

Chapter 1

Introduction

A primary focus of educational historians is to better understand the role of education in history. Investigating the lives of individual learners from the past can help to clarify this focus by providing the means to interpret the complex interactions between the individual and lifelong institutions of education — including institutions such as family and church not as commonly associated with education as is schooling. Understanding this relationship is complicated by ongoing interactions or “configurations” among the educational institutions themselves.¹ Analyzing an individual's life history by highlighting significant educative events through the research genre of educational biography can enhance our understanding of the process that is education.

An appropriate subject for an educational biography is nineteenth-century Virginian, Robert Reid Howison. Howison's life spanned what historians consider to be the tumultuous ante-bellum period in Virginia history, beginning in 1820 and ending with the new state constitution in 1902 (although he died four years later in 1906).² The ninth child of Samuel and Helen Howison, Robert was born on June 22, 1820 in Fredericksburg, Virginia.³ At the time of his birth, the Howison household already consisted of four boys and four girls, and within several years the family circle was completed by the births of three more siblings, two sons, and a then a daughter who died in infancy. Robert's father, Samuel Howison, had left the farming profession and was a bank teller and notary public in Fredericksburg. Apparently education was valued in the family since each child was sent to one of the local schools as soon as he or she was of age.⁴

Robert had numerous learning experiences during his childhood years. At a very young age he memorized all the Kings and Queens of England as pictorially depicted in an old copy of Goldsmith's *History of England*.⁵ His parents provided for his formal

¹ Lawrence A. Cremin, *Public Education* (New York: The John Dewey Society, 1976).

² James Tice Moore, "From Dynasty to Disfranchisement: Some Reflections About Virginia History, 1820-1902," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 104 (1996):137-148.

³ Robert Reid Howison, *Twice Forty Years of American Life*, autobiography MS (1901), 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

schooling, and he first attended the Herard Academy - a private school near his home. Several years later, his father decided that twelve-year old Robert should attend the local mathematical school of Mr. John Goolrick. After this course in mathematics, Robert studied at the classical academy of Thomas H. Hanson where he learned the Latin and Greek languages and public speaking.⁶ However, at the age of fifteen, Robert had to leave school, just as his older brothers had, due to the need for family finances to be spent on the education of his younger brothers.

Robert's earliest employments included a job as a clerk in Mr. William Allen's *Tea, Wine & Liquor* store and warehouse, a position as a Junior Salesman in a cloth and dry goods store, and as a bookkeeper in a grocery business.⁷ In this latter position, he had opportunity, during slow periods in his work day and with his employer's blessing, to continue his reading of Greek, Latin, and French, to which he added English poetry, History, Prose, and Law.⁸ During slack times between jobs, Robert spent as much time as he could reading and acquiring knowledge, especially in History.⁹ He also joined the Young Men's Society and attributed much of his intellectual successes in later life to this organization.¹⁰

Robert prepared for occupational membership in two learned professions, law and the ministry, working alternately in them for the majority of his adult life. At the age of eighteen, after reading Blackstone's *Commentaries*, Robert mapped out a course of reading on legal subjects which laid the foundation for his first professional position in law.¹¹ He also attended the local law school taught by Judge John Tayloe Lomax, and in the Spring of 1841, at the age of 21, Robert applied for and gained a license to practice law. He then moved to Richmond, Virginia in June, 1841 to establish his law practice; however, within a year, he underwent a spiritual conversion and his inclinations turned towards the Ministry. To prepare for this calling, he enrolled at Union Theological Seminary in 1842, then located in Prince Edward County, Virginia, and graduated in 1844.

⁶ Ibid., 72-73.

⁷ Ibid., 76-80.

⁸ Ibid., 80.

⁹ Ibid., 77.

¹⁰ Ibid., 91.

¹¹ Ibid., 148-149.

While at the Seminary, he met his future wife, Mary Elizabeth Graham, a daughter of one of his professors. After graduation, he accepted a call to the Presbyterian Church in Staunton, Virginia; however, he had a nervous breakdown that winter and resigned from the ministry. He returned briefly to Fredericksburg, and then moved back to Richmond in 1847 to resume his law practice which eventually spanned twenty-five years. His avocational life in Richmond included playing chess, attending concerts and plays, and writing. One of the first gifts Robert gave his new wife was a copy of his two-volume work, *A History of Virginia From Its Discovery and Settlement*, with the first volume published in 1846.

In 1861, due to his age and the fact that he believed he could render more service on the home front, Howison paid a Swiss soldier \$1,000 to serve for him in the Civil War. However, Howison himself eventually became a member of the Home Guard and fought at several locations. He also worked in the office of the Adjutant General in Richmond, and capitalized on the opportunity presented to him in this position by writing a concurrent history of the Civil War based on his correspondence with the leaders of the battles. His writing was published in serial form in the *Southern Literary Messenger* until the publication was stopped due to a paper shortage. He was also the Secretary of a Joint Committee of the Confederate Congress and prepared a report on the treatment of prisoners of war. After the War, in 1870, he, among others, was seriously injured when the floor of the Richmond courtroom collapsed. The accident brought on a depression, and Robert moved his family back to Fredericksburg to the farm he had previously purchased from his brother in 1867. After several years of recovery, he decided to remain in Fredericksburg, and he practiced law there from 1875 to 1880.

Howison spent the latter part of his life primarily involved in the ministry, writing, and teaching. In 1880, he accepted the pastorate of the "Samuel Davies" organization of three churches - "Salem", "Beulah" and "Bethlehem" in Hanover County, Virginia and labored in this field for three years. During this tenure, in 1883, he won a fifty dollar prize for his essay on the best way to educate candidates for the Christian ministry. He later resigned from the Samuel Davies Church and, in May 1883, he was installed as Pastor of the Third Presbyterian Church in Richmond. During this same year, his only book on a

religious topic, *God and Creation*, was published. This work was censured by the Presbytery, although Howison was able to continue preaching. Due to the inconvenience of having his family divided between two residences, in Richmond and Fredericksburg, he resigned after six years at Third Presbyterian and permanently settled at *Braehead*. He pastored several small churches near Fredericksburg in Culpeper, Orange, and Ashland respectively. His writings during these years include a history of Fredericksburg entitled, *Fredericksburg: Past, Present and Future*, written in 1880 at the request of the Fredericksburg Library and Lyceum Association, *A Student's History of the United States of America*, published in 1892, as well as numerous articles for newspapers and church journals. In 1894, at 74 years of age, he became a lecturer on American History at Fredericksburg College. He received the honorary degree LL.D. in 1897 from Hampden Sidney College, as well as other honors from historical societies. He died on November 1, 1906, at 86 years of age.

Howison's life is of interest to me due to the fact that he is my husband's great-great grandfather and because of the material available on his lifelong learning experiences. Although his life could be studied from a variety of perspectives, such as through his roles as lawyer, minister, historian, and author in both pre- and post- Civil War Virginia, this study will examine Howison's life as a learner. Five years prior to his death, on May 16, 1901, Howison completed his autobiography and entitled the manuscript *Twice Forty Years of American Life*. This hand-written document, along with other pertinent primary and secondary material, provides source material from which his learning experiences can be analyzed within a general chronological framework of his life based on geographic considerations.

An Approach to the Study

A framework for conducting this study has been based on previously established methods for conducting an educational biography, with an added emphasis on the individual's self-stated learning experiences in order to derive the most educationally significant occurrences throughout the individual's life. Much of educational biography methodology has been developed from the work of educational historian Lawrence

Cremin.¹² Cremin stresses the need for writers of the history of education to have a clear conception or definition of education before embarking on writing its history. He defines education as "the experience resulting from the deliberate, systematic, and sustained efforts of others to transmit or evoke knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, or sensibilities, as well as the experience involved in the subject's own deliberate, systematic, and sustained efforts to acquire knowledge, attitudes, values and sensibilities."¹³ Therefore, a prerequisite for the educational biographer includes determining what education is – understanding and articulating the concept or process that is education – and then discerning its lifelong effects.

Based on a stated conception of education, educational biography describes educatively significant experiences in the life of a learner.¹⁴ Cremin defines educational biography as "a portrayal of an individual life focusing on the experience of education — the experience resulting from the deliberate, systematic, and sustained efforts of others to transmit or evoke knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, and sensibilities, as well as the experience involved in the subject's own deliberate, systematic, and sustained efforts to acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, and sensibilities."¹⁵ An educational biography consists of the efforts of others, such as parents, relatives, peers, clergy, teachers, as well as institutions such as libraries, museums, and occupational groups, to convey knowledge and values, including the individual's response to these efforts as well as self-initiated learning, such as independent scholarship activities. As the individual responds to available institutions of education, including independent scholarship efforts, he or she forms unique patterns of learning, and, in turn, reciprocally impacts the educational provider. The outcome of the interaction is initially present in the individual and in the configuration but cannot be predicted by looking at either in isolation.¹⁶

¹² Lawrence A. Cremin, *Traditions of American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977), 146.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Lawrence A. Cremin, *Public Education*, 38, 42.

¹⁵ Cremin, *Traditions of American Education*. 146.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 147.

Understanding the lifelong processes of learning and education is also central to the work of a colleague of Lawrence Cremin, Hope Jensen Leichter.¹⁷ Leichter writes, "When we consider that individual's learn from many significant others - parents, siblings, grandparents and other kin, peers, and clergy as well as schoolteachers - we are impelled to examine the character of the teaching and learning experience in each of these educative encounters. Once that inquiry has begun, we soon see the need to chart the content and course of the individual's various encounters, and above all to gain understanding of how he engages in, moves through, and combines diverse educative experiences over a lifetime."¹⁸ Leichter characterizes the patterning of these educational encounters as an individual's "educative style."¹⁹ Several components Leichter considers important to educative style include timing, learning modes, pace of learning, and the way individuals combine learning experiences. Other factors of educative style include inner or other-directed learning and how an individual accepts and integrates the knowledge presented to him or her by others.²⁰

Examples of educational biographies representative of the genre are not numerous. However, one exemplary educational biography has been written by a student of Lawrence Cremin, Ellen Condliffe Lagemann.²¹ Lagemann, in *A Generation of Women*, posits a definition of education and examines its effects, implicitly informed by educational theory, in the lives of five women. She "investigates the experience of education or the meaning of education within the context of an individual's life. The approach is designed to bring into view the educative functions of a variety of different institutions, and to assess the effects of those institutions, as well as the effects of noninstitutionally related teaching and learning, on the individual under consideration."²² Lagemann advocates the use of biography in educational research since it allows one to look at the broad process of education over the lifespan, and it permits the writer to select significant and meaningful educative events throughout the life of the subject. Lagemann also provides

¹⁷ Hope Jensen Leichter, "The Concept of Educative Style," *Teachers College Record* 75, no. 2 (1973).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 240.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 240-244.

