Randolph, grandson of Thomas Jefferson. In 1823 Jefferson had borrowed from William and Mary \$24,705 to cover the principal and interest of a \$20,000 debt he had endorsed for Wilson Cary Nicholas. Nicholas lost most of his assets in the Panic of 1819, and when Nicholas defaulted in May 1819, Jefferson, as first endorser, assumed liability. Upon Jefferson's death in 1826, Jefferson Randolph inherited his grandfather's debt to the college as well as Jefferson's birthplace, Shadwell, an 836 acre estate on the banks of the Rivanna River in Albemarle County, Virginia. Before his death in 1875, Randolph had given William and Mary a deed of trust on Shadwell as security for the remaining debt which, in 1878, totalled \$17,000 and constituted the largest bond held by the college. In 1876 the college assigned the debt to W. W. Vest who held college bonds for approximately \$10,000 of the remaining building debt. When Vest threatened a suit against the college, the faculty began, reluctantly, to press Thomas Jefferson Randolph, Jr. for sale of Shadwell.⁴⁰

On 6 May 1878 Shadwell was offered for sale. When no buyers appeared, the college bought Shadwell for \$15 an acre, a total of \$12,540, hoping resale of Jefferson's birthplace

might bring a sum sufficient to cover all the school's debts. In post-war Virginia sentiment was not money. Several months later William and Mary, unable to secure better terms, sold Shadwell for \$11,500, a loss of more than \$5000 on the Randolph debt. To make matters worse, the college had to pay \$661.76 in back taxes on Shadwell, \$465 in sale expenses, and was forced to accept bonds from several of the purchasers. As in the case of the Mayo debt, Ewell blamed himself for the loss believing he should have insisted that instead of Shadwell, Jefferson Randolph offer Edgehill, the Randolph home near Charlottesville, as security. His only consolation was Randolph's assurance that "the money contributed much to the ease & comfort of Mr. Jefferson in his declining years."⁴⁷

The total of the Shands, Mayo, and Randolph debts made up approximately half of the college's remaining assets. Collection of the Shands debt produced no spendable capital; the Mayo debt was a total loss; and income from the sale of Shadwell was assigned to cover one of the college's largest debts. Some smaller debts to William and Mary were collected, but most of these, too, had already been signed over to college creditors. When public and private sources of monetary support proved unproductive, and further compromise of the endowment seemed the only means of providing for operating expenses, Ewell turned to tactics he hoped would produce more students. With an eye to the

success of the Virginia Military Institute he attempted, unsuccessfully, to establish a military chair, a notion he had vigorously opposed in more prosperous times. With the support of several of the Visitors, he sought a closer connection with the Episcopal Church, believing Virginia Episcopalians might then be encouraged to send their sons to a college established by the Church of England. Opposition of some influential Visitors plus the Church's wish to avoid such "entanglements" defeated this effort. Ewell even attempted to change the college's time-honored opening date from the second Wednesday in October to October first, in the belief that since William and Mary was the last college in the state to begin exercises, it was losing students to other institutions. The college's old nemesis, Williamsburg's unhealthy climate--which the public blamed for a mumps epidemic--defeated this experiment. Finally Ewell resorted to further borrowing to meet expenses and interest payments on the debt.⁴⁰

Ewell's almost frantic clinging to the endowment clearly illustrates that where the college was concerned, he was ruled more by sentiment than reason, more by emotion than figures. He was no more inclined to spend the school's remaining pre-war assets, which had become to him a symbol of its life and continuity, than he was to relinquish its traditional site in Williamsburg or its classical curriculum. Several college officials were critical of Ewell's judgment

in this matter, pointing out that the remaining stock earned at an annual rate of only 6 percent while loans carried much higher rates--some as high as 12 percent. Visitor James Lyons of Richmond observed that "saving the endowment will not save the college--so why not spend it in hope of resuscitation?" Bursar John S. Wise advised Ewell that William and Mary was "no richer by holding the assets and no poorer by paying her debts with them." In the absence of outside support, it is doubtful that, in the long run, paying off the high-interest debts would have made a significant difference in the college's financial health. This course might, however, have slowed depletion of the institution's remaining assets. But Ewell would not hear of it, if it threatened the endowment.⁴⁷

Throughout his desperate search in the 1870s for financial support and stability, Ewell never publicly admitted his frustration and discouragement. Believing a display of confidence and conviction that the college still lived was essential to gaining the aid the college needed, his news releases and other public statements brimmed with optimism. Privately, he doubted William and Mary could recover from the blows dealt it by war, building debts, and a lack of support, and admitted to both discouragement and bitterness. In the summer of 1877, in a report to the Visitors, he conceded that William and Mary had few choices. It could close for a lengthy period and let the endowment

build to an acceptable level; he thought it better to struggle than pursue this course which would surely be a "death blow." The faculty could be reduced to only two professors and "carry into effect the idea of the old Oxford professor who thought his University a very pleasant place so long as there were no undergraduates." The college could continue to spend its remaining assets until all were depleted, a course which meant sure death. He recommended William and Mary adopt a course of "retrenchment" and struggle along as best it could. This pessimistic view of the college's future doubtless was precipitated by the latest refusal of the Virginia General Assembly to provide any relief.^{oo}

In late March 1877 the college's memorial to the General Assembly died in the Committee on Schools and Colleges of the House of Delegates. In the same session the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College at Blacksburg received \$16,250. In the previous session the General Assembly--in an attempt to increase enrollment--had raised the state's annual contribution to the University of Virginia from \$15,000 to \$30,000 and waived tuition for Virginia residents. Ewell was extremely bitter that the University and the new land-grant school, as well as the Hampton Institute for Negroes, should receive support while the state's most venerable college and alma mater to so many distinguished Virginians and present legislators was

subjected to "heartless neglect." Massachusetts, he observed, had shown more interest than had Virginia. The indifference of Virginia's legislature to the college's plight was the combined result of a new generation of leaders, a need for financial stringency, and the political impotence of southeastern Virginia. For Virginia's post-war political leadership, war was a greater reality than the traditions and institutions of ante-bellum Virginia. Efforts to fund Virginia's large pre-war debt, huge deficits in public funds, and public pressure, forced the Conservatives who controlled Virginia's government from 1869 until 1879 to cut spending and hold the line on tax increases. During this same period, Negro suffrage resulted in the heavily black counties of southern and eastern Virginia being represented in Richmond by Republicans. Conservatives generally ignored them; no resident of southeastern Virginia received a nomination for high state office during the Conservative regime. Ewell understood the political realities, but understanding did not alleviate his bitterness. The public, at least, owed Tidewater Virginia's only college and the state's oldest collegiate institution more respect:

This college, the only surviving relic of those days when our state towered in unrivalled supremacy over the Union, is subjected to cruel injury by that omnipotent popular opinion which deems those things only as valuable which are the productions of modern times and recent inventions.

If Virginia did not value the College of William and Mary as a symbol of its past, then the state must be prepared to lose

it.⁰¹

If the college's financial affairs offered Ewell little reason for optimism, neither did life on the usually tranquil campus in Williamsburg. As the endowment and student numbers shrank, problems seemed to multiply. At a time when Ewell was most anxious to reassure the public of the healthfulness of Williamsburg's climate, the death of a student from dysentery and of Professor Frank Preston from pulmonary disease were severe blows. As morale fell, faculty solidarity, usually so predictable, dissolved. Some visitors lost interest in a school that seemed moribund, and it became increasingly difficult to gather a quorum to deal with the college's problems. Even the school's classical curriculum came under attack as schools in the North and West adopted courses of study more responsive to the perceived needs of an industrial society.⁰²

Faculty salaries, which constituted a large part of the college's operating expenses, were the first target in an effort to retrench and save the endowment. Before the war professors had received \$1000 a year; they continued officially to receive this amount--not considered by most to be a living wage in the post-war economy--until 1877 when the Board voted to pay each faculty member \$500 and offer three-year bonds for the remaining \$500. Two years later, professors were guaranteed only \$400 per session. In a

further attempt at economy, the college failed to rehire some instructors; others, who could find better positions, resigned. Those who remained resented their diminished salaries and the increased work-load they had to bear. Under these circumstances, dedication gave way to bitterness. Thomas P. McCandlish, professor of French, brought suit against William and Mary for arrears of salary. Other faculty members officially protested a ruling by a majority of the faculty that all professors must spend at least three hours daily in the lecture room, even if it meant teaching in the preparatory department. Ewell dealt with the dissension as best he could, but resources simply were not available to provide adequate wages and a full faculty.⁵³

Ewell's usually harmonious relations with the college's Visitors were also put to the test in the late 1870s when he appointed Richmond attorney John S. Wise, son of his old friend Henry A. Wise and brother of Professor Richard A. Wise, to the office of bursar. Wise replaced Tazewell Taylor of Norfolk who died in December 1875 after serving as bursar for nearly thirty years. Several Visitors openly opposed Wise's appointment on grounds that his position as a trustee of the Virginia Military Institute prevented his attending the Visitors' meetings. Both boards met at the same time. Their unstated, but more important, objection doubtless had to do with Wise's political activities.⁵⁴

At an August 1877 convention of the Virginia Conservative Party a struggle developed between "Funder" and "Readjuster" factions over disposition of Virginia's large state debt. In 1879 this cleavage would split the party into separate organizations. At the 1877 meeting, the impetuous and aggressive Wise served as floor manager for William H. Mahone, leader of the Readjuster group, in Mahone's attempt to secure the party's nomination for governor. Mahone's principal opposition came from William and Mary Visitor William Booth Taliaferro, and Taliaferro blamed Wise for his failure to be nominated. At this same convention another William and Mary Visitor, William Lamb of Norfolk, gave a very pro-Funder welcoming address. With the notable exception of Richmonder James Lyons, most William and Mary Visitors sympathized with the Funders. As a result, when Wise used the college's state bonds as security for a loan to the college from the Fire & Marine Insurance Company, the Board ordered him to redeem them immediately. They also ordered that in the future any choice of bursar or investment of funds be cleared with the Visitors, thereby--for the first time in the history of the college--removing that authority from the president. Ewell was able to retain John Wise as bursar only because, as a result of his involvement with the Mayo debt, Wise was returning his entire salary to the college.²²

In addition to his other problems, Ewell found it

necessary to defend the classical curriculum William and Mary had always offered and which he believed to be as sacred as the school's location and endowment. The founding of many land-grant colleges and large Midwestern universities in the 1870s marked a transition period in higher education. These schools offered a "practical education," with an emphasis on the sciences that their founders believed to be in tune with an expanding industrial society. With Harvard in the lead, most older Northern colleges balanced offerings in the humanities and science. The opening of Johns Hopkins University in 1876 institutionalized in American education the influence of German scholarship with its stress on research and graduate study. Many Virginians suggested that William and Mary, with its obligatory courses in Latin, Greek, belles lettres, and rhetoric--and its dedication to educating gentlemen in the paths of honor and duty--was an anachronism. The rebuilding of the South required something more practical than Latin and Greek. Ewell argued passionately that "as a rational education [mathematics] is among the most useless" while the classics offered the "sure foundations of a sound education." Few graduates of scientific schools were, he asserted, "capable of discussing in a broad and masterly manner the great questions of state and church."⁶⁶

One is tempted to suggest that Ewell's refusal to consider abandonment of the classical curriculum--one of the

few possible solutions to the college's problems he did not consider--was a major cause of the school's misfortunes in the 1870s. But such was probably not the case. Regardless of his attitude, William and Mary did not have the funds for innovative changes. Furthermore, he would have encountered overwhelming resistance from many Visitors, alumni, and friends of the college. In the discouraging present, things of the past took on an added lustre for many Virginians.²⁷

During these frustrating years, Ewell's one consolation was his continuing success and satisfaction in dealing with the few young men who graced the campus at Williamsburg. The students of the 1870s were apparently a more obstreperous group than those of the pre-war period. Some were Confederate veterans. Drinking and card-playing at the numerous barrooms that lined Duke of Gloucester Street were common. Boyish pranks, standard in all nineteenth century colleges, continued. In dealing with these infractions of college rules, Ewell's abrupt and gruff exterior demeanor hid a compassionate and understanding nature and a fatherly attitude. When students began, consistently, to break into the belfry after midnight to ring the college bell at length, Ewell simply unlocked the door and invited the offenders to ring the bell as often as they liked. It did not ring again except to announce classes. Four students who stole the bell clapper were suspended for

ten days, but Ewell invited them to spend the time at his farm where he arranged a prolonged house party. Students were expected, each Sunday, to attend the church to which their parents belonged, and most attended Bruton Parish Episcopal Church. When a student complained that there was no Presbyterian church--only the foundations of one never completed--Ewell advised him to sit on the foundation until the services at Bruton were over.⁶⁶

Ewell's association with the students was very close. He repeatedly interceded on behalf of errant pupils and opposed severe punishments. Students of the 1870s, like those before them, called him "Old Buck," and, although they were convinced he did not know of it, he cherished the nickname. Even his grandchildren adopted it.