²¹ Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, *A Generation of Women* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

²² *Ibid.*, 167.

comprehensive notes on the research methodology of educational biography.²³ Lagemann stresses that the ultimate goal of an educational biography is to “to enrich our knowledge of history and our understanding of that part of human growth that is education.”²⁴

Educational biography can be distinguished from its related biographical forms of literary biography, hagiography, psychobiography, and life history. In addition to establishing the basic facts of a life, educational biography differs from literary biography by primarily highlighting the educationally significant experiences of the individual's life. Hagiography is essentially a biography idealizing the subject. This form of biography has been described by its critics as an "extended obituary notice" adulating the specific individual.²⁵ Conversely, educational biography seeks to recognize the individual's learning as Cremin writes, "The point of the educational biography is to indicate the tremendous range and complexity of educational experience, not to trumpet the triumph of the self-made American."²⁶ Educational biography also differs from psychobiography by concentrating on conscious processes implicitly informed by educational theory, not psychoanalytic theory.²⁷ Cremin discusses other life histories, biographies, and autobiographies, such as that of Benjamin Franklin, as resembling the educational biography genre, but not illustrating it exactly.²⁸ An example of another biography of a learner is Suzanne Caswell's dissertation, *William Byrd of Westover: Adult Learner*. Caswell analyzes the learning practices of colonial Virginian, William Byrd, by relating his lifelong learning experiences within the social, intellectual, political, and cultural values of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Virginia. Educational biography methodology is similar to that of life history research found primarily in the social sciences in that both

²³ Ibid., 167-180.

²⁴ Ibid., 7.

²⁵ Marietta A. Hyde, *Modern Biography* (New York: Brace and Company, 1926).

²⁶ Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 122.

²⁷ Jacques Barzun, "History: The Muse and Her Doctors," *Daedalus*, vol. 77 (1972).

²⁸ Lawrence A. Cremin, *Traditions of American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876*, 147.

methods involve intensive autobiographical research, but life history methodology does not necessarily highlight significant educative experiences.²⁹

Several problematics concerning educational biography have been noted. Geraldine Clifford discusses several problems in writing educational biography, namely, the difficulty of defining education and then documenting its effects, as well as the problems inherent in gathering enough information during the individual's early life when the basic constructs of education are formed.³⁰ She also alludes to the historiography of educational biographers as becoming, "increasingly less intellectual and more social history."³¹ Several limitations of educational biography, as discussed by Leichter, include the limited nature of the questions biographers are able to ask due to their own poor conceptions of educational development and the lack of available data covering an individual's entire lifespan. She also states that biographical research has limited use in explaining educational problems unique to the present day, such as the use of technology.³²

The work of the German philosopher of history and intellectual biographer, William Dilthey, can add to our understanding of the centrality of using autobiography in better understanding historical events..³³ Dilthey's conception of history focused on understanding the individual through the individual's own understanding of himself and his times. The primary historian, according to Dilthey, is the autobiographer or, "the person who seeks the connecting threads in the history of his life."³⁴ Dilthey, according to Rickman, saw an individual's life, particularly an influential individual, as being a microcosm reflecting the macrocosm of the world around him. Rickman summarizes, "he [the influential individual] was part of the intellectual and political movements which he helped to direct and heir to traditions which he helped to perpetuate, or to which he gave a new twist. He interacted with individuals, institutions and organizations which influenced

²⁹ Geraldine Jonich Clifford, "The Life Story Biographic Study," in *Historical Inquiry in Education: A Research Agenda*, ed. John Hardin Best (Washington, D. C.: American Educational Research Association, 1983).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 68.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

³² Leichter, 247.

³³ H. P. Rickman, *Wilhelm Dilthey: Pioneer of the Human Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

³⁴ Wilhelm Dilthey, *W. Dilthey: Selected Writings*, trans. H. P. Rickman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 215.

him and which he, in turn, affected." ³⁵ A primary methodological principle of Dilthey's work includes taking into account the mutual interdependence of parts and wholes of the individual's life. Individual actions must be considered in relation to the larger context of which they are a part. Rickman also summarizes another tenet of Dilthey's methodology as being the "double-focus" principle which includes assessing the person by what his contemporaries thought about him as well as how the individual saw himself. Rickman explains, "If we cannot enter into a subject's point of view and the inner life from which his actions originated, we cannot write a proper biography. This is why Dilthey considered the use of letters, diaries and the subject's own writings or lectures of outstanding importance."³⁶ Dilthey also believed that a biographer should not only seek to capture an individual's life from the individual's own time perspective, but should use the virtue of hindsight and assumptions of one's own age to complete the historical picture.

The framework for this study has been primarily influenced by the educational biography methodology suggested by Lawrence Cremin and his colleagues. Cremin's emphasis on formulating a definition of education has led, for the purposes of this study, to the proposal of the following definition of education. Education is defined as a process consisting of the sum of an individual's learning experiences at any point in the lifespan. A learning experience can occur when the individual comes into contact with an external institution of education such as parents, teachers, books, friends, church, or through internal self-initiated learning, resulting in some type of outcome. Therefore, the sum of these learning experiences, at any point in the lifespan, equates with the individual's education. This definition will serve as a foundation for studying Howison's lifelong learning experiences, with a particular emphasis on his self-described learning encounters. The definition is not so broad as to include non-educative events nor restrictive to the point where formal schooling is considered the only source of education. The works of Cremin and Lagemann have informed this study by clarifying the methodology and approach to writing an educational biography. Incorporating Dilthey's philosophy concerning the use of the individual's perspective, primarily through autobiography, can

³⁵ H. P. Rickman, *Wilhelm Dilthey: Pioneer of the Human Studies*, 33.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

help to overcome some of the problematics of supplying data during the early years of the individual's life and documenting the effects of education.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study, as well as the related research questions, stem from an examination of Robert Reid Howison's interactions with lifelong educational institutions, including the outcomes of these interactions. The first purpose of this study is to develop an educational biography on the life of Robert Reid Howison as a learner, associating his educative encounters, with respect to his personal characteristics and natural abilities, within the environmental context of the political, economic, intellectual, religious, and social aspects of the Virginia society in which he lived for the majority of the nineteenth century and into the first decade of the twentieth century. An analysis of his learning experiences, as seen primarily from his autobiography, coupled with his other writings and those contemporaneous with him, will provide data for an educational biography on the life of this nineteenth-century Virginian.

A second purpose is to look at the practices and efforts of Robert Reid Howison as a teacher. This study will examine his experiences and contributions as an educator, with an emphasis on the methods he used in teaching others.

Guiding Questions

In order to document the process of education as evidenced through the life of an individual learner, Robert Reid Howison, his interactions with external educational institutions, coupled with his self-initiated learning experiences, will be examined in order to ascertain the effects of learning. The following questions have been developed based on a proposed educational biography framework. The questions determine the boundaries for acquisition and analysis of data pertaining to the purposes of this study. The primary research questions are as follows:

1. What were Howison's significant lifelong learning experiences, based on interactions with institutions of education, as well as his own self-initiated learning? What were the outcomes of these learning experiences over the course of his lifespan?

2. How did family, as an educational institution, contribute to Howison's educational development? To what extent did educationally significant others, such as relatives and friends, have an impact on Robert's life as a learner?
3. What role did formal schooling, as an institution of education, play in Robert Reid Howison's education? How did he interact with the learning opportunities presented to him in the nineteenth-century academies he attended? in law school? in seminary?
4. Did Howison's employments function as an institution of education? If so, how was this evidenced?
5. How did his lifelong affiliation with the Presbyterian Church as an institution of education influence Howison's education?
6. What do Howison's self-initiated learning efforts, as understood primarily through his reading and writing, reveal concerning his education? What was the influence of learning societies, newspapers, magazines/journals, libraries, and museums on Howison as a learner? Were Howison's avocations or hobbies educative? If so, how?
7. Was writing his autobiography an educational experience for Howison? If so, how was this indicated?
8. How did Howison participate as an educator and what were the outcomes of his efforts as an educator? Did Howison use his writing to educate others?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study stems from the opportunity it presents to examine the experiences of a learner from the past, Robert Reid Howison, and to assess the effects of these experiences on his life and thereby illuminate the historical record and the educational process. From an educational perspective, this study helps to clarify the constants and variables in learning and helps to explain the process that is education. An examination of Howison's learning experiences adds to the more general body of knowledge about how individual learners interact with institutions of education as well as how self-initiated learning is conducted throughout the lifespan.

Studying the life of Robert Reid Howison adds to our understanding of how education was perceived and practiced in the past, particularly in both pre- and post- Civil War Virginia. This study illustrates how one person interacted with the broad range of

educational institutions in nineteenth-century Virginia as well as how these institutions formed configurations that complemented or contradicted one another. Brent Tarter writes about the dearth of insightful studies concerning Virginia history, and calls for fresh research to provide new insights into neglected topics.³⁷ The genre of educational biography can help to complete historical gaps by illustrating the learning experiences of individuals within a continuously evolving historic landscape.

This study also contributes to the research genre of educational biography by refining and/or expanding this methodology through application.

Method

Educational biography methodology is based on the work of Lawrence Cremin and his colleagues. This methodology is applied through positing a definition of education, and then using the definition to filter significant educative experiences from an individual's life and assessing the effects of these experiences. To reiterate, for the purposes of this study, education was defined as a process consisting of the sum of an individual's learning experiences at any point in the lifespan. Both externally and internally initiated learning was examined, with a particular emphasis on self-stated learning experiences. In applying this methodology to the life of Robert Reid Howison, his earliest educational experiences in his family of origin, extending from his ancestry to his parents and siblings to his own family after marriage, were examined. The role of educatively significant others, such as neighbors, peers and friends, were also examined as related to his education. Traditional educational institutions, academies, law school, and seminary, were all institutions for Howison's formal schooling. Other community organizations, such as the young men's society, historical societies, libraries, newspapers, magazines and journals, were learning opportunities available to Howison. Another lifelong educational agent was the Presbyterian church and related religious influences, including movements such as the Second Great Awakening and Howison's own individual spiritual proclivities. An essential element in his education was his own independent scholarship activities encompassing self-initiated reading and writing efforts, as well as his avocations of attending concerts, plays,

³⁷ Brent Tarter, "The New Virginia Bookshelf," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 104 (winter 1996): 7.

and playing chess. Educational opportunities were also presented to him through his various occupational endeavors. Additionally, Howison was an educator of others at various times throughout his life. Each of these educative institutions was discussed, as applicable, in succeeding chapters of the study to examine educative intentionality, patterning or grouping, and processual approach — that of the institution being contemporaneous or successive to other institutions.

Sources of Data

Data were collected from primary and secondary sources relating to the historic context of Howison's life. A principal primary source was his unpublished autobiography, *Twice Forty Years of American Life*, which is in my possession. Howison completed this 384-page manuscript on May 16, 1901 at 81 years of age. In this handwritten document, he chronicled his remembrance of events and people throughout his lifetime and it provides an important commentary on his learning experiences. Information contained in his autobiography was spot-checked against other sources to ensure veracity. In addition to his autobiography, his major books, *A History of Virginia From Its Discovery and Settlement, God and Creation, and A Students' History of the United States of America*, as well as his other writings and scrapbooks, were examined in order to understand his learning experiences, his philosophy of education and general information about his life as a Virginia lawyer, minister, historian, author, and educator.

Robert Howison's 95 year-old autobiographical manuscript is still in the possession of his descendants. After Howison's death in 1906, his effects remained at the family home, *Braehead*, in Fredericksburg, which was then occupied at various times by his son, Samuel Graham, and his two unmarried daughters, Helen and Mary. Eventually, two of Samuel Graham's daughters (grand-daughters of Robert Reid Howison), Nannie Watkins Howison Stephens and Mary Graham Howison, who later resided at *Braehead*, became caretakers of the manuscript. After Mary Graham's death, Nannie gave the manuscript to her son, Dr. W. Graham Stephens of Troutville, Virginia in the late 1980's. As the owner of the manuscript, he loaned it to the author for the purposes of this study.

The manuscript presents itself as an aged document. It is handwritten in black ink on lined tablet paper bound in sections on the left side by white thread, with no cover

present. The pages measure 12.5 inches by 7.75 inches and have a star emblem with the words "NORTH STAR" impressed on each page in the upper left-hand corner. The title page presents an unintelligible emblem in the upper left-hand corner and has more visible signs of aging and yellowing than the rest of the document. The 384 hand-numbered pages are divided into twenty-two chapters with a title page, a table of contents, and a one-page preface. The preface was signed and dated by Robert Reid Howison on May 16, 1901. The individual chapter titles have been written on their respective pages in red ink; however, they have been written within the body of the text as if they were added after the entire document was completed. Although somewhat rambling, the manuscript is written in a general, chronological format.

Cursory evidence, comparing the handwriting of this manuscript with another handwritten manuscript by the same author at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia indicates the authorship to be that of Robert Reid Howison. The manuscript at the Museum of the Confederacy is the second volume of a history of the Civil War written by Robert Reid Howison. The paper used in each manuscript is similar, however the latter has a leather cover with the words *History of the Civil War* by Robert Reid Howison embossed in gold on the spine. A notation in *The Papers of the Southern Historical Society* cited the donation of this manuscript and related documents from Robert Howison to be one of the "most valuable contributions" to the society.³⁸

Portions of Howison's autobiography were published earlier this century when the manuscript was on loan to the Swem Library at William and Mary College. The table of contents was published in the *William and Mary College Quarterly* in 1918. A preface to the listing of chapters in the table of contents admonished readers not to forget this Virginia historian and scholar.³⁹ Chapter Two of the autobiography, "Fredericksburg Her People and Characters," was published in the *William and Mary College Quarterly* in the October, 1922 issue,⁴⁰ and a part of Chapter Six, "Duelling in Virginia," was published in

³⁸ J. William Jones, *Historical Society Papers, July to December, 1876* (Richmond, VA: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1990), 2:206.

³⁹ A. J. Morrison, "Dr. Howison's Autobiography," *William and Mary College Quarterly* 4 (April 1918): 219.

⁴⁰ Robert Reid Howison, "Fredericksburg, Her People and Characters," *William and Mary College Quarterly* 2 (October 1922).

the October, 1924 issue of this same journal.⁴¹ In these publications, no introduction is given other than a footnote citing the source of the material to be that of Robert Reid Howison's autobiography. Additionally, the manuscript was used as source material by W. Hamilton Bryson in *The Virginia Law Reporters Before 1880*. Bryson summarized much of Howison's autobiography in the final chapter of his book wherein he discusses the lives of other Virginia lawyers such as George Wythe and Thomas Jefferson. Robert Reid Howison was included in this publication because of his contributions to the Virginia bar during the nineteenth century. According to Bryson, Howison's small book, *Reports of Criminal Trials*, has been almost forgotten since the reports cannot be used today as precedent; however, they do have historical interest and value as being a primary source describing criminal proceedings in the 1850's.⁴²

An abundance of data exists concerning the life and work of Robert Reid Howison. A second handwritten manuscript detailing his history of the Civil War (Volume II) was used to corroborate his handwriting as well as the bearing it has on his educational efforts. His personal scrapbooks of newspaper clippings and handwritten notations evidence his interest in recording events concerning his life and those important to him. His publications, such as his books and periodical and newspaper articles were used to piece together his life history and document his learning and educational efforts. Other family records such as the journal kept by his older sister, Jane Howison Beale, was used to round out scenes of the family circle.⁴³

Other non-published sources such as vital records of birth, marriage and death notices, land deeds, census/enumeration reports, and other legal records found in court records or court order books, military, church and cemetery, as well as tax records and city directories provide quantitative information to complete Howison's educational biography. Additionally, the writings of contemporaries of Howison, such as Presbyterian Minister Moses Drury Hoge, were reviewed for information concerning Howison. A final source of data was *Braehead*, the home Robert purchased from his brother John in 1867.

⁴¹ Robert Reid Howison, "Duelling in Virginia," *William and Mary College Quarterly* 4 (October 1924).

⁴² W. Hamilton Bryson, *The Virginia Law Reporters Before 1880*, ed. W. Hamilton Bryson (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977).

Many of Robert Reid Howison's personal effects, such as his books and furniture, are still in this family-owned homeplace. An examination of these items lends additional objective information to the study as the contents of his personal effects are enumerated.

Data was collected by reviewing the above listed sources as well as other primary source information to be found in local, state and national repositories. Although there are no collections pertaining solely to the life of Howison, several repositories such as the Virginia Historical Society, The White House of the Confederacy and the Museum of the Confederacy, as well as the State Library of Virginia and its branches contain documents pertaining to the life of Howison in addition to other pertinent historical data. The collection at the Presbyterian Historical Society at Montreat, North Carolina and Union Seminary in Richmond, Virginia contain writings of Howison and other evidences of his lifelong affiliation with the Presbyterian Church.

Additionally, interviews were conducted with Howison family members and citizens of Fredericksburg who have memorabilia or who could relate oral histories concerning Howison's education.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized chronologically and sub-divided into three major geographical divisions in Howison's life. The first geographical division extends from his birth to age 21 when he lived in Fredericksburg, Virginia. The second division begins when he moved to Richmond in 1841, to begin his law practice, and where he lived, except for one year in a Staunton, Virginia pastorate, until the "Capitol disaster" accident in 1870. The third division starts after the accident in 1870 when he returned to Fredericksburg to recover and where he lived the remainder of his life preaching, teaching, and writing (except for six years when he maintained a second, dual residence in Richmond due to a Pastorate).

Chapter One discusses an approach to the study, guiding questions, and research methodology.

⁴³ Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc., *The Journal Of Jane Howison Beale: Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1850-1862* (Fredericksburg, VA: Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, 1995).

Chapter Two presents Howison's educational experiences stemming from his heritage, birth and early life in Fredericksburg, Virginia, including his family life, schooling, and early career, concluding in the Spring of 1841, when he completed his legal training and moved to Richmond, Virginia to establish his professional law practice.

Chapter Three discusses his educational experiences beginning in 1841 with his initial law practice, his spiritual conversion and subsequent attendance at Union Theological Seminary, his aborted Pastoral experience in Staunton, Virginia, his return to Richmond, marriage, his first book, and his law career in Richmond, Virginia until 1870, when he returned to Fredericksburg after the “Capitol disaster” accident.

Chapter Four examines his return to Fredericksburg in 1870, his role as an itinerant Pastor, his concurrent ministry at Third Presbyterian Church in Richmond, his writings, and his tenure as a professor in the fledgling Fredericksburg College during in his later years.

Chapter Five reviews the purposes of this study and draws conclusions about the education of Robert Reid Howison. It also suggests directions for further research.

Chapter 2

Formative Learning Experiences: 1820-1841

Robert Reid Howison's birth on June 22, 1820, in Fredericksburg, Virginia, occurred during the period of United States history known as the "Era of Good Feelings" with James Monroe as the fifth President of the United States and the last of the "Virginia dynasty" to serve in that office.⁴⁴ At the time of Howison's birth, the American republic was only thirty-seven years old; however, Fredericksburg was beginning its second century of existence.⁴⁵ This chapter examines Howison's learning experiences during his childhood and youth, highlighting the influences of his family and the Fredericksburg community on his education, and concludes when Robert received his license to practice law in June, 1841, at the age of 21, and his subsequent move to Richmond, Virginia to establish his initial law practice.

Family and Community

The fact that Robert Howison's birth occurred in Fredericksburg, Virginia was a result of two family lines converging at a particular time and place. Documenting his heritage is an important element in understanding his life, specifically as a learner. In addition to providing information about his family, the lives of Howison's ancestors can help to situate the historical context of events leading up to his birth.

Paternal Ancestry. Howison's paternal ancestry dates back to 1450 with the earliest known ancestor being John Howison of Edinburgh, Scotland.⁴⁶ John's great-great grandson, Jacques (John) Howison (d.1618), was memorialized by Sir Walter Scott in *Tales of A Grandfather*. This engaging story relates how this Howison obtained the *Braehead* estate and a Coat of Arms from the King of Scotland.⁴⁷ The most likely immigration to American soil came four generations later when descendants of Jacques

⁴⁴ Emily J. Salmon and Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr. eds. *The Hornbook of Virginia History* (Richmond: The Library of Virginia, 1994).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 33. The American republic officially began with the Peace of Paris in 1783 and Fredericksburg was settled in 1622.

⁴⁶ Claude E. Laws, *The Howison family in America: An Account of the Descendants of John Howison of "Braehead", Scotland, from his Emigration Up to the Year 1935* (Richmond: J. F. and M. L. Howison, 1935).

(John) Howison (d. 1618) of *Braehead*, John and Robert Howison, sons of Alexander Howison of *Braehead*, without land or wives, immigrated to Maryland around 1731. Their three older brothers had died and the fourth, William, had inherited *Braehead* at their father's death in 1703.⁴⁸ These two young brothers negotiated travel on an American bound ship by agreeing to pay for their passage after their arrival; however, Robert died shortly after their coming. John, at age 21, was left to finish paying for their voyage, which he accomplished by farm labor in Maryland for two years. His work ethic and thrift soon enabled him to acquire property, and eventually his Scottish sweetheart, Ann Wood, traveled across the Atlantic and became his wife.

John and Ann Howison had one son, Stephen, born in 1736, who married Mary Brooke, of an old aristocratic family in Maryland, in 1758.⁴⁹ Soon after their marriage, Stephen and Mary settled near Dumphries in Prince William County, Virginia. They homesteaded a tract of land and built a log cabin to house their twelve children, nine sons and three daughters, each receiving a "liberal education."⁵⁰ Founded and built by George Washington, the Pohick Church was located about halfway between the Howison homestead and the Mount Vernon estate. Washington served as a vestryman in this church for 22 years, and although no record attests to the fact, these contemporaries may have met there in worship.⁵¹ Stephen and Mary's eighth child, Stephen Howison III, inherited the family homestead, and he wrote a poem "in his twilight years" prior to his death in 1862, describing his memories of the then hundred year old property.⁵² Samuel Howison, their ninth child and twin with the tenth child Mary Ann, was born in January, 1779 and later became the father of Robert Reid Howison.⁵³

Maternal ancestry. Howison's maternal ancestry can be traced to the McDonnell clan in Ireland whose contentious leader, conciliated by Queen Elizabeth, received land and the Castle Antrim from her hand and thus became the Earl of Antrim.⁵⁴ A descendent

⁴⁷ Sir Walter Scott, *Tales of a Grandfather* (New York: University Publishing Company, 1898).