Ewell continued to live on the campus, in the President's House, while his daughter Lizzie and son-in-law Beverley Scott managed his farm. Except for an occasional visitor or a boarding student or professor, his only companion was a teenaged Negro servant, Robert Rush. Lizzy continued to serve as hostess for her father when the occasion demanded.⁶⁷

Ewell's farm was his haven. There among the pigs, cows, chickens, ducks, and his beloved peach and apple orchards, he found respite from the problems on campus. Almost daily he made the four-mile trip from

Williamsburg--stopping along the way to visit with any neighbor who had time to talk--to inspect his property and visit his three grandchildren, Ewell, Ben, and Elizabeth. Although he considered Lizzy and Beverley's children undisciplined and too independent, Benjamin was exceedingly fond of them. He also kept a close eye on Beverley, concerned that he persisted in treating the Negroes he hired as though they were still slaves, causing many to leave his employment. Declining farm prices were problem enough without the addition of labor difficulties.⁶⁰

Lizzy attempted to establish the best relationship she could between her children and their grandmother, Julia, who still lived in York, Pennsylvania. Julia never visited Williamsburg, but Lizzy and the children regularly travelled to York. Lizzy found her mother excitable and irritable, and eventually concluded the visits did more harm than good. Although no record of a divorce exists, Benjamin apparently had had no other contact with his wife since she had left Williamsburg in 1851. No mention of her appears in his correspondence after that date.⁶¹

Lizzy also worried about her father's health. On several occasions during the 1870s Benjamin was seriously ill, and Lizzy was concerned that "his own comforts and necessities are the last thing he thinks of and won't let us do anything for him." Ben was more inclined to worry about his debts than his health. Ewell's debts, and his

contributions to the college during this period, have formed the basis for one of the most enduring college legends, one that emphasises his sacrifices without compensation. In the legend there is some truth and much misinformation. For this reason, Ewell's financial affairs deserve close examination.⁶²

Shortly after Benjamin Ewell's death in 1894, his close friend and colleague Professor Richard A. Wise wrote to Harriet Stoddert Turner, Ewell's cousin and self-appointed family historian, that "[Ewell] spent many thousand of dollars of his own money to maintain the credit of the college. Only a mere pittance of this was ever repaid." When E.J. Harvie, Ewell's close friend and classmate at West Point, wrote Ewell's obituary for the annual gathering of Military Academy graduates in 1895, he copied Wise's phrase verbatim. Because Harvie's is the best short account of Ewell's life and career, students of the Ewell era at William and Mary have relied heavily on it, and all have faithfully repeated the testimony to Ewell's generosity. Thus was born the legend that Ewell had spent a fortune on the college, little, if any, of which was returned, and that he had thereby fallen deeply in debt.⁶³

In the first place, Ewell had no "fortune" to lose. Census enumerators, in August 1870, valued his real estate holdings and personal estate at \$5000 each. In 1872, he

inherited approximately \$5000 from Richard Ewell's estate, part of which he used to meet debts incurred in re-establishing his farm after the war. From time to time during the 1870s lack of liquid capital forced Ewell to borrow from family members to pay the ever-rising taxes and operating expenses on the farm. He even attempted once again--and unsuccessfully--to convince his sister Elizabeth that Stony Lonesome, the family farm in Prince William County, should be sold if anyone would bid at least seven dollars an acre. Ewell's "fortune" was, at best, a livelihood.⁶⁴

That Ewell, during the 1870s and early 1880s, loaned the college a considerable sum is undeniable; that none of it was ever repaid is a fallacy. In 1869 Ewell gave William and Mary \$2000 to aid in its reopening. Fifteen hundred dollars of this debt was cancelled by a debt of that amount Ewell owed the college. He accepted a bond for the remainder. When, in 1872, \$28,000 of the building debt came due, the college could pay only \$23,000. The Visitors would authorize no more borrowing at the current rate of 12 percent, so Ewell paid the \$5,000 difference, spending what remained of his inheritance from Richard Ewell's estate plus \$1,200 borrowed from Robert R. Cole of Williamsburg. In 1876 he borrowed \$1,385 from John H. Lee to meet the Cole debt, plus interest, and assigned an equal amount of what the college owed him, to Lee. Ewell thereby sacrificed a portion of the college's

debt to himself. Taking this complicated transaction into account, by July 1877 the college owed him only \$500; nearly half the repayment, however, had been in the form of private bonds held by the college which were signed over to Ewell. He was forced to reassign most of these bonds to pay his own debts. Whether he was ever able to collect on the bonds he retained is impossible to determine. From time to time during the 1870s, Ewell, like the other professors, was also forced to accept bonds from the college in lieu of salary. Some of these he eventually redeemed. In 1893, a year before his death, Ewell submitted to the Board of Visitors a claim of \$1200 for expenditures and arrears of salary. The Visitors questioned the validity of his claim but approved it "in consideration of his great services, and his loyal devotion."⁶⁶

Undeniably, Ewell was generous to William and Mary in a time of great need, and he sacrificed much on behalf of the institution whose survival had become almost an obsession for him. He neglected his own debts and compromised his personal finances that the college might continue to live. William and Mary, however, did not totally ignore its financial obligation to him, as has so commonly been assumed. Clearly, many expenditures went unrecorded, but the college repaid most of the debts of record. Nor were Ewell's financial problems solely a result of his contributions to the college. Depressed economic conditions, especially in Tidewater

Virginia, also played a role, as did Ewell's lack of expertise in financial matters. Harriet Turner was in agreement with other members of the family when she observed that "[Benjamin] was not shrewd in money matters."^{ee}

As the decade ended and the college's financial situation worsened, it seemed certain William and Mary would be unable to remain open. Despite Ewell's pleas, most of the Visitors suggested that closing was the only way to preserve what remained of the school's capital assets. Ironically, a reprieve came as a result of the most serious proposal to date that William and Mary be removed from Williamsburg.

On 11 March 1879, the Visitors held a special meeting at Richmond to consider a proposal by the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee, that William and Mary be removed to Sewanee to become "The College of William and Mary of Virginia at the University of the South." Presenting the proposal was Professor George Thornton Wilmer, formerly a member of the faculty at William and Mary and currently professor of systematic theology at Sewanee. Wilmer explained that the University of the South, founded in 1857 as a joint venture of the Episcopal dioceses of what were to be Confederate states, except Virginia, could offer to the ancient college in Williamsburg not only salvation but a resumption of its Episcopal ties as Virginia's representative in the "confederation." Lacking a quorum, the Visitors

promised to reconvene in April to consider the matter.⁴⁷

Meanwhile Ewell prepared to defend the college from this latest threat. When the Visitors met again in mid-April--still lacking a quorum--he seized the opportunity to make the most impassioned argument of his career for the college's continued existence in Williamsburg. On this occasion his plea seemed to be as much on his own behalf as that of the college. The agony of a man facing bankruptcy, his reputation ruined, is clearly evident. His own existence and that of the college had almost become one. Once again he repeated the history of the college and asserted his faith in the rejuvenation of Tidewater Virginia--especially after the extension of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad from Richmond to the Lower Peninsula, scheduled for completion within five years. The Visitors were reminded that the college's condition had been worse in the past, notably when the Revolution had claimed its entire endowment and in 1848 when internal dissension had forced its closing. On neither of these occasions had removal proved necessary to its recovery. In any case, removal would invalidate the charter. If William and Mary were to die, it should end its existence where it began.⁴⁸

The faculty ordered 300 copies of Ewell's address for public distribution. Meanwhile authorities at the University of the South, refusing to surrender, published a pamphlet

arguing their case, censuring Virginians for their neglect of William and Mary, and asking why a "virtually defunct" institution should continue to "humble herself before the United States Congress, Massachusetts, and the Puritans." In answer to suggestions that William and Mary should be united instead with the University of Virginia, authors of the tract labelled the University "Jefferson's infidel institution" and accused it of being unworthy of a college founded by the Church of England. The publication was widely distributed in Virginia and received considerable attention in the press--perhaps because of its lack of moderation.⁶⁷

Finally, on 1 July 1879, the Visitors voted unanimously to reject the proposal offered by the University of the South. The pamphlet, which seemed to many Virginians to question the honor of the state and its educational institutions, encouraged support for William and Mary from many who would not otherwise have cared. Recognition that Virginia might lose its oldest college focused attention on the college's problems and brought allies to its preservation. At the very least, as one supporter put it, the college should "be allowed to rest in peace . . . on the battleground where she has fought so long." The University of the South defeated its own cause and inadvertently granted Ewell the reprieve from closing or removal he so desperately desired.⁷⁰

Having once again averted a threat to the college's existence, Ewell turned his attention to the centennial celebration of the American victory over British troops at Yorktown on 19 October 1781. He hoped that William and Mary, with its proximity to Yorktown and its location in Virginia's colonial capital, might capitalize on the national observance. In 1879, at a state-sponsored commemoration at Yorktown, the college had laid the foundations of an appeal for aid. On that occasion former Confederate general William Booth Taliaferro, a Visitor of the college, dedicated a lengthy address to description of the college's misfortunes and suggested that on 19 October 1881 "the American people make a centennial gift to restore the ancient college and in commemoration of the great event we [will] celebrate." Virginia congressman James Goode supported Taliaferro's appeal and reminded the American public that because of its contributions to independence, William and Mary should stand as a "perpetual monument of the glorious past of our country." For two years a committee of college officials, including Ewell, and also including Robert C. Winthrop, president of the Massachusetts Historical Society, worked to secure a centennial gift to William and Mary at the 1881 observance.⁷¹

On 18 October 1881 a large crowd, including President Chester A. Arthur, his cabinet, representatives from the thirteen original colonies, and from England, France, and

Germany, gathered at Yorktown to lay the cornerstone of a monument to the American victory a hundred years earlier. Many visitors travelled to Yorktown for the four-day celebration on the inaugural run of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad from Richmond to the Peninsula. In unseasonably hot and dry weather the participants watched military parades and a naval review; they listened to President Arthur's keynote address and an epic poem written especially for the occasion by Virginia poet and William and Mary graduate, James Barron Hope. But the centennial gift to William and Mary was denied.⁷²

Ewell had only one more card to play. As rumors concerning the closing of the college threatened to become fact, he proposed that William and Mary be made a state normal school for instruction of white male and female teachers--a solution he would under any other circumstances have abhorred. At a meeting with the Visitors in March 1882, Ewell admitted that attempts to restore William and Mary had seemed only to increase its difficulties; state control offered the only means of salvation. He requested that the Board petition the legislature to accept the college's property and endowment in return for state appropriations and the school's service to the state as a normal school. To assure retention of the charter, "the only charter given by the English crown to an American institution of learning,"

William and Mary should be governed by a combination board composed of its present members plus appointees of the governor. In conclusion Ewell made the most personal statement of his relationship to the college he would ever make:

Since 1865 the restoration of the College has been the object of my thoughts by day and of my dreams by night. I have made sacrifices and sustained losses. . . . I do not mention this to boast of it, or to claim any credit for it, save of an honest endeavor to do my duty. At various times since 1865 the college has, seemingly, been on the eve of receiving the aid it so much needs. But in each case some obstacle would appear against which the cup filled with pleasing hopes . . . would be dashed to pieces, bringing to my mind the well-known line: "Man never is, but always to be, blest." It is my earnest conviction that there is at this time a golden opportunity to doing what you have at heart as much as I have in mine.⁷³

In addition to his dedication to the continued life of the old college, Ewell's decision to ask for a measure of state control was influenced by three factors: a change in policy by the Peabody trustees; political changes in Virginia; and a need for training of white teachers. In 1881 trustees of the Peabody Fund determined to divert the bulk of the income from direct support of public schools in the South to the training of teachers in public-supported colleges and universities. Dr. J. L. M. Curry, general agent of the Peabody Fund, promised Ewell \$8,000 should William and Mary become state-affiliated.⁷⁴

Virginia's governmental establishment had also undergone considerable change since 1879. During the decade following Virginia's readmission to the Union in 1869, the

Conservative Party had dominated Virginia politics and their policies had generally supported payment of the state debt and the expenses of government to the detriment of the new public school system. By 1879 the debt issue had become sufficiently volatile to split the party into "Funder" and "Readjuster" factions. The former group continued to support full funding of the debt while the latter insisted, among other things, that the debt be scaled down to allow greater expenditures for education. In 1879, Readjusters gained control of the state legislature, and two years later Virginia voters elected a Readjuster governor. With the state political machinery firmly in the hands of officials inclined to be generous with funds for education, Ewell thought he saw an opportunity to rescue the college from its financial woes.⁷⁰

Renewed dedication to public education also focused attention on Virginia's lack of a normal school for white teachers. Hampton Institute had been training Negro teachers since 1868, and in February 1882 the Readjuster legislature established the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute for Colored Persons (Virginia State University) at Petersburg with annual funding of \$20,000. Many persons, including the Readjuster Superintendent of Public Instruction, Richard Ratcliffe Farr, believed colleges dedicated solely to training teachers were much to be preferred to normal departments in the state's traditional institutions.

Perhaps, Ewell suggested, William and Mary could be transformed into a normal school for white teachers.⁷⁶

The Readjuster-controlled legislature and Governor William Cameron proved sympathetic to Ewell's plan and Cameron even assured Ewell the legislature would appropriate \$12,000 annually. The Visitors, however, refused to support such a move. A majority of the Visitors belonged to the Funder faction and harbored deep suspicions of the Readjusters whom they considered irresponsible. Others, no doubt, objected to Ewell's plan for co-education at a time when only Virginia's Negro colleges educated both male and female students. Some opposed the entire public school system. It was a Northern invention forced upon Virginia by Northern politicians; it was aimed at the levelling of social ranks and might lead to unrest; it was too costly. Some Visitors were unwilling to compromise the college's traditional mission to educate gentlemen in the classical studies. Everything considered, the Visitors thought it better that one of the few remaining symbols of old Virginia die than become a normal school.⁷⁷

By June 1882, Ewell was forced to admit defeat. He had explored all likely sources of aid; all had proved empty. William and Mary could claim only three collegiate students and two faculty members, including himself. The endowment of \$33,000 was compromised by \$30,000 in debts, and the building

required extensive repairs. Ewell reported peeling paint, numerous broken windows, and serious problems with the ever-troublesome slate on the roof which blew off in heavy winds, making it dangerous to walk in the college yard. Even the long-awaited Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad proved a disappointment. Ewell had hoped the college might sell the preparatory school building on Palace Green to the railroad for use as a depot, but the tracks by-passed the property. Three months after rejecting Ewell's proposal that the college become a normal school, the Visitors decided that exercises should be suspended so that the remaining assets might be saved for resumption at a more favorable time. No official vote to close William and Mary was ever taken--to have done so would have invalidated the charter. The institution simply went into hibernation.⁷⁰

Ewell's disappointment was keen. That so few details of his personal life in the 1870s survive is testimony to the extent to which his life merged with that of the college. Nevertheless, he accepted without question the Visitor's action as the only reasonable course. As the enrollment dwindled and aid failed to come, as students and faculty drifted away, a lethargy seemed to settle over the institution he had defended so long. He would never acquiesce in the death of its spirit, but the body could no longer survive. There was one consolation--a significant one. Since 1865 Ewell had struggled with three major

problems: financial distress; recurring suggestions that William and Mary be closed; and an almost constant clamor for the college's removal to a more favorable site. On the first two counts he had met defeat, but at least Virginia's colonial college remained in the state's colonial capital--the only place he had ever believed it could legitimately exist."

The financial problems of the 1870s and early 1880s, and Ewell's search for a solution, need to be placed in perspective. These difficulties were not unique to William and Mary, although they were certainly of a greater magnitude than elsewhere. As educators in other sections of the nation debated at length about admissions standards, curriculum, and expansion, most Southern colleges and universities struggled simply to survive. All suffered to some degree from the economic distress and social dislocations of the post-war era. Few students from other areas chose Southern colleges; Southern students were inclined to remain in the South, but few could afford a college education. In Virginia, Washington and Lee, the Virginia Military Institute, the University, and other institutions faced a lack of funds and students. That these schools remained open while William and Mary was forced to "close" was a function of the extent of physical damage the college had suffered during the war and its location in the economically-depressed and relatively inaccessible Tidewater region. However, to admit that

Ewell's situation was not unique does not diminish the contributions his tenacity and devotion made to the institution that had become his life. If devotion could have saved it, William and Mary, too, would have survived the effects of the war.⁹⁹

NOTES FOR CHAPTER VII

¹BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 3 July 1869, Faculty Minutes, CWM.

²BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 28 June 1869, 4 July 1870, 3 July 1871, 10 Sept. 1872, 1 July 1873, 1 July 1874, WM College Papers; Board of Visitors Minutes, 4 July 1871, CWM.

³History of William and Mary (Randolph & English), p. 172; Charles F. Thwing, American Colleges: Their Students and Work (New York: G. P. Putnam Sons, 1879), p. 36; BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 3 July 1871, 17 June 1872, 12 June 1878, WM College Papers.

⁴Robert M. Hughes, "Baccalaureate Address of the College of William and Mary, June 12, 1933," typescript in Hughes Alumni File, CWM; Richmond News Leader, 11 May 1936; Richmond State, 15 Feb. 1883; James Lyons to the Board of Visitors, 28 June 1875, WM College Papers (quotation).

⁵Enrollment figures compiled by the author. The number of matriculates from each county for the 1825-1861 period is recorded in "Historic Elements in Virginia Education," a paper read before the Virginia Historical Society, 21 Dec. 1891, by Professor John Bell Henneman and printed in Virginia Historical Society Collections, XI, 1892, pp. 17-19. Totals for 1825-61 are as follows: Virginia residents-1154; Out-of-state-169; Present state of West Virginia-10; Residence unknown-23; Total-1356. Pearson, Readjuster Movement, discusses the decrease in assessed realty values for Virginia counties, 1860-1875; see especially map opposite p. 66. Statistics for 1865-1881 were compiled from the "Catalogue of the Alumni and Alumnae for the Years 1865-1923," Bulletin of the College of William and Mary in Virginia, XVIII, 1923. Thwing, American Colleges gives total enrollment for most colleges in 1876-77. Enrollment for William and Mary is recorded in Board of Visitors Minutes, 12 Jan. 1877. In the 1870s all Virginia colleges had enrollment problems. Washington College flourished under the leadership of Robert E. Lee, but with his death, the school lost its major claim to the interest of the Southern states. From 411 students in

1867-68, enrollment fell to 134 in 1876-77. Pusey, Interrupted Dream, pp. 8, 31.

⁶Board of Visitors Minutes, Report of the President and Faculty, 1 July 1873, CWM; Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

⁷Earle D. Ross, Democracy's College: The Land Grant Movement in the Formative Stage (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State College Press, 1942), pp. 46-47; Heatwole, Education in Virginia, p. 204, n.1; Richmond Enquirer, 16 Apr. 1870; Crenshaw, General Lee's College, p. 163.

⁸A Memorial of the College of William and Mary to the Legislature of Virginia for an Equitable Portion of the Land Scrip Funds (Richmond: Enquirer Steam Presses, 1870), passim.

⁹Unidentified newspaper clipping, [Dec. 1870], WM College Papers.

¹⁰Virginia General Assembly, Senate Journal for session beginning 5 Oct. 1869; Heatwole, Education in Virginia, p. 204; Ross, Democracy's College, p. 75.

¹¹John W. Johnston (Senator from Virginia) to BSE, 25 Feb. 1870, Ewell Papers, CWM; Faculty Minutes, 7 Mar. 1870, CWM; BSE to Elizabeth Ewell (sister), 22 Jan. 1870, Ewell Papers, CWM; Eckenrode, Reconstruction, p. 126. Beginning in 1865 Washington College and the Virginia Military Institute sought reparations from Congress for property destroyed during General David Hunter's raid of June 1864. Crenshaw, General Lee's College, p. 138.

¹²Henry A. Wise to Benjamin F. Butler, 9 July 1870, WM College Papers; Board of Visitors Minutes, 22 July 1870, CWM; DAB, s.v. "Butler, Benjamin Franklin"; Butler to Wise, 10 July 1870, WM College Papers (quotation). Benjamin Franklin Butler (1818-1893) was an ambitious, controversial, and unpredictable politician. In 1860 he had originally supported Jefferson Davis for president. Elected to Congress in 1866 as a Republican, he remained in the House of Representatives--except for one term--until 1879. As a Radical he insisted Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis be executed and urged that Lincoln show no leniency in dealing with the South. Butler was perhaps Andrew Johnson's severest critic and one of the first to suggest his impeachment. His talent for turbulence made him unpopular in Congress, especially with Republican reformers. I am grateful to Professor Michael Les Benedict of Ohio State University for

allowing me to read portions of the manuscript of his forthcoming study of the Grant administration, Let Us Have Peace: Republicans and Reconstruction, 1869-1880, and for his suggestions concerning the reasons college officials might have chosen Butler as patron of their bill. On Butler see also Robert S. Holzman, Stormy Ben Butler (New York: MacMillan Co., 1954).

¹³Manuscript copy of a memorial referred to the Committee on Education of the House of Representatives, 12 Dec. 1870 (1st and 2d quotations), WM College Paper; Robert W. Hughes to Charles H. Porter, 16 Jan. 1871 (3rd quotation), WM College Papers. Robert W. Hughes, former editor of Virginia's leading Republican newspaper, the Richmond State Journal, and U.S. District Attorney, was the Republican candidate for governor in 1873. He was defeated by Conservative James Kemper. Dabney, New Dominion, p. 378. For a concise and accurate account of the college's appeals to Congress see Helen Cam Walker, "The Great Development Campaign of 1870-93," William and Mary Alumni Gazette, 43: 8-9.

¹⁴Benjamin F. Butler to Henry A. Wise, 18 Dec. 1870, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Faculty Minutes, 7 Mar. 1870, CWM; "Remarks of Professor Benjamin S. Ewell before the Committee of Education and Labor of the House of Representatives," 3 Mar. 1871, Archives, CWM (all quotations).

¹⁵Ewell to Committee on Education and Labor, 3 Mar. 1871, Archives, CWM (quotation); BSE to William Booth Taliaferro, 19 Feb. 1879, William Booth Taliaferro Papers, CWM; Special Report of the President to the Visitors, 3 July 1871, WM College Papers; U.S. Congress, House, Report No. 65, 41st Congress, 3d sess., 3 Mar. 1871.

¹⁶Deposition of Mary T. Southall and Maria T. Peyton in History of William and Mary (Randolph & English), pp. 52-53; Charles W. Butts to Legrand W. Perce, 6 Feb. 1872, and Samuel Chapman Armstrong to H. L. Dawes, 6 Feb. 1872, Ewell Faculty File, CWM (quotation). Henry Lawson Dawes was a congressman from Massachusetts, 1857-1875, and a U.S. senator 1875-1893. Biographical Directory of the American Congress, s.v. "Dawes, Henry Laurens."

¹⁷"Remarks of Professor Benjamin S. Ewell before the Committee of Education and Labor of the House of Representatives," 24 Jan. 1872, Archives, CWM; U.S. Congress, House, Report No. 9, 42d Cong., 2d sess., 29 Jan. 1872.

¹⁸Beginning in 1865, Hoar also strongly supported claims by Washington College for reparations from

Congress for losses incurred during General David Hunter's raid in 1864. In 1895 Washington and Lee University (formerly Washington College) received \$17,484 from a Democratic Congress. Crenshaw, General Lee's College, p. 138. On Hoar and Butler see Benedict, Let Us Have Peace (forthcoming), Chap. 2, MS page 8; Holzman, Butler, p. 221; George F. Hoar, Autobiography of Seventy Years, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 1: 265-266, 355.

¹⁷U.S. Congress, House, 42d Cong., 2d sess., 9 Feb. 1872, Congressional Globe 172: 941-943; *Ibid.*, 23 Feb. 1872, 172: 1192; *Ibid.*, 2 Mar. 1872, 172: 1373-1383; Unidentified newspaper clipping, Ewell Papers, CWM (quotation).

²⁰BSE to Legrand W. Perce, 12 Feb. 1872; BSE to editor of Washington Chronicle, 23 Feb. 1872; BSE to Charles Howell Porter, 16 Feb. 1872 and Richard A. Wise to BSE, 19 Feb. 1872, all in Ewell Faculty File, CWM. Charles H. Porter (1833-1897), a native of New York State and Union war veteran, had moved to Norfolk, Virginia, after the war where he served a year as City Attorney. In 1867 he moved to Richmond where he served as a member of Virginia's 1867-68 Constitutional Convention and was elected as a Republican to the 41st and 42d Congresses. Sometime during the 1880s he returned to New York. Biographical Directory of the American Congress, s.v. "Porter, Charles Howell."

²¹U.S., Congress, House, Speech of the Hon. John B. Hawley, 42d Cong., 2d sess., 24 Feb. 1872, Congressional Globe, copy in Archives, CWM (1st and 2d quotations); Boston Daily Advertiser, 15 Mar. 1875 (3rd quotation); Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

²²BSE to Legrand W. Perce, 12 Feb. 1872 (1st quotation), and BSE to the editor, Washington Chronicle, 23 Feb. 1872, both in Ewell Faculty File, CWM; BSE to Legrand W. Perce, 27 Feb. 1872, Archives, CWM; Robert W. Hughes to Ebenezer Rockwell Hoar, 13 Apr. 1872, typescript from Washington Chronicle in WM College Papers (2d and 3rd quotations). In 1867 at least three Southern legislatures and a number of Southern educators endorsed the publication by Richardson & Company of a collection of textbooks called the "Southern University Series of School and College Textbooks." While sympathetic to the work of Southern writers, Ewell publicly condemned the series as an effort to "shut out from Southern schools unobjectable books published elsewhere." The ultimate effect of such action, he believed, would be "to dwarf Southern intelligence and Southern education." The series, he pointed out, would be printed on Northern paper by Northern machines, bound and

published in the North, anyway. (Richmond Whig, 11 Sept. 1867). The New York Tribune, 15 Oct. 1867, labelled his article "a timely rebuke of a mischievous sectional job."

²³BSE, Special Report to the Board of Visitors, 17 June 1872, WM College Papers; William Stoddert to BSE, 25 Jan. 1872, and Harriet Stoddert Turner to Lizzy Ewell, 26 Jan. 1872, both in Ewell Papers, CWM.

²⁴U.S., Congress, House, 42d Cong., 2d sess., 13 Dec. 1872, Congressional Globe 177: 186-187; *Ibid.*, 17 Feb. 1873, 178: 1443-1444; "Speech of George B. Loring in the House of Representatives," 10 Jan. 1879, WM College Papers. On this occasion Loring recounted the history of the bill to indemnify William and Mary.

²⁵Hamlin, Old Bald Head, pp. 194-196; Turner, "Ewells of Virginia," p. 52; BSE, "The South and Grant," Washington Daily Chronicle, 20 May 1872 [reprint in Ewell Papers, CWM].

²⁶Washington Daily Chronicle, 20 May 1872 (quotations).

²⁷Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 134-136. In 1872 the state Conservative Convention endorsed Greeley, but without enthusiasm. Ulysses S. Grant to BSE, 22 Dec. 1868, WM College Papers.

²⁸Thomas J. Cram to BSE, 30 May 1872, and General John Barnard to BSE, 1 June 1872, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Campbell Brown to BSE, 12 July 1872, Ewell Papers, CWM (1st quotation); BSE to James Lyons, 25 Nov. 1872, Brock Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif. (2d quotation); Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 109, 134.

²⁹John W. Johnston to BSE, 9 June 1873, Ewell Faculty File, CWM (1st quotation). John Warfield Johnston, nephew of Joseph E. Johnston and U.S. Senator from Virginia, 1870-71, 1871-1877, and 1877-1883, had been elected in October 1869 by Virginia's first legislature under the Underwood Constitution. His colleague in the Senate, John F. Lewis of Rockingham County, Virginia, was a Republican and the only member of the secession convention of 1861 from Virginia's post-war area to refuse to sign the Ordinance of Secession. Lewis apparently gave no active support to the college's petition. Biographical Directory of the American Congress, s.v. "Johnston, John Warfield," and "Lewis, John F." Remarks of Benjamin S. Ewell . . . before the Committee of Education and Labor, House of

Representatives, April 1, 1874, Archives, CWM (2d quotation, p. 7; 3rd quotation, pp. 15-16).

³⁰Walker, "Development Campaign," p. 9; U.S., Congress, House, Miscellaneous Document No. 247, 43rd Congress., 1st sess., 13 Apr. 1874; Virginia General Assembly, Senate Journal (1874), pp. 350-351.

³¹Walker, "Development Campaign," p. 9; U. S., Congress, House, Report No. 203, 44th Cong., 1st sess., 3 March 1871 (quotations, pp. 2, 3); Ibid., 7 April 1876, Congressional Record 195: 2306.

³²John Goode, Recollections of a Lifetime by John Goode of Virginia (New York and Washington: Neale Publishing Co., 1906); U.S. Congress, House, Report No. 12, 45th Cong., 2d sess., 5 Dec. 1877; Speech of Hon. George B. Loring of Massachusetts in the House of Representatives, April 21, 1878, Archives, CWM (1st quotation); Speeches of Hon. George B. Loring of Massachusetts, Hon. John Goode of Virginia, and Hon. J. Randolph Tucker of Virginia on the Bill to Pay to the College of William and Mary . . . the sum of \$65,000 . . . delivered in the House of Representatives, January 10, 1879, WM College Papers (2d and 3rd quotations); Speeches of Hon. Thomas B. Reed of Maine and Hon. Martin I. Townsend of New York on a Bill to pay William and Mary College of Virginia the sum of \$65,000 for Injuries Received during the Rebellion, 12 April 1878, Archives, CWM (4th quotation); Walker, "Development Campaign," p. 9; BSE to William Booth Taliaferro, 19 Feb. 1879, Taliaferro Papers, CWM.

³³Richard W. Welch, Jr., George Frisbee Hoar and the Half-Breed Republicans (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 1, 20-25, passim. (quotation, p. 1); Unidentified newspaper clipping of excerpt from Hoar's speech to the House of Representatives, ? Feb. 1872, Ewell Papers, CWM; Boston Daily Advertiser, 15 Mar. 1875.

³⁴Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Encyclopedia Americana, s.v. "Boston"; George F. Hoar to BSE, 3, 18 Mar., 10 Apr. 1875, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Boston Daily Advertiser, 15 Mar. 1875 (1st quotation); BSE to Hugh Blair Grigsby, 30 Mar., 5 Aug. 1875, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 17 May 1875, WM College Papers (2d quotation).

³⁵BSE to Hugh Blair Grigsby, 2 June 1875; Edward Everett Hale to BSE, 25 June 1875; George F. Hoar to BSE, 4, 18 July, 7 Sept., 13 Dec. 1875, all in Ewell Faculty File, CWM; An Appeal for William and Mary, Chronology

File, Archives, CWM.

³⁶Board of Visitors Minutes, 17 June 1872, CWM. Although Wise completed his memoir of Tyler in 1872, it was not published until 1881. Wise emphasized the college's continued dedication to the humanities in a materialistic age and warned that if the life of the constitutional republic were to be restored, educational institutions "must return as quickly as possible to the Humanities." Wise, Seven Decades of the Union (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1881), pp. 318-320 (quotation, p. 320); Francis H. Smith to BSE, 30 Sept., 15 Nov. 1873, Smith Papers, VMI.