⁴⁸ Laws, 4.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁰ Laws, 9-A.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² The Howison Cemetery at the Howison Homestead Park, Dumphries, Virginia.

⁵³ Laws, 10.

⁵⁴ Howison, autobiography MS, 22.

of this McDonnell, the Third Earl of Antrim, Daniel McDonald, born in County Antrim, Ireland, had received a bounty to pay for his trip to Virginia on October 20, 1731, about the same time as John and Robert Howison were emigrating from Scotland.⁵⁵ After McDonald's arrival, he settled in King George County, Virginia and, according to his tombstone, he was ordained in 1731 as Minister in the Hanover Parish from 1731-1735 and in the Brunswick Parish from 1735-1762.⁵⁶ Robert Howison, in writing of the Reverend McDonald, states that his name was actually "Donald" McDonald, not "Daniel" as Bishop Meade refers to him.⁵⁷ The Reverend McDonald's tombstone was not erected by his descendants until 1940, and this marker as well as other local records record his name as Daniel.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Daniel (Donald) McDonald married Ellen Barret on July 26, 1740, and the couple had two sons and four daughters.⁵⁹

The sixth child and fourth daughter of the Rev. Daniel (Donald) McDonald and his wife Ellen (Barret), Helen McDonald, married Edward Moor⁶⁰ in October, 1776.⁶¹ Edward and Helen (MacDonald) Moor lived in what was to become Stafford County after the boundary alteration of 1777.⁶² Edward was a successful merchant and planter and the couple had four children. Their third child and second daughter, Helen Moor, born in 1784, married Samuel Howison of Fredericksburg in 1801 when she was sixteen years old, and gave birth to her ninth child, Robert, nineteen years later.⁶³

The Fredericksburg community. Samuel and Helen Howison began their married life and reared their family in Fredericksburg, Virginia. This small city has a history extending back almost to the founding of the United States. First explored by the colonists one year after the establishment of Jamestown, in the summer of 1608, Captain John Smith led an expedition up the Rappahannock River to present day Fredericksburg and

⁵⁵ George H. S. King, "Copies of Extant Wills from Counties Whose Records Have Been Destroyed," *Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, 28 (1947):109.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Howison, autobiography MS, 9.

⁵⁸ cf. King, "Copies of Extant Wills...", with Overwharton Parish Register of Stafford County, VA, page 40 and King George Will Book #1, page 146.

⁵⁹ King, "Copies of Extant Wills...", 109.

⁶⁰ The original spelling from Edward's will is Moor according to George King in Tyler's Quarterly; Robert Reid Howison, in his autobiography, uses the more modern Spelling of Moore.

⁶¹ King, "Copies of Extant Wills...", 111.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Falmouth where the ship could not proceed further due to the waterfalls. Spotsylvania County historian, James Mansfield, writes that Smith unknowingly, “had reached an ethnic

⁶⁴ The Native Americans previously encountered by Smith and others were the Algonquins, usually friendly to the white settlers, but now Captain Smith and his party encountered the Manahoacs, relatives of the more war-like Sioux. These Indians and others had found the area along the Rappahannock to be a choice place for fishing and hunting; therefore, they built villages within a distance of about twenty miles on either side of the falls. The Indian trails of the Rappahannock Valley have been described as resembling a huge spider web with the present sites of Falmouth and Fredericksburg as central points linking other regional centers. These trails eventually became the roads used by white men for trade and westward travel.⁶⁵

Named for Frederick, Prince of Wales, Fredericksburg was incorporated as a town in 1727,⁶⁶ although tradition holds that white settlements have been there continuously since 1622.⁶⁷ One of the earliest enterprises near colonial Fredericksburg was the iron industry, developed and managed by Virginia’s former Governor and leader of the “Knights of the Golden Horseshoe,” Alexander Spotswood. William Byrd, of *Westover* plantation near Richmond, visited Spotswood at Germanna and also visited Fredericksburg in 1732. Byrd recorded in his diary that Fredericksburg had three buildings of importance, a church, a prison, and a court house, as well as many natural advantages; however, there were very few inhabitants living there at the time.⁶⁸

Fredericksburg has been portrayed as being more cosmopolitan than provincial in nature as evidenced by its many contributions to colonial culture. Edmund Morgan writes concerning eighteenth-century Fredericksburg, “The pattern of social life established by the wealthy planters was copied, so far as possible, by the small number of merchants and professional men who lived in Williamsburg, Fredericksburg, and Norfolk, and the few

⁶⁴ James Roger Mansfield, *A History of Early Spotsylvania* (Spotsylvania County Board of Supervisors, Spotsylvania, VA, 1977), 2.

⁶⁵ Oscar Darter, *Colonial Fredericksburg and Neighborhood in Perspective* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1957), 48.

⁶⁶ S. J. Quinn, *The History of the City of Fredericksburg Virginia* (Richmond, VA: The Hermitage Press, 1908), 37.

⁶⁷ Vivian Minor Fleming, *Historic Periods of Fredericksburg, 1608-1861* (Richmond, VA: W. C. Hill Printing Company, 1921), 7.

other towns of colonial Virginia.”⁶⁹ Oscar Darter based his extensive study concerning Fredericksburg as an important cultural center on its trade, observations of early travelers, diverse populace, and the variety of industry and schools as contributing to Fredericksburg being one of several important urban colonial communities. He attributes the impact of Fredericksburg on American history as stemming from the leadership of men such as George Washington, James Madison, James Monroe, George Mason, John Marshall, John Paul Jones, and George Rogers Clark, who were born or educated in Fredericksburg or its environs.⁷⁰

The first school in Fredericksburg was established in the mid 1700’s by the Reverend James Mayre and was attended by Washington, and possibly Madison and Monroe as well.⁷¹ By the mid-1700s, there were over fifty private schools in the Fredericksburg area, not including a large number of tutors who instructed the youth in the private homes of the planters and wealthy citizens.⁷² Apparently Fredericksburg had greater educational advantages than some of the larger cities in the colonies, as historian Joseph Ketts writes,

“As for the South, much of Virginia was little more than a rowdy frontier in the eighteenth century....Most members of the colonial Virginia gentry lived primarily in a world of oral culture, into which print culture, the disposition to acquire ideas and information from books, pamphlets, newspapers, and magazines, infrequently and inconsistently intruded. Even in Virginia, towns like Petersburg and Fredericksburg were vastly more congenial environments in which to cultivate literature and philosophy than were the plantations. For rural youth of modest means, in other words, for most youth, the obstacles to acquiring higher or “polite knowledge were formidable.”⁷³

Fredericksburg has been characterized as being a “hotbed of sedition” during the days of the American Revolution, with the Lee’s, Washington, Mason, and others meeting at the Weedon Tavern and who “spearheaded the Revolution intellectually and

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⁶⁸ Darter, 60.

⁶⁹ Edmund S. Morgan, *Virginians at Home* (1952; reprint, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. and Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated, 1972), 85.

⁷⁰ Darter, 207.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 132.

⁷³ Joseph H. Ketts, *The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties: From Self-Improvement to Adult Education in America, 1750-1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 25.

⁷⁴ Darter, 190-191.

Fredericksburg reached its maximum ante-bellum population in the first decades of the nineteenth century and then experienced a population decline, paralleled by other Virginia towns, in the aftermath of the panic of 1819 and the ensuing depression.⁷⁵ At the time of Howison's birth in 1820, 3,306 citizens were recorded as living in Fredericksburg with 50.4% being White, 11.9% Free Black, and 37.7% as Slaves.⁷⁶

Eyewitness accounts from travelers visiting Fredericksburg around the time of Howison's birth reveal their impressions of the town. Two Frenchmen, J. G. Moffatt and J. M. Carriere, who visited Norfolk, Fredericksburg, and Orange County in September, 1816, wrote concerning Fredericksburg: "Fredericksburg is rather pleasantly situated.... There are some isolated houses which appear very nice, although built of wood. They are embellished with gardens. But the charm is soon dissipated by the thought of a dirty sky, a wicked climate, a humid soil, a dreary solitude, badly formed manners, crude usages, religious fanaticism, a democracy which is unbearable in the great mass of the white inhabitants and of a comic elevation among the rich, and by the lack of an advanced society of good taste and tone enriched by urbanity."⁷⁷ Another traveler, William Tell Harris, wrote to friends in England concerning his visit to Fredericksburg sometime between 1817-19. Harris commented on the extensive trade in grains, flour and lumber between Fredericksburg and other ports such as New York.⁷⁸

Robert Howison also recorded, in his autobiography, conditions in and around Fredericksburg at the time of his birth. He described the available means of transportation as being private carriages and racehorses, with public travel consisting of steamboats and stage coaches which had to travel on poor roads, "dangerous to horse and man - life and

⁷⁹ Additionally, he described the large estates surrounding Fredericksburg, with names such as *Fall Hill, Snowden, Kenmore, Mansfield, Chatham, Travellers Rest,*

⁷⁵ Thomas Field Armstrong, "Urban Vision in Virginia: A Comparative Study of Ante-Bellum Fredericksburg, Lynchburg, and Staunton," Corcoran Department of History, University of Virginia, 1974), 319.

⁷⁶ Armstrong, 318.

⁷⁷ J. G. Moffatt and J. M. Carriere, "A Frenchman Visits Norfolk, Fredericksburg and Orange County," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 53 (1945): 115.

⁷⁸ William Tell Harris, "Remarks Made During a Tour Through the United States of America in the Years 1817, 1818, and 1819 in a Series of Letters to Friends in England." (London: Sherwood, Neely, & Jones, 1821).

⁷⁹ Howison, autobiography MS, 6.

Wakefield, and Malden, as being quite opulent, “North, and South, and East, and West of Fredericksburg and on the Rappahannock below her, were the seats of families then wealthy and comfortable, at least in ownership of much land and many slaves, and of handsome houses abundantly furnished with gold and silver plate, carpets of luxurious richness in fabric and color, grand pianos, and means for repose and sleep not exceeded by any apartments in Persia or Turkey.”⁸⁰

Early Learning Experiences: 1820-1825

After Samuel and Helen Howison set up housekeeping in Fredericksburg, they had twelve children born to them, seven boys and five girls, of whom Robert, born on June 22, 1820, was the ninth child and the fifth son.⁸¹ Samuel Howison’s occupations as Teller and Notary Public paid him about fourteen hundred and fifty dollars a year, a sum which allowed him to rear his large family in respectable style.⁸² Robert’s father, a member of the professional middle class of Fredericksburg⁸³ was known among the other merchants and business men for his business acumen and agreeable social nature. The family’s house on Prince Edward Street was built of wood and had a small front yard and a garden in the back separated from the neighboring Kenmore estate by a fence constructed out of tall palings. The family had a gardener of African descent named “Uncle Reuben” who kept the family supplied with fresh vegetables. Robert’s mother managed a small home business, assisted by her family, which consisted in growing and collecting rose petals for the local pharmacist, Dr. Cooke, who distilled them into rose water.⁸⁴

Initial independent scholarship efforts. Robert’s earliest recorded intellectual pursuits occurred shortly after he emerged from what he called “unconsciousness” or the “time of life when one can utter a few words,” about two years of age.⁸⁵ His language ability was developed to the point where he pronounced the name “Bloody Mary” as

⁸⁶ He had access to an old copy of Goldsmith’s *History of England* and

⁸⁰ Ibid., 6-7.