³⁷Faculty Minutes, 10 Oct. 1874, 28 June 1875, CWM. The "Randolph and English" catalog served as the basis for an entry on the college in The College Book by Charles F. Richardson and Henry A. Clark in 1878 (Boston: Houghton, Osgood & Co.) and for an article by Richardson in the November 1884 issue of the Magazine of American History. Several years later, Lyon Tyler, Ewell's successor as president of William and Mary, depended heavily on the 1874 catalogue for his The College of William and Mary in Virginia: 1693-1907 (1907) and Williamsburg: The Old Colonial Capital (1907). Although Ewell was pleased with the college's inclusion in The College Book of 1878, he was, no doubt, distressed at Richardson's observation that "[William and Mary] would seem to have a better mission than to maunder over its past, however interesting or creditable."

³⁸Taliaferro Alumni File and Taliaferro Papers, CWM; Photographs of newspaper clippings [1875] from Robert M. Hughes's Scrapbook, WM College Papers; Richmond Dispatch, 5 July 1875 (1st quotation); Robert J. Graves to BSE, 20 Nov. 1877, 4 Feb. 1878 (2d quotation). Graves, pastor of a Presbyterian church in Sharon, Pennsylvania, also established a scholarship at William and Mary. Faculty Minutes, ? Aug. 1872, CWM.

³⁹Richard A. Wise to William Booth Taliaferro, 24 Aug. 1874, Taliaferro Papers, CWM; BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 17 May 1875, WM College Papers; Faculty Minutes, 4 July 1876, CWM; William Glover Stanard, "Reminiscences of William and Mary," Stanard Alumni File, CWM; BSE, Report to the Visitors of 12 Jan. 1877 in Board of Visitors Minutes, 4 July 1877, CWM.

⁴⁰Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

⁴¹The most accurate and complete account of the financial status of William and Maray in the 1870s may be

found in a report of the Finance Committee of the Board of Visitors, 1 July 1883, WM College Papers. This forty-six page typescript incorporates the bursar's reports and other financial records for the 16 June 1876-1 July 1883 period. For additional information and earlier records see Ewell's reports to the Visitors, 4 July 1870, 3 July 1871, 17 June 1872, 17 May 1875, 2 July 1878, WM College Papers; Bursar's Accounts, 1870-1888, WM College Papers; Board of Visitors Minutes, 1870-1882, and Faculty Minutes, 1870-1882, CWM. Unless otherwise noted, all information on college finances is taken from the Finance Committee Report of 1883. Figures for 1870 and 1876 are from BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 4 July 1870 and the Report of the Bursar, 6 June 1876, WM College Papers.

⁴²Bursar's Accounts, 1870, WM College Papers; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 167; Board of Visitors Minutes, 4 July 1871, 18 June 1872, CWM; BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 17 June 1872.

⁴³BSE, Abstract of the Financial Condition of William and Mary College, 1 July 1877, WM College Papers; Faculty Minutes, 27 Mar., 15 Oct. 1871, CWM; Mann and Stringfellow, Attorneys at Law, to John S. Wise, Bursar, 29 Jan. 1879, WM College Papers (quotation); Charles Stringfellow to BSE, 19 July 1880, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Board of Visitors Minutes, 26-27 Aug. 1880, CWM; BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 1 July 1881, WM College Papers; Finance Committee Report, 1883, WM College Papers.

⁴⁴Report of the Finance Committee, 1883; Warner T. Jones, Report of the Finance Committee of the Board of Visitors, July 1888, WM College Papers; Board of Visitors Minutes, 4-5 July 1878, CWM.

⁴⁵BSE to Judge W. W. Crump, 27 Aug. 1890. Ewell Faculty File, CWM (quotation); Finance Committee Report, 1883, WM College Papers. The Mayo debt was never paid.

⁴⁶Contract of Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson Randolph, and Samuel Carr with the Presidents and Masters of the College of William and Mary, 22 Jun. 1823, and Thomas Jefferson's Account Book, 22 Jan. 1823, Jefferson Papers, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.; Board of Visitors Minutes, 15 June 1878, CWM; BSE, Abstract of the Financial Condition of William and Mary College, 1 July 1877, WM College Papers; Faculty Minutes, 3, 26 June 1876, 25 May 1877, CWM. Wilson Cary Nicholas (1761-1820), governor of Virginia, 1814-1816, and thereafter president of the Richmond branch of the Bank of the United States, was Jefferson's close friend and political associate. Thomas Jefferson

Randolph married Nicholas' daughter, Jane, in 1815. Nicholas lost much of his fortune through overspeculation in western lands and other unsuccessful business ventures. William and Mary financed the loan to Jefferson in 1823 with monies received from a suit against Nicholas' estate for a large debt Nicholas had owed the college. Jefferson called his endorsement of Nicholas' loan from the BUS the coup de grace to his own fortunes.

Jefferson was born at Shadwell, 13 April 1743, and lived there until age two or three. The family returned there when he was nine and Jefferson called it home until he moved to Monticello at age twenty-seven. The frame dwelling in which he was born burned 1 Feb. 1770. Jefferson inherited Shadwell from his mother at her death in 1776. DAB, s.v. "Randolph, Thomas Jefferson" and "Nicholas, Wilson Cary"; Merrill D. Peterson, Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation: A Biography (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 991-992; Dumas Malone, Jefferson the Virginian (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1948), pp. 27, 125-126, 17.

⁴⁷BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 12 June, 2 July 1878 and Finance Committee Report, 1883, WM College Papers; Board of Visitors Minutes, 15 June 1878, CWM; BSE to Judge W. W. Crump, 27 Aug. 1890, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

⁴⁸Finance Committee Report, 1883, WM College Papers; Board of Visitors Minutes 17 Jan. 1877, 4 July 1873, 1 July 1874, 2 July 1879, CWM; BSE to Rev. William Brown, 12 Sept. 1873, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Report of the Committee of the Board of Visitors Appointed to Consider the Expediency of a More Intimate Connection with the Episcopal Church, 15 July 1874, WM Papers; BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 3 July 1871, 17 June 1872, WM College Papers; Board of Visitors Minutes, 4 July 1871, 20 May 1875, and Faculty Minutes, 24 Dec. 1873, CWM.

⁴⁹BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 3 July 1871, James Lyons to the Board of Visitors, 28 June 1875 (1st quotation), and John S. Wise, Bursar's Report, 1876 (2d quotation), WM College Papers. From 1865-1869 a 6 percent maximum was set on interest rates. In 1869 this limit was raised to 12 percent. Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 169.

⁵⁰Board of Visitors Minutes, 3 July 1877, CWM (all quotations).

⁵¹Petition to the General Assembly of Virginia from a Committee of Visitors, William and Mary College, [1877], WM College Papers; Virginia General Assembly,

House Journal, 1876-77, pp. 442, 458; Crenshaw, General Lee's College, p. 195; C. H. Ryland [President of Richmond College] to BSE, 13 June 1876, Tyler Papers, CWM; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 200, 218-220; BSE, Address to the Students of the College of William and Mary at Commencement, July 4, 1873 (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1873), copy in Ewell Faculty File, CWM (all quotations). The issue of whether Virginia's pre-war debt--which by 1870 totalled nearly \$45,000,000--should be fully funded or readjusted dominated Virginia politics from Reconstruction to the 1890s. The best treatments of this issue are Maddex, Virginia Conservatives; Moger, Bourbonism to Byrd; Pearson, Readjuster Movement; and Raymond H. Pulley, Old Virginia Restored: An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930 (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1968). In 1878 William and Mary made another unsuccessful attempt to receive state funds. See Petition to the General Assembly of Virginia from the William and Mary Board of Visitors [Jan. 1868], Archives Subject File, CWM. William Booth Taliaferro and Judge Warner T. Jones, both Visitors and members of the General Assembly, served on the committee which drew up this petition.

¶ Faculty Minutes, 24 June 1871, CWM; BSE to Hugh Blair Grigsby, 22 Nov. 1869, Archives Chronology File, CWM. Ewell was especially disturbed at Preston's death because he considered the former Washington College professor to be the best talent William and Mary had been able to attract since the war. Preston died 19 November 1869, only a month after joining the faculty. BSE to Hugh Blair Grigsby, 16 Aug. 1869, Archives Chronology File, CWM. Student George Turner, who died 24 June 1871, is buried in the College Cemetery. BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 3 July 1871.

¶ On salaries see Ewell's reports to the Board of Visitors, 1870-1879, WM College Papers, and Board's minutes for the same period. See especially Board of Visitors Minutes, 14 Dec. 1871, 18 June 1872, 3 July 1877, 2 July 1879. On McCandlish's suit see Faculty Minutes, 2 Dec. 1872, 10 July 1874, Board of Visitors Minutes, 1 July 1874, CWM, and BSE to James Lyons, 17 Mar., 31 Oct., 1873, Brock Collection, Huntington Library. On the faculty protest see Board of Visitors Minutes, 2-3 July 1869 and Faculty Minutes, 5 Oct. 1871, CWM. See also T. L. Snead, Thomas P. McCandlish, and L. B. Wharton to the Board of Visitors, 5 Oct. 1871; Resolution of the Faculty, 5 Oct. 1871, and L. B. Wharton to the Executive Committee, 9 Oct. 1871, Tyler Papers, CWM.

¶ Bursar's Accounts, 1875, WM College Papers. Wise assumed the office of Bursar on 20 March 1876. Faculty

Minutes, CWM. Tazewell Taylor had opposed the re-opening of William and Mary after the war, and Ewell was relieved to fill the post with someone more sympathetic to his views. Francis H. Smith to BSE, 11 Feb. 1874, Smith Papers, VMI; Board of Visitors Minutes, 2 July 1879, CWM.

²⁰Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 252; Pearson, Readjuster Movement, pp. 68-69; William Booth Taliaferro to "My Dear Wife," 11 Aug. 1877, Taliaferro Papers, CWM; Board of Visitors Minutes, 25 May, 3 July 1877 and Bursar's Report, 23 May 1877, CWM. In 1877 the Conservative Party settled for a compromise candidate, Colonel F. W. M. Holliday, who was subsequently elected. From 1879 until 1883 Readjusters controlled the Virginia General Assembly and from 1881-1885, the governorship. In 1879 Mahone became a U.S. Senator and in 1881 he was joined by Harrison Holt Riddleberger, another Readjuster. John S. Wise refused to run for U.S. Representative in 1879 because it meant opposition to his old commander, General Joseph E. Johnston, a Funder. In 1880 Wise was defeated in his bid for the Third District seat by his cousin, George D. Wise, a Funder. In 1882, at the height of Readjuster power, Wise defeated John Massey for an at-large seat in the House of Representatives. In 1885 Wise lost the governorship to Democrat Fitzhugh Lee by 16,000 votes. By 1888 Wise had broken completely with Mahone and led a revolt in the Readjuster-Republican Party against him. Moyer, Bourbonism to Byrd, pp. 32-39, 59-62; Pearson, Readjuster Movement, p. 82; John S. Wise, The Lion's Skin: A Historical Novel and a Novel History (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1905), pp. 318-319.

²¹Schmidt, College President, pp. 13, 226-229; Rudolph, American College, pp. 221-232 and Curriculum, pp. 99-128, 138, 144, 150; BSE, manuscript of commencement address, n.d. [early 1870s], Ewell Faculty File (quotations).

²²Frederick Rudolph in Curriculum states that "after the war poverty, which had had much to do with stabilizing the classical course of study, was no longer a hindrance to reform. Government and new private wealth were available to underwrite in the colleges and universities courses of study that were responsive to a dynamic industrial society and to an expansive democracy." (p. 150). Rudolph does not, as he should, exclude the South from this general statement. Nowhere does he deal with the special problems of higher education in an impoverished post-war South except to attribute a reluctance to change to an aristocratic tradition. Maddex, in Virginia Conservatives, also ignores economic factors and attributes the plight of William and Mary to an "obstinate resistance to change." (p. 217).

In the 1860s and 1870s some Virginia colleges did increase their technical and scientific offerings, but these changes seem to have been made more to attract land-grant funds than from a sincere desire for change. Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 214; Crenshaw, General Lee's College, pp. 160-163.

90 Robert M. Hughes, "Baccalaureate Address at the College of William and Mary, 12 June 1933," Hughes Alumni File, CWM; Warner T. Taliaferro to [Mrs. William Booth Taliaferro], 2 Feb. 1875, Taliaferro Papers, CWM; Faculty Minutes, 14 Oct. 1874, CWM; William Glover Stanard, "Reminiscences of William and Mary," Stanard Alumni File, CWM; Beverley Bland Munford, photostat of pages from Random Recollections (privately printed, 1905), Munford Alumni File, CWM. Hughes, Stanard, and Munford were all students in the 1870s, and their accounts offer detailed information on student entertainment and behavior. Although these accounts were written many years later, all agree as to Ewell's relationship with his students.

91 Elizabeth S. E. Scott to Lizinka C. B. Ewell, 25 Dec. 1871, Brown-Ewell Papers, TSLA; Ninth Census of the United States (1870), MS Schedules for James City County, Virginia; Elizabeth S. E. Ewell to Elizabeth S. Ewell, 8 Mar [1872?], Ewell Papers, CWM.

92 A. L. Prout to Elizabeth S. Ewell, 12 May 1874 and BSE to Elizabeth S. Ewell (sister), 13 Apr. 1870, 12 Aug. 1875, Ewell Papers, CWM. Richard Stoddert Ewell Scott was born 7 April 1869; Benjamin Stoddert Scott was born 10 April 1873; Elizabeth Lowndes Scott was born 27 Feb. 1875. Family Bible, photograph in Ewell Papers, CWM.

93 BSE to Elizabeth S. Ewell (sister), 16 Sept. 1871, 21 Oct. 1874, and Lizzie Ewell to Elizabeth S. Ewell, 19 Nov. 1876, Ewell Papers, CWM.

94 Elizabeth S. E. Scott to "Aunt Elizabeth," 19 Nov. 1876, Ewell Papers, CWM.

95 Richard A. Wise to Harriet S. B. Turner, 23 June 1894, Georgetown University Archives (quotation); E. J. Harvie, BSE Obituary, Annual Reunion of Graduates of the United States Military Academy, 1895, p. 13, copy in Archives, CWM. Harriet Stoddert Brown Turner was a great-granddaughter of Benjamin Stoddert and Richard Ewell's step-daughter.