⁸¹ Laws, 126-127.

⁸² Howison, autobiography MS, 11.

⁸³ William H. Siener, “Economic Development in Revolutionary Virginia: Fredericksburg, 1750-1810” (Ph.D. diss., The College of William and Mary, 1982).

⁸⁴ Howison, autobiography MS, 8.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

perused the book so often that he was able to identify the pictures of each king and queen pictured in the book. One afternoon as the Howison's neighbor, Mrs. Gordon, was visiting, Robert displayed his ability to name the kings and queens. Mrs. Gordon was so impressed that she rewarded Robert by sending him a packet of cards depicting each monarch of England, and she inscribed the case with the words, "To the young historian." This gift was long a "treasure and delight" to young Robert.⁸⁷

At the age of three, Robert had an enigmatic learning episode, which he later described in his autobiography as something all young persons pass through, but perhaps without being conscious of doing so, or of understanding the novelty of the condition. The episode lasted a few days and consisted of Robert being agitated and being unable to stop talking to himself, even though he tried to cease the interior voice by pacing through the house. This experience resulted in Robert realizing the absurdity of materialism and gaining the knowledge that the soul and body are not one and the same.⁸⁸

Another memorable pre-school experience, occurring when Robert was four, was the visit of La Fayette to Fredericksburg, in 1824, on a tour commemorating the Revolution. Robert went with his mother and next older brother, James, to the house of a friend of his mother to see the proceedings. Robert felt love and gratitude towards La Fayette; however, he did not think the General had an impressive face or physique.⁸⁹

Family as educator. Robert's older siblings, particularly his older brothers, exerted both positive and negative educative influences on Robert during the childhood years. Both William Henry and Neil McCoul, Robert's elder brothers by 17 and 15 years respectively, attended the "best schools in Fredericksburg" and subsequently worked in the bookstore of Mr. William F. Gray, where they received clerical and business training, as well as experience in the Post Office, since Mr. Gray was also the Postmaster.⁹⁰ In 1822, Mr. Gray also began a circulating library in connection with his bookstore, with varying terms of subscription from one dollar for one month to six dollars for an entire

⁸⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 64-66.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 11.

year.⁹¹ Each brother had the opportunity, during free time in Mr. Gray's employment, to read history, philosophy, travel, and fiction.⁹² William was an avid reader and studied history, literature, and law.⁹³ However, he was "a slave to intoxicants" and his influence on Robert was lasting; "his life, and evil habits and the ruin of happiness they brought to many to whom he would otherwise have been dear, made an impression on me never erased in subsequent years."⁹⁴ Neil McCoul was in the Navy, and his tales of chasing pirates, reinforced by tangible evidence in the form of a blood-stained pirate's coat and cruise journal, also made an impression on young Robert.⁹⁵

The daughters in the family apparently also attended school at least for limited amounts of time. Robert's older sister by five years, Jane, attended school for about two years; however, due to her own efforts and fondness for reading, she developed herself into a scholar and eventually became a teacher. Even though she never had formal training in music or art, she grew into womanhood with notable intellectual and social abilities.⁹⁶

When Robert was five years old, his mother gave birth to another son, Samuel Scott, and as her health was frail, it was decided that Robert's older sister, Anne, would take Robert and James, a brother who was a year and a half older than Robert, along with the family's servant, Lucy, to a relative of his mother's at the Somervilla estate to stay for part of the summer and fall. This situation apparently was not unusual since the Howison and Somerville families often reciprocated in having their children temporarily exchange residences for educational purposes so that each could learn from the experiences afforded by city life in Fredericksburg and farm life on the Somervilla plantation.⁹⁷ After Robert and James returned home, their parents decided that the boys should attend a local academy near their home.

The Academies: 1825-1835

⁹¹ William F. Gray, "Utility & Economy," Advertisement for Circulating Library (Fredericksburg, VA: June, 19, 1882).

⁹² Howison, autobiography, MS, 12.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 13.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 14.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 75.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 27-28, 30.

The academy movement. During the decades after the Revolutionary War and into the first half of the nineteenth century in Virginia, academies grew to dominate methods of schooling. These academies were private, locally controlled, often transitory, and were “essentially a middle class arrangement, supported by fees and tuition.”⁹⁸ There were three main types of academies: chartered academies, private academies, and home and tutorial schools. Chartered academies operated under a charter from the legislature guided by a board of trustees. Private academies were operated as individual small businesses, and tutorial schools were held in the homes of individuals who employed tutors to teach their own as well as neighboring children. Oftentimes, poor children were allowed to attend free of charge while others paid a fee. The curriculum of the academies was largely classical, with primary subjects being Latin, Greek, mathematics, rhetoric, physics, chemistry, botany and sometimes bookkeeping. The academies provided educational opportunities for thousands of young Virginians who had no other educational options, and they prepared these same individuals to attend institutions of higher education.⁹⁹

The Herard Academy. The educational institution selected for Robert and James was a private school named the Herard Academy. This academy was originally a Female school founded by the Rev. Samuel B. Wilson, Pastor of the Fredericksburg Presbyterian Church. Wilson, due to health reasons and pressing duties in the church, was succeeded as teacher by one of his pupils, Miss Mary Ralles, who eventually took in boys as well. Miss Ralles was assisted by a non-English speaking Frenchman, Mons. Herard, whom she later married.¹⁰⁰

Robert’s school days were sprinkled with various incidents that provide details about school life at this nineteenth-century academy. Mons. Herard taught Writing and French, and Robert learned how to spell, read, and also how to write by the formation of “pot hooks” and “hangers.” The students participated in a Spelling Bee at the end of each school day, and Robert’s first triumph in this examination led to him being promoted to the head of the class where he noticed some of the older girls receiving him with

⁹⁸ Dale Glenwood Robinson, *The Academies of Virginia, 1776-1861*. (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1977), 5.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Reid Howison, *Fredericksburg: Past Present and Future*, (Fredericksburg, VA: Rufus B. Merchant, 1880), 37.

“ambiguous grins.” Although the students learned to do sums and multiplication, arithmetic was “not as exact a science as it should have been” until Madame Herard’s brother, Nathaniel Ralles, came around 1828 as an assistant to the school.¹⁰¹

Around the year 1829, Madame Herard instituted a new educational philosophy at the Herard Academy based on the Infant School Movement. This movement had originated in Scotland in 1799 under the direction of Robert Owen. Owen sought to assist children who worked in factories, by taking them at about three years of age and “by amusements and instruction tried to give them moral, physical, and intellectual training.”¹⁰² There was to be no punishment and no books. The movement spread quickly to the United States and was generally adopted by cities on the East coast. The educational philosophy underlying the infant schools was basically Pestalozzian in that small-group work was emphasized, leading to the necessity to have teachers trained in this methodology.¹⁰³

Madame Herard took part of her savings and visited some of the Infant Schools in the northern states to learn this new teaching methodology. When she returned, she brought back picture lessons, small books with questions and answers, music, painted balls that ran on wires, and other educational devices. The goal of using such devices was to make learning a delight and not a toil. Rumor of her travels and plan had spread throughout the community, and the school was very full the next session when she returned, due to the students “working on” their parents to let them come. Her first efforts at incorporating this new methodology were somewhat misguided as Madame Herard treated all of the pupils as if they were four or five years old. She seated them around the schoolroom, and then after explaining the new system, had them march around the room.¹⁰⁴ This exercise was interrupted by one of the older boys, Robert Wellford, grabbing a poplar switch and making gestures of the manual of arms. Madame Herard, seeing his actions, snatched the branch and switched his shoulders to bring the situation under control. To Robert it seemed that even though the students had been relegated to

¹⁰¹ Howison autobiography MS, 43.

¹⁰² Ellwood P. Cubberly, *Public Education in the United States* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1947), 138.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 141.

childhood, “all the joys of child’s play were to be sternly forbidden to us.”¹⁰⁵ When the students went home and told their parents about the new educational methods and devices, some concerned parents went right over to Madame Herard’s house after tea to discuss the situation. This parental consternation led to Madame Herard having the youngest children placed in a separate room to learn under the new methods and the older students being taught as they had been previous to the Infant School experiment.¹⁰⁶

In addition to the academics taught at the Herard Academy, Robert had other school-related experiences. Apparently some of the other students were not as eager to learn as was Robert. One Negro woman had to bodily bring her eight year old charge “to be educated” and the unwilling boy lay howling on the floor for about half an hour. Howison attributed the fact that the boy had not even learned the alphabet due to his “laziness” and that he “made slow progress in learning anything useful” even though he came from a “highly respectable” family in Fredericksburg. In another situation, the students used their Geography books to counsel a student who declared that he wished he was dead and that he was going to walk down to the sea and jump in. Instead of rushing to the playground during afternoon break, the students used their Geography books to trace the trail that Horace Crismond would have to travel in order to carry out his plan. Realizing that Horace would have to walk through fields, cross rivers and swamps and even the Chesapeake Bay, a distance of over one hundred and twenty miles, the students were comforted by the thought that during this long walk Horace would undoubtedly reflect on his plan and change his mind. The pupils told Horace about their research, and he apparently gained hope and never referred to the subject again.¹⁰⁷

Shortly after Robert’s ninth birthday, the Howison family moved to another house, St. James’ Place on Charles Street. At about this same time, Robert had the “spirit of poesy” come upon him and he became a writer of poetry. He later understood this phenomenon, an almost resistless urge to write poetry, to occur between the ages of eight

¹⁰⁴ Howison, autobiography MS, 51.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 47-50.

and sixteen and to continue into the later years.¹⁰⁸ Since Robert was very fond of fishing, he linked this interest with his first attempt at writing poetry, the subject of his first poem being about a fish. The poem was well received; Madame Herard came to his house to hear the poem and she later read it to Robert's class in a very expressive fashion.¹⁰⁹ Robert also wrote other poems, and some of them were published; however, the "Piscatory Ode" was the one he wanted preserved and remembered.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 60.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 61.

The Perch and the Carp

by Robert Reid Howison

A Perch was learning how to swim
He saw a Carp pursuing him;
With rapid strokes he flitted through
The waves whose spray around him flew.

The perch and carp went full speed,
The latter without taking heed;
The former, on the contrary,
Took care to look every way.

The chase was fierce, but ended well,
For, while the Sea, with fearful swell,
Came rolling in, towards the shore,
The perch saw rocks, though curved o'er.

The perch turned quickly to the side
The carp went in with rapid glide;
He dashed himself against the shore,
And bathed himself in his own gore.

A wave soon threw him on the land
And almost buried him in the sand;
The mud flew up in both his eyes,
He gives a flit; He groans and dies !!

Other childhood hobbies and recreations in which Robert participated included Gandy, chuming (similar to baseball), kites, fishing and hunting, swimming, and skating. He was not of a robust physical frame and his hobbies reflected this limitation. He often played card games with family visitors; however, he did not care for cards or backgammon. He learned to play chess and it became a favorite lifetime recreation.¹¹¹

Goolrick's Academy. At the age of 12, Robert's father's decided to give him the opportunity for more schooling in math; therefore, Robert was enrolled in the mathematical academy taught by Mr. John Goolrick and his physically disabled son.¹¹² Mr. Goolrick was a surveyor proficient in mathematics, and due to the few numbers of students in the higher levels of mathematics he found it necessary to teach younger boys as well.¹¹³ Mr. Goolrick found in Robert "a willingness to acquire knowledge and an aptitude for exact science" and therefore conducted him through Euclid, trigonometry, problems of the sphere, surveying, and navigation. "The result [of this training] has been that I have always sought and believed in truth and the only power in the universe that can render the human soul free. To 'believe a lie' has been the destroying error of man in all places and

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While Robert was a pupil at this school, an event occurred which was long remembered by him. The Indian Queen Hotel, a large, wooden structure built in colonial days, caught on fire. The boys were dismissed from school and went downtown to help in the bucket brigade. Colonel Hugh Mercer, President of the bank, and in full business dress of silk hat, coat, vest and pantaloons, joined the brigade. Although the building burned to the ground, to young Robert, "That well clad form and polite manner did not fade from

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Hanson's Academy. The third school Howison attended was the Fredericksburg Male Academy. The principal, Mr. Thomas Hanson of Georgetown, had been trained for the bar; however, his reserved personality inhibited his practice of law, so he became a teacher and was principal of this successful, classical academy. He and his assistant taught

¹¹¹ Ibid., 53.

¹¹² Howison, *Fredericksburg: Past, Present and Future*, 40.

¹¹³ Howison, autobiography MS, 70.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 71.

Greek and Latin as well as their respective national histories. Robert, in addition to learning Greek grammar, read classics such as the Iliad of Homer, the fables in Latin, Ovid, the Aenid of Virgil, and Invernal and Persius.¹¹⁶ Howison recalled the outcome of this training: “the foundation was so well laid in Hanson’s school, and kindled such a love of the ancient classics, that I had no serious difficulty in subsequent years, in reading the New Testament, all of Homer, Xenophon’s *Anabasis*, the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, all the works of Tacitus, many of the works of Cicero, the great poem ‘De Renum Natura’ by Lucretius, and the works of Catellus, Tiberius and Propertius, and an indefinite amount of theological Latin and Greek treatises.”¹¹⁷ Robert also had his first lessons in public speaking at this academy, as Mr. Hanson held weekly sessions for declaration and oral recitals.

Another memorable event of a political nature occurred during these early years. Robert’s father had been a political supporter of George Washington and John Marshall. At the time of the 1828 election, Robert was eight years old, and remembered his father getting into a hack with three other gentlemen and going to vote for John Quincy Adams; however, Andrew Jackson was elected. Jackson came to Fredericksburg several years later, in 1833, to lay the cornerstone for a monument honoring Mary Ball, the mother of George Washington. At the time of Jackson’s visit, Robert was a member of a boy’s regiment led by Lieut. Col. Goodwin. The boys, wearing white hunting shirts edged in blue with white pompoms on their hats and carrying realistic looking wooden guns, saluted the President. Robert describes never forgetting President Jackson’s “face of

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Robert’s father allowed him, as he had each of his older sons, to remain in school as long as family finances would permit; however, in fairness to the younger boys, Robert had to leave school, in his fifteenth year, and embark in some type of business.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 71-72.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 73.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 85.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 74.

Learning in the Fredericksburg Community: 1835-1841

In addition to school, Robert had several significant learning opportunities connected with his professional preparation. His early vocational experiences lended, for the most part, opportunities for him to continue his self-initiated reading and to learn new job skills. At age 17, he joined a Young Men's Society and also traveled to Richmond, Virginia by himself. Early in his eighteenth year he began to read law independently and subsequently attended a local law school in preparation for a legal career. During these years he also enjoyed the pleasures of a social life.

Early employments. Robert's first job was in Mr. William Allen's "Tea, Wine and Liquor" store on Main Street in Fredericksburg. He disliked this job largely due to his employer's business conduct and the damages that occurred to families as a result of drinking alcoholic beverages. Shortly after beginning work, Robert discovered that he would have no opportunity to read or study during his free time on this job.¹²⁰ Apparently, he was a valued worker since Mr. Allen later proposed that Robert remain in his employ until the age of twenty-one. After much family discussion about this potentially profitable opportunity, Robert's older brother Neil, at home on leave from one of his cruises, seems to have verbalized the final decision that although the job would be good for Robert's future he did not think Robert needed to be "behind a rind of cheese and a pipe of brandy, for the next six years of his life!"¹²¹ Robert was not content to be unemployed; therefore, he put his free time to use for learning: "During the brief seasons when I was not actually employed in business, I read and studied eagerly and made progress in acquiring knowledge especially of history."¹²²

Robert's next position was as a Junior Salesman in a dry goods store owned by John H. and Henry Smith on Main Street.¹²³ During the few months he was employed there, Robert did not come into contact with liquor, and he learned about cloth and American cotton and linens and saw many "fair faces." However, Robert's brother-in-law, William Beale, learned of an available position for a clerk in a wheat, flour, and produce

¹²⁰ Ibid., 76.

¹²¹ Ibid., 77.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

business in a business adjoining his own purchasing company. Sixteen year old Robert accepted the offered job and was glad to move on to a more elevated business environment.¹²⁴

Robert began his job as a clerk with Mr. Howson Wallace's wheat, flour, and produce business in the spring of 1836.¹²⁵ Mr. Wallace exchanged groceries for staples such as wheat, corn, bacon, and venison, and frequently traded with other merchants in Norfolk, Boston and as far as the West Indies. Robert and Mr. Wallace became good friends, and Robert filled the positions of clerk and bookkeeper and his salary was doubled every year for several years. Mr. Wallace did not forbid Robert's proclivity for study but encouraged him to the point of loaning Robert books. Robert felt that his five year employment with Mr. Wallace was "a season of wide acquisition of knowledge by me."¹²⁶ He accomplished this study by utilizing his free time during the business day: "In the intervals when business did not call, I was able to spend many hours of the summer seasons in the cool recesses made by the great walls of sacks of 'Ashton Salt' in the rear of our stores. There I read and studied attentively all the best Greek, Latin, French, and English poets, historians and prose writers, and finally the standard works on the Science of Jurisprudence."¹²⁷ As a clerk, and also due to the nature of the goods sold, Robert came into contact with the leading contractor of the rail road line between Fredericksburg and Richmond. This experience exposed Robert to the profession of Civil Engineering, and, since his studies under Mr. Goolrick had already laid a solid foundation, he studied several books on Civil Engineering with the intent to investigate this field as a possible future career. However, in his quest for information on this topic, Robert soon learned that the job required a physical robustness for which he was not suited.¹²⁸

During this time of employment in 1837, Mr. Wallace was able to befriend the Howison family in a work-related crisis.¹²⁹ Robert's father had become somewhat incapacitated by a paralysis of his right arm and hand and could not completely perform

¹²⁴ Ibid., 78.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 80.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 142.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 80-81.

the duties of his job, so an arrangement was made with the Board of Directors of the bank for Robert's brother John to assist their father in his business duties. Mr. Allen, Robert's former employer and book-keeper at the bank, wrote a letter to the Board of Directors to the effect that he wished to be elected as Teller of the bank since he considered the position to be empty as Robert's father was unable to fulfill the job. Robert's friend, Mr. Wallace, was on the bank's board and wielded what influence he could for the Howison family, and when the vote was taken, Mr. Allen was defeated. Not long afterwards, Mr. Allen resigned as book-keeper and Robert's father, his invalidism increasing, also resigned, and John Howison remained as Teller until the War Between the States.¹³⁰

It was also while Robert was in Mr. Wallace's employ that he became interested in politics. During these years, the Whigs increased in political prominence, and during the Presidential term of Martin Van Buren financial troubles soon affected the monetary system. Small coins disappeared and "shin-plasters," paper notes up to two or three dollars took their place. Although illegal, they were traded as money; however, if they became very mutilated it was difficult to keep them in circulation. As book-keeper for Mr. Wallace, Robert noticed that at one point his employer had almost one hundred dollars of shin-plasters. Robert, seeking to rid the company of this supply, offered to pay a vendor with these notes; however the client rather angrily refused this form of payment.¹³¹

Membership in a learned society. Robert's desire to learn seemed to increase as he passed through his teen years: "As the years approaching young manhood passed with me I became more and more interested in pursuits and associations for mental culture."¹³² At age 17, Robert joined the "Young Men's Society" in Fredericksburg and in later years attributed a large part of his intellectual successes to this society.¹³³ Learning societies such as this were often linked to libraries and existed under a wide variety of names, such as literary, belle-lettres, mechanics, mercantile, lyceum, as well as young men's, as was the

¹³⁴ These societies were composed of segments of the population,

¹³⁰ Ibid., 82.

¹³¹ Ibid., 86-87.

¹³² Ibid., 91.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ketts, 45.

either based on gender or race, and functioned much like schools.¹³⁵ Their primarily teenage members participated in debate as a form of self-improvement, and many of these societies sponsored lectures open to the general public in the community.

The typical meeting of the society in which Howison was a member involved weekly discussions of questions involving history, politics, philosophy, public economy, morals, and law. The Reader's duty was to select interesting articles, generally in manuscript form, and read them to the members of the society during the meeting.¹³⁶ Robert attended these meetings for five years and made many lasting friendships of men who later became prominent in business or public life, such as James Alexander Seddon, James M. Morson, Alexander Walker, and Benjamin Franklin Stringfellow.¹³⁷ Debate seemed to be a favorite pastime for the group and sometimes the debate was even publicized. One particular public debate was on the topic "Is there an inherent difference in the intellectual capacities of the sexes?" Robert and his partner, Richard Sterling, maintained the equality of woman's intellect with man. Robert recalled, "I had reflected and studied history on the question and had formed views which have ever since been held. They were briefly these, that thought was the work and the test of mind, reason, intellect in both sexes, and that in every Department of thought ever exercised in this world, woman had proved herself to be intellectually equal to man."¹³⁸ Unfortunately, when the vote was taken, "a stupid majority" voted that man was superior; however, the title "Defender of the Faith" was bestowed on Robert and his partner, and they never lost the distinction.¹³⁹

Learning through travel. Also during his seventeenth year, Robert visited Richmond, Virginia for the first time. His visit occurred soon after the Fredericksburg & Potomac Rail Road Company completed the line between Richmond and Fredericksburg, an event eagerly observed by Robert and which shortened the seventeen hour trip to an hour and a half. Prior to this, the mode of travel was via steamboat between Washington and Acquia, and from there to either Fredericksburg or Richmond by horse drawn

¹³⁵ Ibid., 46.