96 Ninth Census of the United States (1870), MS Schedules for James City County, Virginia; Campbell Brown to BSE, 11 Mar. 1872, 27 June, 27 Dec. 1873, BSE to Richard

S. Ewell, 9 Aug. 1871, BSE to Elizabeth S. Ewell (sister), 6 Nov. 1872, 1 Aug. 1880, Ewell Papers, CWM; Elizabeth S. Ewell to Lizinka C. B. Ewell, 9 Jan. 1870 and Campbell Brown to BSE, 16 Oct. 1872, Brown-Ewell Papers, TSLA.

66Resolution of the Faculty, 1 July 1869, WM College Papers; Faculty Minutes, 25 Aug. 1870, CWM; BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors on the Debts of the College, 10 Sept. 1872, WM College Papers; BSE to James Lyons, 10 Sept. 1872, Brock Collection, Huntington Library; BSE to Judge Warner T. Jones, 14 May 1889, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Faculty Minutes, 1 Dec. 1876; Board of Visitors Minutes, 25 May, 3 July 1877, CWM; Finance Committee Report, 1883, WM College Papers; BSE, Accounts, 1877, Ewell Papers, CWM; BSE to Board of Visitors, 26 Aug. 1880, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Board of Visitors Minutes, 18 Apr. 1893, CWM (quotation).

66Harriet S. B. Turner to Bessie [Elizabeth Lowndes Scott, BSE granddaughter], 14 Jan. [?], Ewell Papers, CWM (quotation). The total value of farm products in Virginia fell 11 percent from 1870 to 1880 while land value also depreciated. Taxes steadily increased as Virginia attempted to fund its new public school system and pay off the staggering pre-war state debt. Twelfth Census of the United States, 5(pt. 1): p. 703; Richmond Dispatch, 14 Aug. 1879.

67Board of Visitors Minutes, 1 July 1879, CWM; George Thornton Wilmer Faculty File, CWM. Wilmer was professor of moral philosophy at William and Mary and Rector of Bruton Parish Church, 1869-1876. William and Mary and the University of the South (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1879), copy in Archives, University of the South, Sewanee, Tenn.

68Board of Visitors Minutes, 1 July 1879, CWM; George T. Wilmer, Caskie Harrison, et. al., to the Board of Trustees of the University of the South, 31 July 1879, University of the South, Archives; Report and Address of Benjamin S. Ewell [to the Board of Visitors] at their Convocation in Richmond on the 18th of April, 1879 (Richmond: J. W. Randolph & English, 1879), passim.

69William and Mary College and the University of the South, pp. 5-11 (quotation pp. 5-6); Unidentified newspaper clippings, Robert M. Hughes Scrapbook, Hughes Alumni File, CWM; Richmond State, 30 Apr., 5 May 1879; Richmond Dispatch, 29 Apr. 1879.

70Charles Minnegerode, William Booth Taliaferro, and William Lamb on behalf of the Visitors of William and Mary College to the Faculty, Professors, and

Officers of the University of the South, 2 July 1879, Archives, University of the South; Richmond State, 5 May 1879; Board of Visitors Minutes, 1 July 1879, CWM. Collis Huntington, President of the Chesapeake and Ohio, promised Congress that its members could travel over a new spur line to lay the cornerstone for the Victory Monument at Yorktown. To make this possible, temporary tracks were laid down Duke of Gloucester Street to connect Williamsburg and Yorktown to the line from Richmond. Permanent double tracks were laid by May 1882 establishing regular service from Newport News, Virginia, to Toledo Ohio. These ran along Williamsburg's North Boundary Street due east to Newport News.

7¹Norfolk Daily

Landmark, 24 Oct. 1879 (1st and 2d quotations). BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 1 July 1881, WM College Papers.

7²Williamsburg Virginia Gazette, 2 Sept.

1981; MS description of the Yorktown celebration, James Barron Hope Papers, CWM; Report of the Congressional Commission for Erection of a Monument at Yorktown (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1883), copy in Hope Alumni File, CWM; Charles W. Turner, Chessie's Road (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, 1956), p. 112.

7³BSE to the Board of Visitors, 27 Mar. 1882, WM College Papers; Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

7⁴Curry, Peabody Fund, pp. 77, 87; BSE to Board of Visitors, 27 Mar. 1882, WM College Papers; BSE to Lyon Tyler, 31 Jan. 1888, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

7⁵On the Funder-Readjuster controversy see Pearson, Readjuster Movement; Moger, Bourbonism to Byrd; Pulley, Virginia Restored. On the policy of the Conservatives see Maddex, Virginia Conservatives. On the debt controversy and the public schools see Buck, Public Schools in Virginia.

7⁶Clayton Beverley Phillips, Education in Virginia Under Superintendent Richard Ratcliffe Farr, 1882-1886 (n.p., n. Publ., 1932), pp. 96-99; Buck, Public Schools in Virginia, p. 94. In 1882 Farr succeeded William H. Ruffner, Virginia's first Superintendent of Public Instruction.

7⁷BSE to Lyon G. Tyler, 31 Jan. 1888 and Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, [June] 1882, WM College Papers. On 25

Mar. 1882 James Lyons wrote Dr. J. L. M. Curry that William and Mary would accept the appointment, by the governor, of six Visitors but would "never surrender their charter to the Legislature." Dr. Curry answered on 27 Mar. 1882 that the Peabody trustees would act only in conjunction with state authorities and control. See WM College Papers.

7°BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 1 July 1881, [June] 1882, WM College Papers; Board of Visitors Minutes, 15-16 June 1882, CWM; BSE to the editor, Richmond State, 15 Feb. 1883. When the college suspended exercises, it retained only its Virginia State and James River Company stock. Finance Committee Report, 1883, WM College Papers.

7°Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

°°For accounts of other colleges in the post-war period see, for example: Crenshaw, General Lee's College, pp. 182-186, and Charles Bracelton Flood, Lee: The Last Years (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1981) for Washington and Lee; Francis H. Smith, VMI, pp. 226-230 and Couper, VMI 3, passim; for the Virginia Military Institute; Bruce, UVA 4: 172 for the University of Virginia. For general discussions of higher education after the war see Rudolph, American College and Schmidt, Liberal Arts College. Even as late as 1901 Southern colleges could claim only \$14 million in endowment funds compared to \$143 million in the North and West. Sixty-six institutions in the former Confederate states had a total annual income less than that of Harvard alone. Simpkins and Roland, History of the South, p. 357.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST YEARS: 1882-1894

Ewell was on hand as usual to toll the college bell at sunrise on the second Wednesday in October 1882, but no students answered the call. No collegiate exercises were planned, but the Visitors--in order nominally to maintain the corporation of president and masters in which the charter was vested--had offered Ewell a \$400 annuity to remain on campus. In addition to preserving the charter, Ewell's presence would also serve to demonstrate a semblance of life at William and Mary, thereby protecting the privileged status of state stock held by the college. Beginning in 1866, and on several occasions thereafter, the General Assembly had voted to guarantee payment of maximum legal interest on bonds held by institutions of learning, irrespective of the funding of private bonds. Ewell was also to attend to maintenance and repair of college property and pay off as many of the school's debts as possible. Some visitors doubted Ewell's ability to execute the latter charge. One member of the Board wrote that "whilst [Colonel Ewell] is one of the best men in the world, [he] is one of the poorest managers of money I have ever known." Another Visitor suggested the charter be amended to give total financial control to the

Board of Visitors. The Visitors finally ordered Ewell to keep "a suitable notebook" containing records of all financial transactions.¹

When Ewell assumed guardianship of the empty campus he was seventy-two years old and suffered from arthritis and failing eyesight. He could not and would not, however, be a mere caretaker. Convinced that the president of the college "should occupy the President's House, at least in part," Ewell spent five to six hours a day at the college, regardless of the weather. He drove in from his farm at 11:00 each morning in a black buggy, pulled by a horse he called "Redeye" and driven by Malachi Gardiner, a black tenant farmer who shared his acreage and whom he called "The Professor." The Colonel and the "Professor" remained in town until approximately 4:00 P.M., taking dinner there before returning to the country. With Gardiner carrying the keys, the two checked the status of every building. Then Ewell would retire to his office in the President's House to talk with townspeople, some of whom he considered great bores; to tutor several local students; to entertain visitors interested in the history of the old college; or to attend to a rather extensive correspondence with those concerned for the future of William and Mary. "If not really busy," he remarked to his sister Elizabeth, "at least I have the semblance of it."²

Ewell's greatest burden during these discouraging

years was maintenance of the buildings and grounds at the college. These concerns had been his albatross for more than thirty years and would remain so. The necessity to rebuild as cheaply as possible in 1867-69 continued to haunt him. The slate roof of the main building still leaked and window glass placed in loose frames broke frequently. The architect recommended that the slate be replaced with tin and that outside shutters be installed on the windows, but funds for such projects were not available. Minor buildings on the campus and property in Williamsburg belonging to the college also suffered from want of repair. Ewell sold some of these holdings to balance debts; the remainder he rented out, hoping to avoid the vandalism and trespassing that had plagued vacant buildings in Williamsburg since the war. This solution engendered more problems than it solved. The buildings had been too neglected to attract responsible tenants, and the sheriff was kept busy collecting delinquent rent payments. Meanwhile, grass on the campus grew long and trees and shrubs remained untrimmed as resources refused to allow the hire of laborers. It was, Ewell declared, "a thankless responsibility," but if the buildings and grounds could be kept in good order, "a hope [might] be entertained of the restoration of the institution."⁹

Visitors to Williamsburg frequently requested tours of the college, a task Ewell undertook with enthusiasm. To an outgoing man who relished conversation and good company,

his solitary existence on the campus meant too many lonely hours. Ewell never missed an opportunity to relate the college's history--his favorite topic--and point out portraits and items of historic interest. He always hoped that an aroused interest might bring a substantial contribution. Among Ewell's favorite guests were Daniel Coit Gilman, first president of Johns Hopkins University, and his wife Elizabeth. In late May 1887, while attending a meeting of Slater Fund trustees at Old Point Comfort, the Gilmans journeyed to Ewell's farm to express their interest in seeing the college. Benjamin, accompanied by Lizzy, showed off not only the college but the town. Gilman, charmed by Ewell and his attractive daughter, wrote that Ewell seemed "the embodiment of the genius loci, the watchful and faithful guardian of a grand idea." As long as Ewell lived, Gilman continued, "we may be sure that the sparks of fire will not disappear from the sacred altar." Elizabeth Gilman was neither as impressed nor as hopeful. The silence and desolation of the campus made the college seem to her "a most pathetic place, full of the past with no present but one of dreary decay, and no future." She termed Ewell's efforts to arouse public interest, "hopeless." "When the old Colonel goes," she wrote, "all traces of the place will gradually disappear."⁴

Ewell refused to admit to hopelessness, and much of his correspondence in the mid-1880s was with those who, like

himself, refused to allow William and Mary or its present plight to be forgotten. Dartmouth professor Charles Francis Richardson, who was also an author and journalist, solicited information for an article on the college. "An Old Colonial College," based on the 1874 William and Mary catalog, appeared in the Magazine of American History, November 1884. Richardson sketched the college's history and lamented the neglect of an institution that had once been "surrounded by the nobility and gentry of England's most aristocratic colony." In June 1887 Richardson invited Ewell, as president of the institution where the Phi Beta Kappa Society had been founded, to address the Dartmouth chapter on its 100th anniversary. Ewell declined, on the basis of age and infirmity, but sent a short address to be read to the celebrants. "The College," he wrote, "hath become as an Oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that has no water," but "William and Mary will, on its old site, and under its ancient name and charter, yet renew its youth." Despite any private doubts, Ewell would keep the faith as far as the public was concerned.☐

George F. Hoar of Massachusetts also refused to forget the college. Although his efforts to procure reparations from the federal government for damages sustained by William and Mary during the war had come to naught, Hoar frequently wrote Ewell letters of encouragement. At the 250th celebration of the founding of Harvard University in

October 1886, he saluted Ewell for his dedication and again appealed for aid from Harvard alumni. Hoar told the celebrants that he "should value it more than any public honor or private good fortune" if he might "live to see that old historic college of Virginia endowed anew with liberal aid of the sons of Harvard."⁶

Another Bostonian, Edwin D. Meade, also made an appeal for William and Mary. Having visited Ewell and the college in May 1886, Meade dedicated one of a series of "Old South" lectures, delivered in Boston in September 1866, to the history of William and Mary. Meade declared it

a pity when one considers the educational needs of the South that something should not be done to perpetuate this old college. . . . Such great traditions as those of William and Mary College are themselves of the highest utility in education and ought not to be wasted.

Although Ewell was distressed that Meade credited Harvard rather than William and Mary with the establishment of the first law school in the United States, he was grateful for Meade's interest. In a letter of appreciation he expressed to Meade--perhaps prophetically--his continued belief "that some Northern man will immortalize himself by re-endowing William and Mary College." Ewell would not live to see the reconstruction of the college's colonial buildings by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. in the 1920s and 1930s.⁷

Ewell's most extensive correspondence during these lonely years was with Herbert Baxter Adams, chairman of the

Department of History and Political Science at Johns Hopkins University. Beginning in early 1887 Adams' research seminars prepared a series of pamphlets on the history of higher education in America, to be published by the Bureau of Education of the Department of the Interior. Adams chose William and Mary for his first study because he wished to promote the idea of a national, government-supported university in Washington, D.C., that would train statesmen as William and Mary had done in the Revolutionary era. He also sought to demonstrate the effects that "public neglect and legislative indifference" could have on education. Why, Adams asked, with a federal treasury "bursting with silver," was there no help for education, especially in the South? It was a national disgrace that President Ewell should be able to say with perfect truth, "Le college, C'est moi!" Ewell provided Adams with an abundance of information concerning the college's history, and Adams wrote the most complete account to date, weaving into the story his own special pleas.®

Ewell was pleased with Adams' study--in all but one important respect. Adams had strongly insisted that William and Mary should be removed to Alexandria or Richmond and even maintained it had been a great mistake not to have done it much sooner. Ewell wondered if he would ever be free of the necessity to defend the college's location in Williamsburg. Now he had to counter any harm Adams might have done in this

regard. Before distributing copies of Adams' pamphlet to alumni and friends of William and Mary, Ewell had them bound with copies of his impassioned speech to the Visitors on 18 April 1879 in opposition to removing the college to the University of the South. Adams could not be expected, Ewell wrote, to realize

our strong local attachment, and the inseparable nature of the Union between Williamsburg and William and Mary College. . . . We want not a portrait of the College, but a living reality of flesh and blood. . . . The first may exist anywhere; the second, only in Williamsburg.⁷

In their efforts to aid the college, Richardson, Hoar, Meade, and Adams also helped to perpetuate a story which has become the most enduring of college legends. Even though the college had no students during most of the 1880s, Benjamin Ewell, in order to keep the charter alive, rang the college bell each year on the second Wednesday of October, the date the session would have begun. Ewell's action became a staple of local lore, and townspeople enjoyed telling of it to visitors. Gradually Ewell's reputation as the "Old Bellringer" spread. Richardson, Hoar, Meade, and Adams all found romance in the tale and repeated it. Edwin Meade's comments to his audience in Boston are representative:

The old grey-haired President, as each October comes round, goes to the college and has the old college bell rung as a formality to still retain the Charter. Although it wakens no response . . . [he] believes that the bell will yet be heard.¹⁰

Students of the Ewell era at William and Mary,

contemporary and future, have almost unanimously found Ewell's annual--some insisted it was daily--ringing of the bell symbolic of his dedication to the college as well as the most memorable event of his presidency. They have also implied that his action was somehow both pathetic and eccentric. Ewell himself liked the story well enough but made light of it. When Herbert Baxter Adams inquired about the truth of the tale, Ewell replied:

There is an ancient tradition . . . that a full session of students followed the ringing of the bell on the 1st of Oct. at sunrise. . . . The transformation of this tradition into a daily ringing by me exceeds [reality]. But, to compensate, it has given me a wide reputation as a "bell-ringer," equal or superior to that of the celebrated Swiss bellringers. So I laugh at the story without murmuring or contradicting.