¹³⁶ Howison, autobiography MS, 91.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 94.

stagecoaches. The coaches left Fredericksburg at dawn each day and arrived in Richmond at ten o'clock at night. Charles Dickens in his *Notes on America* describes this often perilous and muddy trip.¹⁴⁰ Robert states that the circumstances which made his visit to Richmond necessary were "so little pleasant" that he does not report them in his autobiography. However, he needed "the exercise of tact and caution not common at that time of life," and with the assistance of relatives and friends in Richmond he accomplished his task. During this visit to Richmond, he stayed with his cousins, the Briggs, who showed him the sights of Broad Street, Capitol Square, the spire of St. John's church, and the party obtained a license to visit the penitentiary of Virginia. They passed through Cary Street, which Robert thought to be rather dingy, although it was a very profitable merchandising area.¹⁴¹ Robert was not impressed by the James River and Kanawha Canal; however, he was interested in the iron works. At the penitentiary his group received a tour and Robert found the convicts to be nearly all white males from about sixteen years of age upwards. He learned that few women and no Negroes, either slaves or free, were in the prison, as the law provided other punishment for them.¹⁴² Robert returned to Fredericksburg the next day and got caught up on his bookkeeping.¹⁴³

Preparation for a legal career. Early in his eighteenth year, 1838, Robert felt a strong predilection to study Law.¹⁴⁴ Previously he had been seeking a career in literature; however, as he was strongly southern, he decided that the South was not an appropriate place to live while pursuing a career in this field. He had already discounted a career in Civil Engineering on account of his physical constitution. On the advice of trusted friends, one being his brother-in-law-law William C. Beale, Robert decided to prepare himself for the practice of Law. Even in making this decision, there were some factors which caused him to feel an aversion to Law, namely, a feeling, "set in motion within me by the reading of the boy-period" whereby he had read the tale of "Simple Susan" in Maria Edgeworth's

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 131.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 140.

¹⁴² Ibid., 141.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 141-142.

Parent's Assistant.¹⁴⁵ This story had made such a strong impression against attorneys that seven year old Robert, when walking through the streets of Fredericksburg and seeing an Attorney-at-Law sign, feared that the Lawyer was someone who would turn an honest farmer out of his home, take Simple Susan's pet lamb and have it butchered to pay off his landlord.¹⁴⁶ These negative feelings about the legal profession were further entrenched by accounts Robert had heard about the local legal community. Two lawyers, father and son Joseph Christie Senior and Joseph Christie Junior, negatively influenced Robert since he did not respect their questionable legal practices."¹⁴⁷ However, these negative impressions concerning the legal profession gradually faded during Robert's teenage years. In July, 1838, he became the owner of Chitty's two-volume edition of Sir William Blackstone's *Commentaries* and devoted all the time he could to studying this work. Robert's life soon consisted in working and studying Law; "But it became more and more interesting to me, and by the time I had completed the fourth book of Blackstone, the spirit of law had taken hold upon me, and I no longer felt adverse to the toils of study, or the monotonies of practice."¹⁴⁸

After completing Blackstone, Robert selected the rest of his course in legal reading.¹⁴⁹ He read Burlanaqui's work in English, although he would have preferred to read it in French since he could read French almost as readily as English. He then read Kent, Tucker, Story, Stephen, Stankie, Cruise, Lomax (his teacher), Fearne, Robert, Conway Robinson's *Practice* (a work which Robert considered to have given him the most practical help), and *History of the Middle Ages* by Henry Hallam. The last book he read before applying for his practice was by Professor John A. G. Davis of the University of Virginia, entitled *Criminal Law*.¹⁵⁰

After finishing Davis' book, Robert left his employment with Mr. Wallace, and in the Fall of 1840, entered the law-school of Judge Lomax.¹⁵¹ Lomax had previously been the first Law professor at the University of Virginia, and in this position he had influenced

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 142.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 143.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 148-149.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 149-152, 154.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 154-155.

the course of legal training at the University. He also had cemented his own philosophy on legal education and emphasized the practical as well as the theoretical. To assist the university students in learning legal theory, Lomax established a reading list beginning with Blackstone and including Cruise, Seln, and Maddock, and others. After being elected to the Judgeship of the Fifth Judicial Circuit, Lomax resigned from the University and moved back to Fredericksburg. During the winters he conducted a private law school in the basement of his home, and it was this school that Howison attended for one session. This school “nearly rivaled the law school at Charlottesville” and many students transferred there after Lomax’s successor, John A. Davis, was murdered by an unruly student. A circular from Lomax’ school in 1831 stressed that learning law through textbooks and examinations was the method preferred over oral lectures. The purpose of the school was to “facilitate the acquisition of knowledge” of law, but students would not be complete Lawyers at the end of the course. They would need to build on the foundation provided and develop themselves into competent lawyers. The cost of attending the school in 1831 was sixty dollars and did not include room and board. Students could board in local houses for monthly amounts ranging from ten to twelve dollars.

After completing the course of study at Judge Lomax’ school in the Spring of 1841, Robert needed the signatures of three Judges to complete his licensure examination. He had been working for three hours a week in the office of Mr. James Chew who was a Clerk in the Circuit and Corporation Courts of Fredericksburg, and he was able to practice conveyancing, equity pleading, and drafting decrees, and copying. Robert first approached Judge Stanard for his signature, and the judge asked him questions concerning real estate law since that was the department of law with which Robert was the most familiar. Robert’s prior reading and preparation aided him, “Yet I had no serious difficulty in answering each one correctly. Cruise, and Lomax, and Tucker all helped me.”¹⁵² After receiving Judge Stanard’s signature, Robert needed two additional signatures. Although Judge Lomax generally did not sign the licenses of his students, he made an exception in the case of Robert. Robert received the final signature the next day when he rode to *Saint*

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 155.

¹⁵² Ibid., 162.

Julian, the home of Judge Brook.¹⁵³ Here Robert was asked a series of questions on various law topics and he answered them as well as he could; “Thus, very early after completing my twenty-first year, I was entitled to admission to the bar of Virginia from its highest-seats to its lowest, and also, on easy conditions, to practice law in any Court in the United States.”¹⁵⁴

Avocational learning. During his late teen years, Robert enjoyed social activities such as conversation parties, and dancing the quadrille, cotillion, and the Old Virginia Reel, and avoided the German waltz which he considered to be lascivious. He also attended walking parties to Alum Spring Rock and participated in ice skating functions.¹⁵⁵ Howison was able to attend these soirees “until the necessities for study and self-denial as to social parties became absolute in my case.”¹⁵⁶

Church as educator. Another educational institution Robert came into contact with early in life, and which continued to be a major influence throughout his entire life, was the Presbyterian Church. When Robert’s parents moved to Fredericksburg at the turn of the century, the city was not under the positive effects of religion. Robert’s father’s family was of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and when his father went to church at all, this was the church he attended. Robert’s older brother, Neil, often attributed his worldly habits and lack of church attendance as resulting from being baptized by the drunken and card playing “Old Parson McConichie.”¹⁵⁷ Robert’s mother was a granddaughter of a minister in the Colonial Anglican Church, the Rev. Daniel (Donald) McDonald; however, she attended the Presbyterian Church in Fredericksburg, and young Robert attended the services with her.¹⁵⁸

The Presbyterian Church in Fredericksburg began at the urging of a local citizen, John Mark, who had moved to Fredericksburg after living in the Valley of Virginia and wanted to continue attending a Presbyterian Church. Therefore, the Presbyterian General Assembly issued a commission to young Samuel B. Wilson who “reluctantly” accepted the

¹⁵³ Ibid., 163.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 95.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 94.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 182.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 184.

two month missionary endeavor to begin a work in Fredericksburg.¹⁵⁹ After his arrival in Fredericksburg in January, 1806, Wilson realized that “religion at that time was in the lowest state and iniquity abounded.”¹⁶⁰ He ascertained that in order to effect change, a “radical change must take place in the education of the youth and the discipline of the

¹⁶¹ Therefore, he started a school for boys in October, 1806. The advertisement for the school in the September, 1806 issue of the *Virginia Herald* stated that Latin, Greek, mathematics, geography, and English grammar would be taught.”¹⁶² In 1816, the school was named Union Academy, and a girls department was added under the direction of Mary Ralles. Wilson’s exhausting routine and delicate health forced him to give up teaching and concentrate on the church. Miss Ralles continued teaching at the school which later became the Herard Academy.

In 1809, Wilson attended the meeting of the Presbyterian General Assembly in Philadelphia and learned about a new area of ministry called Sunday school. Sunday schools had originated in the middle of the seventeenth-century in England under the direction of Robert Raikes. The purpose of these schools was to teach children the basics of the Bible as well as reading.¹⁶³ The movement spread to Hanover County, Virginia, where a Sunday school modeled after Raikes plan was established in the home of Thomas Crenshaw in 1786.¹⁶⁴ After returning to Fredericksburg, Wilson was assisted by the ladies of the church in beginning a Sunday school, and all children, rich or poor, were invited to attend.”¹⁶⁵ The women in the church even collected and sewed clothes for those who could not come because they did not have suitable clothing.¹⁶⁶

Robert’s mother took him to church on Sunday mornings, and sometimes on Sunday evenings, beginning when he was about five years old. The sermons seemed very

¹⁵⁹ Edward Alvey, Jr., *History of the Presbyterian Church of Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1808-1976* (Fredericksburg: The Session of the Presbyterian Church of Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1976), 3-4.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Cubberly, 121.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Alvey, 9-10.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

solemn to him, yet they left an indelible impression.¹⁶⁷ “It need hardly be said that the ‘Sunday School’ became a very strong element in such an organization. And the ‘Bible Class’ taught by the pastor was equally prevalent for good. All the children and young people and a goodly number of the middle-aged and old were in these schools of Christian learning. I remember them well, and can testify to their value.”¹⁶⁸ During these early years he learned, and could perfectly repeat, the answers to the Shorter Catechism.¹⁶⁹

This early Spiritual training, in combination with several other events leading up to the year 1839, fostered spiritual yearnings in Robert’s heart - the outcome of which would impact the remainder of his life. When he began studying jurisprudence, Robert also examined the historical evidences supporting the claims of the Presbyterian Church. His study led him to conclude that the Presbyterian Church was a Republic, governed and ruled by elected Presbyters, and was the only acceptable form of church government.¹⁷⁰ Howison also contemplated the seriousness of eternity during his eighteenth and nineteenth years: “This serious view led me to a determined purpose, to read and study for my own instruction and salvation the inspired word of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. This purpose was deliberately carried out in the midst of the course of law-study in which I was engaged.”¹⁷¹ At the end of this study, Robert was convinced that the Bible was written by God, and more importantly, the study led to the conviction that Jesus Christ was the Redeemer and was all that He claimed to be in Scripture: “the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, when read and studied with intense care and desire to learn had given me an ideal which was real.”¹⁷² However, upon reaching this conclusion, Robert did not immediately join the church for two stated reasons, namely, he felt something was “missing” and he was not ready to make a complete surrender to Christ, and, secondly, when he did join the church he wanted to join the Presbyterian Church.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁷ Robert R. Howison, “The Old Presbyterian Church Building: Fredericksburg, VA.” *Central Presbyterian* (February, 1903).

¹⁶⁸ Howison, autobiography MS, 184.