Ewell was glad for recognition of his devotion, but judgment of his act as pathetic or eccentric must have been distressing to a proud man. However, if such publicity would help William and Mary, he would endure it with good humor.¹¹

With few or no students to teach and no discipline to keep, Ewell had opportunity for the first time in many years to pursue personal interests. History--especially that of the college--and genealogy had long been hobbies. Now he devoted many research hours to the family histories of prominent college alumni, especially Benjamin Harrison and James Monroe. He also located, and attempted to procure for the college archives, several collections of documents

dealing with the very early history of William and Mary. Such quests seemed to take on added importance as he became convinced that Virginians had begun to forget their heritage. For Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography he prepared a sketch of his grandfather, Benjamin Stoddert, and provided to the editors any other information he could. "Such Southerners," he remarked, "as appear in their Encyclopedia should receive all they are entitled to."¹²

Although he had deplored the late Civil War and applauded all efforts to end the bitterness of its aftermath, as with so many Southerners he found it impossible to forget. A founder of the Magruder-Ewell Camp of Confederate Veterans, Ewell often spoke of his war experience to members of the organization that bore his name. Ewell also read with great relish accounts of the war written by its principal participants. In this outpouring of books on the war in the last quarter of the nineteenth century--which one historian has called the "Battle of the Books" and the "War of the Reminiscences"--Ewell found hours of pleasure and occasional frustration. In an exchange of lengthy letters with his cousin Thomas Tasker Gantt of St. Louis, he discussed and debated the memoirs of Sherman and Grant, among others, and analyzed the articles on the war which began appearing in Century magazine in November 1884. Gantt had fought with McClellan's Union forces on the Virginia Peninsula, but

both men agreed that had Johnston made a stand at Williamsburg, the Confederacy would have been successful. The cousins also agreed that Lincoln had been a poor commander-in-chief and his greatest mistake the firing of McClellan.¹³

Meanwhile, for six years, Benjamin Ewell tolled the college bell each opening day and publicly kept the faith that William and Mary could not and would not die. A former student observed that Ewell "bore himself proudly despite the dormancy of the college, moving with dignity among the dusty books and the signs of decay." In more private moments Ewell lamented Virginia's neglect of its oldest educational institution and gave way to despair born of unfulfilled hopes. In 1885 Ewell learned that "a wealthy Bostonian" had willed the college a legacy of \$400,000. However, with the closing of William and Mary in 1882, a codicil had transferred the gift to the University of Virginia. "The College," Ewell remarked, "wishes the death of no one, but may not, in time, a wealthy benefactor insert a similar provision in his will and . . . join the great majority before he annexes such a mischievous codicil." Did the tolling of the bell mark the college's dormant vitality or was it a death knell?¹⁴

In the end optimism prevailed, and Ewell determined

to try once more to implement a plan he had proposed in 1882. On that occasion an attempt to convince the Visitors to offer a course of normal instruction in exchange for limited state support and control had failed, but changes in the state's political and educational establishment seemed, by 1885, to offer greater likelihood of success. In 1883 the Democrat-Conservative Party, having accepted many of the Republican-Readjuster social and fiscal policies, returned to power in the General Assembly. Two years later Democrat Fitzhugh Lee defeated John S. Wise to claim the governorship. No longer did the Visitors' suspicions of the Readjusters affect their attitudes toward state control. At the same time many Virginia educators heightened their demands for normal schools to train white teachers. In March 1884 the General Assembly had established--despite substantial opposition--the State Female Normal School (Longwood College) at Farmville, but white males still had only the traditional colleges and universities. Insisting that only men were suitable as teachers on the secondary level and as administrators, education authorities claimed the universities could not, even with an altered curriculum, provide proper training. In any case, university men would not accept the poor salaries offered public school instructors. With adequate state support and a full course of normal instruction, William and Mary might attract white males unable for financial reasons to attend the

universities, and, at the same time, assure its own survival.¹⁰

In January 1886 the college Visitors approved a bill providing, in return for a state annuity of \$10,000, the establishment of a normal school which would operate in conjunction with the collegiate course. White males who would agree to teach for two years in Virginia's public schools could attend without charge. The Visitors would accept, on the appointment of the governor, ten associate Visitors, thereby recognizing the interest of the state but maintaining the college's traditional organization. In February 1886 this bill, despite the sponsorship of numerous alumni and several Visitors, failed in the Committee on Schools and Colleges of the House of Delegates. In the spring of 1887 proponents reintroduced the measure in a special session of the legislature called to consider the state's continuing debt problems. Again it died in committee.¹⁰

Despite these repeated failures, Ewell believed the college's plan had received sufficient support to warrant another try. He was also encouraged by offers of assistance which came from two politically influential Visitors, former Confederate general William Booth Taliaferro and Taliaferro's cousin, Judge Warner T. Jones, both of Gloucester County. Both men were lawyers and graduates of William and Mary. The sixty-five year old Taliaferro was a former member of the

House of Delegates and a candidate for the Conservative nomination for governor in 1877. Jones, at the age of seventy, was a county judge and former member of the House of Delegates. The two men volunteered to take up residence at Richmond's Exchange Hotel near the Capitol and lobby for the bill on a daily basis, using whatever influence they possessed. Ewell gratefully accepted the offer.¹⁷

The bill for which Taliaferro and Jones prepared to do battle was identical to those of 1885 and 1887 and differed from the 1882 proposal only in the limitation of normal instruction to white males. White females could now attend the Normal School at Farmville. In December 1887 the measure was introduced in both houses of the General Assembly. In the Senate it encountered little opposition, partly as a result of the two Visitors' skillful lobbying and the expert floor management of James N. Stubbs, a college alumnus and senator from Taliaferro's and Jones's home county of Gloucester. In a marathon speech Stubbs reminded the legislators that the University, the Virginia Military Institute, and the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical Institute at Blacksburg received from \$20,000 to \$40,000 annually for support of "state" students who were not required to teach after graduation. Approval of the William and Mary plan would guarantee a supply of white male teachers in a way the other universities could not, and would save the state the cost of a new normal school. Stubbs also pointed

out that Virginia supported only one institution "in the Eastern half of the state"--the medical college at Richmond. At Ewell's instigation Taliaferro and Jones privately informed the senators that since 1865 William and Mary had educated more than half of its students without charge, thereby performing a service to the state. On 14 February 1888 the bill, amended to include the State Superintendent of Public Instruction as an ex-officio member of the Board of Visitors, passed the Senate by a vote of twenty-four to five.¹⁰

Ewell, who had chosen to leave the matter in the experienced hands of Taliaferro and Jones rather than go to Richmond himself, was pleased with the Senate victory, but he knew it was too early to celebrate. Approval of the House of Delegates, where a majority vote of the total membership was required for passage of appropriations bills, would prove much more difficult. Lyon Gardiner Tyler, son of John Tyler and a freshman delegate from Richmond, had agreed to manage the measure in the House. In the 1877-78 collegiate session Tyler had held the chair of Philosophy and Literature at William and Mary, and college authorities knew him to be both personable and persuasive. In the third week of February, after initial rejection by both the Committee on Schools and Colleges and the Committee on Finance, Tyler succeeded in bringing the college's proposal to the floor of the House. From 23 February until 1 March the legislators debated the

measure. Were the public schools worth such an appropriation? Could the state afford another normal school? At times the controversy took on a decidedly sectional character as delegates from Western Virginia--especially supporters of the land-grant school at Blacksburg--opposed an appropriation of \$10,000 for an eastern college, while Tidewater delegates argued that the state had refused educational benefits to their area despite the substantial proportion of taxes collected there.¹⁷

Twice the bill was defeated, and twice Tyler secured a motion to reconsider. Meanwhile Richard A. Wise, professor of Chemistry at William and Mary and an influential Republican, rallied support from among his fellow party members and persuaded his friend A. W. Harris, a black delegate from Dinwiddie County, to deliver the votes of the seven black members of the House. Finally, Taliaferro, Jones, Tyler, and Wise promised Western Democrats support for a bill to increase the state annuity to Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical Institute from \$20,000 to \$40,000 in exchange for their votes in favor of the William and Mary bill. At an evening session on 1 March 1888 the House of Delegates agreed to the bill by a vote of fifty-seven to twenty-seven. Wise remarked to Ewell that, "We all worked like thunder." Intense lobbying--coupled with improvement of the state's financial status--had paid off.²⁰

Late on the evening of March first, immediately

following the vote in the House, Richard Wise wrote Ewell the good news. "I congratulate you," he wrote, "and hope this victory will add years to your life." Ewell was greatly relieved and happy that "a ray of light [had] appeared" after the dark and discouraging years since 1882. The plan to make William and Mary a normal school had been his own, and its implementation would likely insure the school's continued existence, ameliorate its financial distress, and protect its Williamsburg location. His pleasure was not, however, without an underlying sadness. The William and Mary he had known and served for so long would no longer exist. The institution's status as a living monument to Virginia's days of national prominence and to old Virginia values would be compromised. No longer would it be a school for gentlemen. Given a choice, Ewell would have preferred a solution more in keeping with the college's traditional identity. But desperate problems demanded desperate solutions; a new mission was better than no mission at all. Better to meet changing needs than die for an ideal.²¹

On 11 April 1888 the Board of Visitors accepted the Act of Assembly and prepared for a meeting of the combined Board in May. Meanwhile, Ewell attended to superficial cleaning and repairs in anticipation of the new Board's inspection. The roof of the main building still leaked, but he lacked the resources to remedy that old problem. As he prepared the college for a new era, he pondered his own

future. Now seventy-eight years of age, he had served William and Mary for more than half his life. Should he resign? Should he give up the presidency but retain his professorship? Might not the new Board request his resignation in favor of a younger man?"

On 10 May 1888 the twenty Visitors--ten from the old Board and ten appointees of the governor--gathered in the college library to plan for the reopening of William and Mary in the fall. After reporting that the school's debts had been reduced from \$30,000 in 1882 to approximately \$7,000, Ewell informed the Board of his resignation from the presidency and the professorship of Natural Philosophy. Reorganization of the college demanded a younger man, and he would not allow "personal considerations [to] hamper the success of the college." Although he would later remark that his resignation was "the best thing I ever did, and the act I am most proud of," at the time it was painful. For forty years the College of William and Mary had been his life, and for the past six years he had, indeed, been the college. Letting go would not be easy. The Visitors accepted Ewell's resignation without argument, appointed him President Emeritus with a salary of \$400 per year, and requested that he continue to care for the college property until a new president could be selected. Ewell believed the Board had treated him fairly, but he found it difficult to silence some old friends, especially Joseph E. Johnston, who

believed the Visitor's failure to offer Ewell a professorship under the new regime had been an unforgivable slight. Johnston blamed what he thought to be a callous attitude on "the petty spite of two or three enemies on the board . . . and their exaggerated ideas of 'normal' methods." Apparently some members of the new Board were suspicious of Ewell's well-known dedication to the classical curriculum.²³

The championship of his friends notwithstanding, Ewell had made his decision. He would make peace with retirement, and he was grateful that the Visitors had not tempted him with the offer of a professorship. The annual gratuity the Board offered proved more troubling. After years of laboring for the college at an annual salary of \$400, he questioned the propriety of accepting a like amount without requirement of work or responsibility. However, as he wrote a friend, "the wants of the college kept and made me as poor as it was." Unable, financially, to reject the Visitors' offer, Ewell decided to consider it as balancing his account with the college.²⁴

The position of interim caretaker gave him even greater concern. He did not resent the request because it made unnecessary an abrupt break with the duties he had performed for so long, and he was glad to be useful. At the same time he was acutely conscious that the college's new governing board might consider him an interfering old man. Finally deciding that nobody else knew the college so well or

cared so much, Ewell assured the Visitors he could vacate the President's House with twenty-four hours' notice and set to work preparing the college buildings for the renovation they would require. As he directed the removal of debris from the yard and broken plaster from the main building, Ewell undoubtedly reflected that had Virginia cared so much in the immediate post-war years, the fortunes of William and Mary might have been different.²⁰

On 4 October 1888--its buildings renovated, the curriculum revised, and with a new president and faculty--William and Mary rejoined Virginia's system of higher education. During the summer, and at a cost of \$2500, Ewell had supervised the replacement of 200 panes of glass in the main building, the application of paint to cover the defacement of vandals, and repair of the woodwork and plaster. Finally funds were available to re-slate the roof and replace the second floor ceilings and walls so badly damaged over the past twenty years. Even the cupola, long out of perpendicular, was straightened. As for the curriculum, the collegiate course was still an option, but most of the 102 young men who enrolled for this first session had been chosen as "state" students by local school superintendents across Virginia, and therefore chose the normal course.²⁰

Ewell believed this "new departure" stood a good

chance of success if the right man assumed the office of president; his choice was State Superintendent of Public Instruction, John L. Buchanan. At the reorganizational meeting in May 1888 the Visitors had elected Buchanan to the office, and Ewell had invited him to visit the college before making his decision. Ewell proudly treated the state official to a tour of the buildings and grounds, but Buchanan could not have been expected to see the college as Ewell saw it. Believing William and Mary too far gone to be revived, he declined the presidency. The Board then turned to Lyon G. Tyler who eagerly sought the position. Ewell made no objection to the thirty-five-year-old Tyler. At least he had strong ties to the college, a result of his father's long association, and he had held a faculty chair there in 1877-78. In the early fall of 1888, with reluctance and relief, Ewell surrendered the President's House to the Tylers and returned to his farm, his orchards, and his grandchildren.²⁷

During his retirement years, friends in Williamsburg visited the farm frequently and kept him informed of events on the campus. Often Ewell offered advice to his young successor but only when asked and always with the disclaimer that he did not want to appear meddlesome or interfering. When Tyler complained that opposition to his policies by state education officials on one hand and Professor Richard A. Wise on the other was making his job difficult, Ewell

advised him to "keep a sense of humor and avoid political partisanship." When water seeped into the cellars of all three college buildings, Ewell rode to Williamsburg to show Tyler the ditches he had dug which, if kept clear, would prevent further problems. He declined, however, to attend meetings of the Board of Visitors, a privilege to which he was entitled as President Emeritus. William and Mary in the 1890s with its emphasis on normal instruction and greatly increased enrollment was not the college he remembered. His happiness at the school's preservation and success was genuine, but it could not completely overcome his nostalgia for the college as it had been.²⁰

Ewell had often during the college's dark days expressed a wish to retire to his farm and to the home outside Williamsburg that he had built in 1858 and of which he was exceedingly fond. Now, for the first time, this was possible, but being unable to perform much physical labor, he found that idleness made him feel useless. Lizzy and Beverley were busy with farm chores, and the grandchildren gradually drifted away, Ewell and Benjamin to attend William and Mary and Bessie to boarding school. Richard Wise, still a professor at the college, and other old friends visited often, and Ewell welcomed the chance to reminisce and swap stories. Acquaintances had always considered "Old Buck" a brilliant conversationalist and enjoyed listening to his seemingly endless collection of anecdotes. At other times

Ewell passed many lonely hours sorting through his extensive collection of yellowed newspaper clippings concerning the war in the west. Many of these he pasted onto the blank pages of a dispatch book he had preserved since his service as adjutant to General Johnston. When Johnston died in March 1891 Ewell added a score of newspaper accounts of his death and funeral. Attacks on General Richard Ewell's conduct during the war also claimed his brother's attention. In their memoirs several Confederate officers had censured General Ewell's command decisions at Gettysburg, while others blamed him for the burning of Richmond in April 1865. Determined "to put an end to the injustice done . . . to Richard," Benjamin wrote several letters in his defense to the New York Evening Post and began to gather his notes for a biography of the general. Ewell deeply resented the continuing public criticism of both his brother and General Johnston and did his best to counter it whenever he could.²⁷

Ewell was also concerned with defending--or at least explaining--his contribution to the history of the College of William and Mary since 1848. Sometime in 1892 he began to dictate to Lizzy, severe arthritis and poor eyesight having hampered his own ability to write, what he called his "Autobiography." Writing in the third person, he presented for posterity his own case, apparently hoping to prevent any misunderstanding in the future. In conclusion he wrote: "It

is but justice to state that Col. Ewell did all in his power, by the use of his own limited means & credit to sustain the College in its struggles." He missed being on the campus in Williamsburg, and the college was never far from his thoughts. Lizzy worried that her father did not eat properly and spent too much time alone with his literary projects. Despite her concern, the old colonel remained alert, interested, and cheerful. And until late in 1892 his general good health allowed him to ride on horseback around his farm and see to its proper operation.³⁰

In late December 1892 Ewell suffered internal injuries and severe bruises in a fall down the cellar stairs at his home. Several major newspapers in Virginia reported his confinement, and he received scores of letters from former students and associates inquiring after his health. By early February 1893 Ewell had recovered sufficiently to attend exercises at the college commemorating the two-hundredth anniversary of the granting of the royal charter. On that occasion he witnessed the awarding of the first "Ewell Medals" for achievement in mathematics, gifts to the college from one of his former students. The many tributes to his determination to keep the college alive were gratifying, but Ewell took greater pleasure in meeting once again many whom he had known as students. His appearance at this bicentennial celebration would be Benjamin Ewell's last public and official act on behalf of the College of William

and Mary.³¹

Ewell never fully recovered from his injuries and, after the winter of 1893, seldom left his farm. He kept a close watch, however, on events in Washington where the college was once again petitioning Congress for compensation of its war losses. The failure of his numerous campaigns in the 1870s had convinced him it was unlikely Congress would ever grant such an indemnity. An appeal in 1890 by several Visitors, including former Congressman Joseph E. Johnston, had similarly ended in defeat when House Speaker Thomas B. Reid of Maine blocked consideration of their bill. However, the overwhelming success of the Democrats in the 1890 elections encouraged the bill's proponents to try again. In the spring of 1892 a committee of Visitors hired an agent and again solicited the support of Senator George F. Hoar. Then they dusted off the arguments Ewell had first made more than twenty years earlier and submitted the proposal to the Senate Committee on War Claims. On 23 April the Senate approved the measure, and in late February the House of Representatives did likewise. On 3 March 1893, one day before surrendering his office to Democrat Grover Cleveland, President Benjamin Harrison signed the act appropriating \$64,000 to reimburse William and Mary for destruction of its property by United States soldiers. Senator Hoar again did his part by reminding Harrison of his Virginia connections and of the Harrisons' long association with the college. One can

imagine Ewell's great satisfaction at this long-delayed success of a campaign he had begun in 1870; many believed he kept himself alive with this hope. For Ewell there could be no better celebration of the two-hundredth anniversary of William and Mary.³²

On the evening of 19 June 1894, at the age of eighty-four, Benjamin Ewell died, the victim of a paralytic stroke he had suffered two days earlier. The college buildings were draped in mourning and flags in Williamsburg flew at half-mast in tribute to "Old Buck" whom many believed had saved "their" college. The following day his remains were transported to Williamsburg on the morning train. At the City Depot, students, faculty, townspeople, and representatives of the Confederate Veterans and Board of Visitors gathered to pay their respects and escort his body to the college chapel. Julia Ewell did not return to Williamsburg for her husband's funeral. After services at the chapel--conducted by Moses D. Hoge, pastor of Richmond's Second Presbyterian Church and Ewell's close friend since their days together at Hampden-Sydney College--Benjamin Ewell was laid to rest in the heart of the William and Mary campus beside his mother and sister, in the college cemetery he had established in 1859. The headstone would briefly tell of his service to William and Mary and to the Confederate forces. Many old friends and students believed the college itself

stood as a more fitting monument to his memory.³³

Ewell's passing marked the end of an era and provided the finale to a long chapter of the history of William and Mary. At the time of his death the college was not in any true sense the institution he had served for forty years and labored so hard to save. But a semblance of continuity remained. William and Mary had not abandoned Williamsburg, and it continued to educate Virginia's youth. Although no longer a monument to the values of old Virginia, the nation's second oldest college had survived because President Ewell would not abandon his faith in those values. In a rapidly changing and increasingly materialistic world, William and Mary represented for him the best of the past, and he was able to keep the faith until the forces of modern society offered a solution.

The story of the "Old Bellringer" had a certain romance, and the story of Ewell's struggles made him something of a legend in his own time. As the legend grew over the years, its perpetrators implied that Ewell had done it all with equanimity and good cheer, with no sense of sacrifice or thought of surrender. In truth, he had often resented the sacrifice and considered abandoning the fight. His devotion and loyalty, however, were sincere. Few who told his story bothered to ask why the cause of William and Mary had become an obsession, a mission, for Ewell. What, in

the face of so many failed ventures, were the sources of his perseverance? A well-educated, witty, charming, articulate, and brilliant man, he could have pursued a career in engineering, the military service, or perhaps even in politics. Why, then, did this institutional mistress with all her troubles claim his heart and energies. Ewell's personal records offer few clues, but the facts of his life provide some insight.

Ewell's conception of William and Mary as a living relic of Virginia's days of glory and national prominence--days whose passing he mourned--goes far to explain his dedication. More personal concerns, however, may also have played a role. Elizabeth Ewell had made it clear that she expected her sons to seek occupations that would distinguish the family name. Benjamin never achieved Richard's renown, or the family idolatry that accompanied it, but the presidency of an old and honored institution was a suitable profession for a Virginia Ewell. Furthermore, the position was ideally suited to one superbly gifted in dealing with people of all ages. After Julia's departure in 1851, and especially after Lizzy's marriage in 1872, the college and its students seemed to become his family. His farm retreat and the charms of Williamsburg, tarnished as they were, evoked their own particular attraction.

In the end, perhaps, Ewell's crusade can best be understood in terms of the oft-noted but never defined

magnetism the College of William and Mary seemed to exert over so many of its sons and servants.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER VIII

*Ewell Autobiography, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; BSE to the editor, Richmond State, 15 Feb. 1883; Commonwealth of Virginia, Acts of Assembly, 26 June 1866 (p. 57), 23 Feb. 1867 (p. 667), 9, 11 July 1870 (pp. 322, 431), 20 Mar. 1872 (p. 327), 3 Mar. 1882 (p. 203); Commonplace Book (c. 1879), Hugh Blair Grigsby Papers, Virginia Historical Society (1st quotation); Warner T. Jones to William Booth Taliaferro, 3 Aug. 1884, Taliaferro Papers, CWM; Board of Visitors Minutes, 16-17 Mar. 1887, CWM (2d quotation).

Lizzy Ewell to Elizabeth S. Ewell, 26 July 1881, Ewell Papers, CWM; BSE to Dr. O. S. Barten, 30 Aug. 1887, Ewell Faculty File, CWM (1st quotation); BSE to Elizabeth S. Ewell (sister), 23 May 1887, Ewell Papers, CWM (2d quotation); Robert Southall Bright, Memories of Williamsburg and Stories of my Father (Richmon: Garrett & Massie, 1941), pp. 17-18. Malachi Gardiner's small dwelling still stands on the Ewell estate outside Williamsburg. One of Ewell's students during the 1882-1888 interim was George Preston Coleman, whom he tutored in civil engineering. Coleman became Virginia's first Commissioner of Highways. The Coleman Bridge across York River and joining Yorktown to Gloucester on U.S. Route 17 bears his name. BSE, letter of recommendation for George Preston Coleman, 18 July 1889, Tucker-Coleman Papers, CWM.

²BSE, Report to the Visitors, 4 Aug. 1884, in Board of Visitors Minutes, 14 Aug. 1885 (2d and 3rd quotations); BSE, Report to the Visitors, Board Minutes, 26 Nov. 1885, CWM (1st quotation); Elizabeth Woolsey Gilman to her sister, ? 1887, Chronology File, Archives, CWM. The "Saunders Lot" on Palace Green was sold in 1885 to the trustees of the Presbyterian Church for construction of a new building.

*William A. Mowry to [Lyon G. Tyler, 1895], William and Mary Quarterly, 1st ser. (July 1895): 71-72; Drew Sweet to BSE, 15 May 1887, and Daniel Coit Gilman to BSE, 28 May 1887, Ewell Faculty File, CWM (1st and 2d quotations); Elizabeth Woolsey Gilman to her sister, [7 May 1887], Chronology File, Archives, CWM (3rd, 4th, and 5th quotations).

⁶DAB, s.v. "Richardson, Charles Francis"; Richardson, "Colonial College," pp. 414-425 (quotation, p. 415); Charles F. Richardson to BSE, 10 June 1887 and BSE to Richardson, 22 June 1887, Ewell Faculty File, CWM (2d and 3rd quotations). In January 1889 Charles Richardson visited Ewell in Williamsburg to see first-hand the institution he had championed. Charles F. Richardson to BSE, 22 Jan. 1889, Ewell Papers, CWM.

⁷Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, 18 Oct. 1921.

⁸Boston Christian Register, 23 Sept. 1886 (1st and 2d quotations); BSE, Unidentified newspaper clipping, 23 Nov. 1886, in Ewell Papers, CWM; Ewell maintained that Harvard Law School dated from 1815, William and Mary Law School from 1779.

⁹DAB, s.v. "Adams, Herbert Baxter"; N. H. R. Dawson (Commissioner, Bureau of Education) to L. Q. C. Lamar (Secretary of the Interior), 20 Jan. 1887 in Adams, College of William and Mary, pp. 64-65, 88 (2d and 3rd quotations). The pamphlets on education produced by Adams' seminars were published, 1887-1903, as United States Bureau of Education Circulars of Information.

¹⁰Adams, College of William and Mary, pp. 66-67; BSE to Elizabeth W. Ewell (sister), 23 May 1887, Ewell Papers, CWM. A copy of Adams' pamphlet bound with a copy of Ewell's speech may be found in the Chronology File, 1870-90, Archives, CWM (quotation).

¹¹Elizabeth W. Gilman to her sister, [? May 1887], Chronology File, Archives, CWM; Richard A. Wise to Harriet S. Turner, 23 June 1894, Georgetown University Archives; Boston Christian Register, 23 Sept. 1886 (quotation).

¹²On Ewell's ringing of the bell see, for example, Bright, Memories of Williamsburg, p. 17; Herbert B. Adams to BSE, 26 Feb. 1887, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Adams, College of William and Mary, p. 89 (quotation).

¹³BSE to R. A. Brock, 30 July 1881, 20 Sept. 1884 (quotation), 25 Oct. 1887, Brock Collection, Huntington Library; BSE to Elizabeth S. Ewell (sister), 1 Aug., 5 Dec. 1887, and Thomas Tasker Gantt to BSE, 28 Jan. 1888, Ewell Papers, CWM; BSE to Cynthia B. T. Coleman, 28 Feb. 1889, Tucker-Coleman Papers, CWM. If Ewell ever completed his genealogies, no copies seem to have survived. In 1881 the Royal Historical Society of England elected Ewell to honorary

membership.

¹³Confederate Veterans Camps, intended to memorialize CSA heroes, came into existence soon after the war. In June 1889 approximately fifty camps united to form a regional organization with General John B. Gordon as Commander. By 1906 there were nearly 1600 camps with 30,000 members. Myrta Lockett Avery, Dixie After the War: An Exposition of Social Conditions Existing in the South During the Twelve Years Succeeding the Fall of Richmond (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1906), p. 410; Frank Vandiver in Introduction to Johnston, Narratives (1959 edition), pp. ix, xi (quotation); Thomas Tasker Gantt to BSE, 26 July 1886, Ewell Papers, CWM. Gantt, also a grandson of Benjamin Stoddert, had been at West Point with Ewell. The Century articles by former commanders of Union and Confederate forces appeared November 1884-November 1887 and were published in 1888 as Battles and Leaders of the Civil War.

¹⁴BSE to the editor, Richmond State, 15 Feb. 1883; BSE to R. A. Brock, 25 Oct. 1887, Brock Collection, Huntington Library; Unidentified newspaper clipping of article by W. W. Joynes (a student in 1879), Archives Chronology File, CWM (1st quotation); BSE to Herbert Baxter Adams, 19 Jan. 1887, in Adams, College of William and Mary, p. 89 (2d quotation).

¹⁵In 1883 Conservatives took the name "Democrats," and in 1884 Readjusters became "Republicans." Moger, Bourbonism to Byrd, pp. 54-61. Heatwole, Education in Virginia, p. 248; Buck, Public Schools in Virginia, p. 105. In 1885 Virginia had 6,333 teachers, only 723 of whom held degrees or professional certificates. Males received \$31 per month and females \$26.88 per month. Commonwealth of Virginia, Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1884-1885, Part II, p. 15; Ibid., 1886-1887, p. 26.

¹⁶Board of Visitors Minutes, 27 Nov. 1885, 28 Jan. 1886, CWM; Commonwealth of Virginia, House Journal, 1885, pp. 213, 219, 325-326, 374, 401; BSE to Warner T. Jones, 10 Apr. 1886, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Commonwealth of Virginia, House Journal, Extra Session 1887, pp. 45, 132, and Senate Journal, Extra Session 1887, pp. 59, 107, 129, 136, 223, 273; Warner T. Jones to William Booth Taliaferro, 24 Mar. 1887, Taliaferro Papers, CWM. Free education for those who would agree to teach in Virginia was not a new idea. In March 1842 the General Assembly required that cadets at VMI who were supported by the state teach for two years. In March 1856 the legislature awarded \$1,500 to UVA for the education of 50 students who would in return

serve as tutors in a school or academy for two years. Couper, VMI, pp. 150-151.

¹⁷William Booth Taliaferro (1822-1898) attended William and Mary, 1839-1842. He served in the House of Delegates, 1873-1879, and on the Board of Visitors, 1870-1898. Taliaferro served on the governing boards of both the State Female Normal School at Farmville and the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical Institute at Blacksburg. In 1853 Taliaferro married Sally Lyons, daughter of James Lyons of Richmond, Rector of the Board of Visitors, 1871-1883. Taliaferro Papers, CWM; Taliaferro Alumni File, CWM. Warner T. Jones (1818-1891) attended William and Mary, 1836-1840, and served on the Board of Visitors, 1873-1891. Jones Alumni File, CWM. For a detailed account of Taliaferro's and Jones's activities see Russell Smith, "The Second Founding of William and Mary," William and Mary Alumni Gazette 47(Jan.-Feb. 1980): 8-15; BSE to Warner T. Jones, 22 Mar. 1888, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

¹⁸Commonwealth of Virginia, House Journal, 1887-1888, p. 90, and Senate Journal, 1887-1888, pp. 65, 212, 235, 237, 256, 460. The William and Mary petition was designated House Bill No. 268 and Senate Bill No. 53. James N. Stubbs had attended William and Mary, 1858-1860, and in 1888 was elected to the Board of Visitors. Speech of J. N. Stubbs in the Senate of Virginia, 14 Feb. 1888, pp. 3-5, WM College Papers; BSE, Report of the Educational Work of the College of William and Mary, from 1865 to 1887, 4 Jan. 1888, Archives Miscellany File, CWM. Fourteen Democrats and ten Republicans voted approval; four Democrats and one Republican cast negative votes. Richard A. Wise to BSE, 1 Mar. 1888, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

¹⁹House Journal, 1887-1888, pp. 90, 183, 247, 339, 345, 399, 414, 421-422, 433, 481; Smith, "Second Founding," pp. 13-14.

²⁰House Journal, 1887-1888, pp. 421-422, 481; Richard A. Wise to BSE, 1 Mar. 1888, Ewell Faculty File, CWM (quotation); Richard A. Wise to Warner T. Jones, 25 July 1888, WM College Papers; Warner T. Jones to William Booth Taliaferro, 24 Mar. 1887, Taliaferro Papers, CWM; Smith, "Second Founding," pp. 14-15. On 24 February 1888 the vote stood at yes-47; no-37. Approval required 51 "yes" votes. Richard A. Wise was also a Williamsburg physician and Superintendent of the Eastern Lunatic Asylum. The full text of the legislation may be found in Acts of Assembly, 1887-1888, p. 512.

²¹Richard A. Wise to BSE, 1 Mar. 1888 (1st quotation), and BSE, "Account of the Passage of the Bill to

Make William and Mary a Normal School," n.d., (2d quotation), Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

²²Board of Visitors Minutes, 10-11 Apr. 1888, CWM; BSE, Report to the Board of Visitors, 9 May 1888, WM College Papers.

²³Board of Visitors Minutes, 10-11 May 1888, CWM; Financial Report, 1888, WM College Papers; BSE to the Board of Visitors, 10 May 1888, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Richard A. Wise to Harriet S. Turner, 23 June 1894, Georgetown University Archives (1st and 2d quotations); BSE to Warner T. Jones, 12 May 1888, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; Joseph E. Johnston to Thomas Tasker Gantt, 29 May 1888, Johnston Papers, CWM (3rd quotation).

²⁴BSE to Warner T. Jones, 14 May 1889, and to Judge W. W. Crump, 27 Aug. 1890, Ewell Faculty File, CWM; BSE to R. A. Brock, 26 Feb. 1890, Brock Collection, Huntington Library (quotation); Accounts and Receipts, Ewell Papers, CWM. On several occasions in the late 1880s and early 1890s Ewell wrote the Virginia Historical Society that he could not afford the annual \$5 dues. See, for example, BSE to R. A. Brock (Secretary of the VHS), 28 Mar. 1887, Brock Collection, Huntington Library.

²⁵BSE to William Booth Taliaferro, 20 June 1888, Taliaferro Papers, and to Warner T. Jones, 22 Aug. 1888, Ewell Faculty File, CWM.

²⁶P. M. Thompson to Warner T. Jones, 2, 13 Aug. 1888; Annual Report of William and Mary College, 30 June 1889, both in WM College Papers.

²⁷BSE to William Booth Taliaferro, 20 June 1888, Taliaferro Papers, CWM; Board of Visitors Minutes, 10-11 May 1888, CWM; John L. Buchanan to W. W. Crump (Rector of the Board of Visitors), 2 July 1888, WM College Papers. Buchanan served as Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1885-1889. Lyon G. Tyler to Warner T. Jones, 21 July 1888, Jones Papers, CWM. Since leaving William and Mary, Tyler had been principal of a high school in Memphis, Tennessee, 1878-1882, and was at the time of his appointment to the presidency of William and Mary professor of mathematics at the Virginia Mechanics Institute at Richmond, which he had founded in 1884. Tyler served as president of William and Mary until 1919. DAB, s.v. "Tyler, Lyon."

²⁸BSE to Lyon G. Tyler, 25 Mar., 2 May 1889, Tyler Papers, CWM (quotation); Board of Visitors Minutes, 2 July 1891, CWM. By June 1893 William and Mary College had 204 students. Annual Reports of William and Mary College, 30

June 1889-30 June 1893, WM College Papers.

²⁷BSE to Elizabeth S. Ewell (sister), 31 Mar. 1892, Ewell Papers, CWM. Richard Ewell Scott attended William and Mary, 1891-92. Benjamin was unhappy that academic failure did not allow him to continue. Benjamin Stoddert Scott attended, 1892-1895. "Catalogue of Alumni and Alumnae, 1865-1923," pp. 23, 28. Richard A. Wise to Harriet S. Turner, 23 June 1894, Georgetown University Archives; Williamsburg Virginia Gazette, 20 June 1894. The dispatch book containing Ewell's clippings is preserved in the Joseph E. Johnston Papers, CWM. General Johnston died at his home on Connecticut Avenue in Washington, D.C., 21 March 1891. Ewell was unable to attend the funeral services at St. John's Church on 24 March 1891. Bradley T. Johnson, A Memoir of the Life and Public Service of Joseph E. Johnston (Baltimore: R. H. Woodward & Co., 1891), passim. BSE to Elizabeth S. Ewell (sister), 31 Mar. 1892 (quotation), and Lizzy Ewell Scott to Elizabeth S. Ewell, 1 Apr. 1896, Ewell Papers, CWM.

²⁸BSE to Lyon G. Tyler, 28 Jan. [1893], Tyler Papers, CWM. A typescript of Ewell's "Autobiography" is in the Ewell Papers, CWM. Several leaves of the manuscript are missing. Lizzy Scott to Elizabeth S. Ewell, 10 Sept. [1892], 26 Oct. [1893], Ewell Papers, CWM.

²⁹Richmond Times, 1 Jan., 10 Feb. 1893; BSE to Lyon G. Tyler, 28 Jan. [1893], Tyler Papers, CWM; John B. Donovan to BSE, 5 Jan. 1893, Ewell Papers, CWM; Lyon G. Tyler, ed. Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Charter of the College of William and Mary, 1693-1893 (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1894), copy in Archives Publication File, CWM. At this 200th anniversary celebration the Phi Beta Kappa Society, begun at William and Mary in 1776, was reorganized.

³⁰U.S., Congress, House, Report of the Committee on War Claims, H. Rept. 3018, 51st Cong., 1st sess., 26 Aug. 1890; undated newspaper clipping, Washington Post, in Cole Papers, CWM. Ewell planned to go to Washington in 1890 to use whatever influence he could, but cancelled his plans when Speaker Reid voiced his intention to oppose the bill. Henry Christopher Semple to BSE, 16 Nov. and [?] 1890, Ewell Faculty File, CWM. In the House of Representatives, 1891-1893, Democrats held 235 seats, Republicans, 88, and Populists, 9. The Republican majority in the Senate was 8. On the 1893 college campaign see U.S., Congress, Senate, Report of the Committee on Claims, S. Rept. 393, 52d Cong., 1st sess., 1892 and Congressional Record, vol. 300, 23 Apr. 1892 [mispaginated]; U.S., Congress, House, Report of the Committee on War Claims, H. Rept. 1207 on S. bill 2566,

52d Cong., 1st sess., 27 Apr. 1892; Walker, "Development Campaign," p. 9; U.S. Statutes at Large, 26: 744 (1893); Board of Visitors Minutes, 18 Apr. 1893, CWM. From 1693-1888, fifty-three members of the Harrison family attended William and Mary. Six Harrisons served as Visitors during this period. Provisional List of Alumni . . . 1693 to 1888 (Richmond: Division of Purchase and Printing, 1941), pp. 20-21, 53.

³³Williamsburg Virginia Gazette, 20, 22 June 1894; Faculty Minutes, 18 Jan. 1859, record the founding of the cemetery. Lizzy Ewell Scott and Beverley Scott are also buried in the college cemetery located behind the President's House. Flat Hat (CWM student newspaper), 2 Nov. 1979. Not until 1925 was a monument erected on Benjamin Ewell's grave.

EPILOGUE

"As long as William and Mary shall stand, the name of Benjamin Ewell shall be a part . . . of her history."

--Williamsburg Virginia Gazette,
20 June 1894

"He was devoted to William and Mary College; indeed he and it were so indissolubly connected that no one who knew both can think of them apart. . . . [William and Mary] was his idol."

--BSE Obituary, Georgetown College Journal, 22(June 1894): 167.

In 1906 the property and assets of the College of William and Mary were transferred from the Corporation of the President and Masters to the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the college became fully a state institution. Henceforth, the eleven-member board of Visitors and Governors would be appointed by the governor. In a sense, William and Mary had come full circle from its founding in 1693 as an institution of Virginia's colonial government to full association with the state of Virginia. From 1776 until 1888--perhaps even until 1906--the college, unlike its sister institutions in Virginia, existed in a no-man's-land, neither state-supported nor associated with the Episcopal Church or any other supportive institution. Even though Benjamin Ewell regretted the necessity for state affiliation, he would have been pleased, that in the wake of the university movement, William and Mary retained, and still retains, the title of "College,"

a term which in the nineteenth century suggested an institution that was small, traditional, and elite.¹

By 1907 William and Mary boasted 250 students, 25 instructors, and the number of major buildings had grown from 5 in 1888 to 10. The enrollment, which Ewell had so stubbornly protected, totalled \$154,000, and the State of Virginia contributed \$35,000 annually to the school's support. In 1918 the college admitted women students on an equal basis with men, thereby becoming until the mid-twentieth century the only fully co-educational collegiate institution in Virginia.²

Since his death in 1894 the college has remembered Benjamin Ewell in a variety of ways. Less than a week after his death the College Hotel, opposite the Brafferton on Jamestown Road, was renamed Ewell Hall. In 1926 this building was razed to provide space for a dining hall. Not until 14 December 1857 did a campus building again bear his name. At that time the "old" Phi Beta Kappa building, erected in 1926 near the main building, was renamed Ewell Hall, and now (1984) houses the offices of the President and Admissions as well as the Department of Music. In 1895 "some of Colonel Ewell's kindred" presented to William and Mary a portrait of "Old Buck," the only portrait known to exist. Today (1984) it hangs in the portrait gallery of the main building, now called the Wren Building. In June 1899, with the contributions of many former students, the Society of the

Alumni erected in the College Chapel a tablet "in loving tribute" to Ewell, "their teacher and friend."³

From the time of his death until the mid-1920s Ewell's friends and former students gathered annually at his grave for an informal memorial service. Beginning in 1925 the Phi Beta Kappa Society, founded at William and Mary in 1776, assumed responsibility for these services. On the anniversary of his death, members of the Society placed a wreath on his grave as a tribute not only to Old Buck but to all members of the college community who had died during the year.⁴

Memorial services are no longer held at Ewell's grave. Could Ewell, however, see the evidence of growth, the proliferation of buildings, that nearly hide the small cemetery where he is buried, he would consider that tribute enough.

NOTES FOR EPILOGUE

¹Commonwealth of Virginia, Acts of Assembly, [7 March] 1906, p. 94.

²Lyon G. Tyler, quoted in Parke Rouse, Jr., A House for a President (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1983), pp. 155, 161.

³Board of Visitors Minutes, 25 June 1894, CWM; Harriet S. Turner to Dr. Richard A. Wise, [1895], WM College Papers (quotation); Resolutions of the Alumni Society, 1 Oct. 1894, Cole Papers, CWM; Addresses Delivered at the Unveiling of the Tablet Erected by the Alumni to the Memory of Benjamin Stoddert Ewell, LL.D., Late President of the College of William and Mary (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1899), copy in Archives Chronology File, CWM.

⁴Flat Hat (student newspaper), 2 Nov. 1979.

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Note on Sources: The Ewell Family Papers at the College of William and Mary and the archives and manuscript collections at that institution provided the framework for this study. Details of Benjamin Ewell's youth, the West Point years, and his service at Hampden-Sydney College and Washington College (Washington and Lee University) are severely limited. At West Point files on well-known alumni are extensive, but for more obscure figures one must depend primarily on official records. Archives at Hampden-Sydney and Washington and Lee University contain little specific information concerning Ewell's early career. At the College of William and Mary many records for the pre-war years--including those of the Board of Visitors--have been lost or perished in the fires of 1859 or 1862. Pre-1862 records for Williamsburg-James City County were removed to Richmond prior to the Peninsula Campaign of 1862 but burned when Union troops forced the evacuation of the Confederate capital in April 1865. Faculty Minutes for the Ewell years survive but usually record only official actions without explanation. For the post-war period the college's records are essentially complete.

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