¹⁶⁹ Robert R. Howison, “The Old Presbyterian Church Building: Fredericksburg, VA.”, n. p.

¹⁷⁰ Howison, autobiography MS., 185.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 187.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 189.

Robert also became interested in the proceedings of the Presbyterian General Assembly during his late teen years.¹⁷⁴ During these same years, 1837-1838, the Presbyterian church was embroiled in a dispute between the Northern and Southern Presbyteries which ruptured the denomination into rival groups. The division was consequential to Plan of Union, adopted in 1801, which allowed Congregationalists, including those who did not subscribe to the Westminster Confession, to be active Presbyters. Relaxing the church polity eventually led to a laxness in doctrine. According to Smith, “Those who received and understood the Westminster Confession and catechisms in their historic and strict sense were called the “Old School,” whereas those who accepted these standards only in a loose way were called the “New School.”¹⁷⁵ Robert felt “that the new theology as it was called had much to commend it, and was strongly supported by the teachings of Scripture. . . . It encouraged pure revivals of the religion of Christ, and encouraged every earnest and sincere effort for promoting such revivals.”¹⁷⁶ Robert also had this to say concerning the leadership of the Old School, “In truth, no impartial and competent student can doubt that the motives impelling the ‘Old School’ leaders and partisans were excessive aversion to the new theology then beginning to warm and elevate the souls of man, and excessive sensitiveness as to the conservation of Negro slavery in the United States.”¹⁷⁷

After receiving his law license, Robert moved to Richmond, Virginia in June, 1841, to establish his legal practice.¹⁷⁸ He was pondering many questions of a spiritual nature during this period, the answers of which would soon re-direct the course of his life.

Conclusion

Howison’s education up to the point at which he moved away from home in June, 1841, was composed of numerous learning experiences stemming either from his interactions with institutions of education or from his own self-initiated learning endeavors. To draw conclusions about how Howison experienced education during the

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Morton H. Smith, *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology*. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962), 33.

¹⁷⁶ Howison autobiography MS, 190.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 191.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 163.

years 1820-1841, the outcomes of his individual learning experiences will be examined and discussed in conjunction with the applicable institutions of education with which he came into contact. Additionally, the configurations between and among the institutions will be examined, as well as Howison's self-initiated learning as a part of his education.

The time and place of Robert's birth contributed to his unique learning experiences and contact with particular institutions of education. Born in the oldest of the eastern seaboard states in the second decade of the nineteenth century, the institutions of education affecting Howison's life were well established, yet were susceptible to new ideas and influences. The Fredericksburg community, since colonial days, was a locale that fostered learning as evidenced by its numerous schools and cultural contributions. This small port city had a continual influx of new ideas and international personages. Robert witnessed events such as the visit of La Fayette which his mother had taken him to see when he was four years old. Robert's immediate family lived a relatively middle class life in Fredericksburg, although they did have several "African servants." It is unclear if these individuals were slaves or indentured servants. By living in town, Robert came into regular contact with places of business, such as banks and shops, and in particular, as his older brothers worked for the owner of a bookstore, he was no doubt exposed to the wares of this business. By virtue of living in town, and because of his parents ability to pay the tuition, the first school he attended was a local academy located almost across the street from his house.

Robert also had direct experience with the more genteel side of Virginia society during his childhood in the early 1820s. He was exposed to plantation life through his next-door neighbors at *Kenmore*, and he had relatives living on the more rural *Somerville* plantation. Howison's neighbors, the Gordons, had lived on the Kenmore estate since the 1700s. Basil Gordon, one proprietor of the estate, is considered to be the first millionaire in America.¹⁷⁹ In describing this family, Robert writes in his autobiography, "They were carefully educated, and fitted for practical duty, and success in life. Mrs. Samuel Gordon was a lady of taste and culture, very fond of reading - especially of its more solid elements

¹⁷⁹ Darter, 105.

in history and literature.”¹⁸⁰ It was this same Mrs. Gordon who sent Robert the packet of cards depicting the monarchs of England after hearing him recite the names of the kings and queens from Goldsmith’s book. That the Howison children often came into contact with this family is evidenced by Robert Reid’s sister, Min, becoming friends with the Gordon’s daughter, Miss Agnes; with the two girls enjoying almost daily visits at one or

¹⁸¹ Although Robert was not sent to *Somerville* specifically for schooling as had been the custom for some of his older brothers and sisters, he lived there while his mother recuperated from childbirth, and undoubtedly he was exposed to the daily operation of this plantation.

Family as educator. Family was the first institution of education encountered by Robert Howison. Ancestry and heritage, as a part of family, is not to be underestimated since Robert’s parents were, as are all parents, shaped by earlier events and influences which they presumably internalized and employed, knowingly or unknowingly, in shaping their own children. Samuel Howison, Robert’s father, a young adult at the turn of the century in 1800, was among the first generation of Howison’s, as well as other Virginians, to exchange a rural life of farming for city life and work. Samuel Howison’s exodus to Fredericksburg from life as a homesteader’s son, may have been part of a larger population movement leading to the development of a new urban society. Joseph Ketts writes, “By the end of the eighteenth century urban clerks were starting to form a distinct occupational class in insurance companies, banks, and merchants’ and stock

¹⁸² He contributes the growth of these non-manual labor jobs to the transportation revolution and the democratization of politics.¹⁸³

Robert’s earliest learning experiences were conducted primarily in conjunction with the institution of family. In addition to the myriad of unascertainable educational influences a parent supplies to a child beginning at birth, Robert’s parents intentionally provided for their children’s education and schooling. Prior to attending school, Robert’s experience in memorizing the names of the kings and queens in Goldsmith’s work

¹⁸⁰ Howison autobiography MS, 26.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁸² Ketts, 51.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 52.

involves, first of all, the availability of the book in the home and the fact that someone in the family, probably either of his parents or an older sibling, undoubtedly would have initially told Robert the names corresponding to the pictures. Since Robert states in his autobiography that he learned to read at the Herard Academy, he most likely had some assistance in first learning the names of the kings and queens. Robert's attendance at two other institutions of education, school and church, were also deliberately selected by Howison's parents to further Robert's, as well as their other children's, academic and spiritual development. Sending their children to school in a day when public schooling was not available, much less, compulsory, speaks to the importance these parents placed on schooling, even to the point of having to decide how many children they could afford to have in school at a time. As to spiritual training, Mrs. Howison, at least, took her children to Sunday school and church. Robert also learned from his siblings, most notably from his older brothers. One particular vicarious learning experience which Robert had during his early years was formed from Robert's observations and conclusions about the destructiveness of alcohol in his brother William's life.

Community as educator. School was one of the primary educational institutions Howison interacted with during his childhood and youth. Due to the time and place of his birth, Robert was exposed to both colonial and ante-bellum schooling practices. Additionally, he experienced firsthand two nineteenth-century school reform efforts, the academy and the Infant-School movements.

Schooling practices in Virginia and the South developed differently than those found in the northern colonies and subsequent states. The isolated nature of the large plantations in eastern Virginia, being divided by the irregular land formations created by large rivers, contributed to the development of decentralized schools. The scattered population of Virginia, coupled with a lack of demand for public schooling, and the fact that no medium then existed to rouse the citizens to collective action, led to a voluntary inertia among the populace in creating public schools.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, other types of

¹⁸⁴ Arthur W. Maddox, *The Free School Idea in Virginia Before the Civil War: A Phase of Political and Social Evolution* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1918).

schooling methods emerged, such as the tutorial schools and academies, and were in operation until the Civil War changed Virginia's social system.

The educational arrangement set up between the Howison household in Fredericksburg and their relatives on the Somervilla estate was a carryover of a type of colonial schooling system known as the tutorial system.¹⁸⁵ The tutorial school operated on a plantation where the parent hired a teacher to teach his own children, and possibly neighboring children as well. Frequently, the teachers in the tutorial schools were clergymen or lay assistants sometimes employed as indentured servants.¹⁸⁶

A second form of schooling in which Howison participated was the academy movement. This nineteenth-century school reform movement created the impetus to modernize curriculum, enhance teacher preparation, and contributed to the formation of public high schools. Many of these academies eventually closed or evolved into colleges and universities existing today.¹⁸⁷ Howison attended three different academies until he was fifteen years old and he apparently liked school and had a positive attitude towards learning. At these academies, Robert, in addition to learning reading, writing, and arithmetic, received the basics of a classical education including Greek and Latin. His knowledge of these languages aided him throughout the rest of his life, particularly in his positions as Pastor and Lawyer and in his writings. Additionally, Robert's training at these schools had prepared him to the point that he could have been a Civil Engineer, but he health prevented him from choosing this career.

While at the Herard Academy, Howison came into contact with the Infant School movement. This experience was rather humorous as Madame Herard's attempt to incorporate the Infant School methodology on all the students in her school met with disaster. Although this methodology eventually declined, several results of the movement include a focus of public attention on the importance of education during early childhood

¹⁸⁵ Richard Beal Davis, *Intellectual Life in the Colonial South, 1585-1763*, vol. I, 306.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 307.

¹⁸⁷ The Miller School in Albemarle County, Virginia is an example of a nineteenth-century academy still in operation. Robert Howison's daughter, Mary, taught at this school in the early 1920s.

and an emphasis on the role of women, particularly trained teachers, in teaching young children.¹⁸⁸

An address delivered before the Fredericksburg Lyceum in 1832, entitled, “A Discourse on Scholastic Reforms, and Amendments in the Modes and General Scope of Parental Instruction,” is an example of another type of school reform effort occurring during Howison’s youth. The lecturer, James M. Garnett, states his purpose was “to awaken, if possible, an earnest, —lasting,—and efficient desire for the improvement of our whole system of education; but especially of our primary or common schools; and for amendment in the modes, as well as in the general scope of parental instruction.”¹⁸⁹ This now rare pamphlet enumerates parental errors, such as suppressing children’s natural curiosities, as being something that parents must remedy before attempting to reform the schools.¹⁹⁰ He concludes with the earnest hope that parents will undertake to set good examples for their children and that morals and religion will be taught from the cradle to the grave.¹⁹¹ It is unknown if Howison’s parents attended such lectures, but this form of instruction was available, at least at times, in the community.

The last formal school Howison attended in Fredericksburg was law school. To prepare for a career in law, Robert first read law independently and then attended Judge Lomax’ law school for one term. A series of events urged Howison to overcome his aversion to law, an aversion created in part by the reading of the story of “Simple Susan” when he was a boy. Apparently, Robert initiated a course of reading on legal topics beginning with Blackstone’s *Commentaries*; however, the fact that Howison’s reading list closely corresponded with Judge Lomax’ reading list for Law students suggests that Howison may have been aware of the required reading prior to his attendance at the school.

The historical context of Robert’s birth also impacted his relationship with the church as an institution of education. During his Grandfather Stephen Howison’s

¹⁸⁸ Maris A. Vinovskis, *Education, Society, and Economic Opportunity: A Historical Perspective on Persistent Issues* (Chelsea, MI: Bookcrafters, 1995), 18.

¹⁸⁹ James M. Garnett, “A Discourse on Scholastic Reforms, and Amendments in the Modes and General Scope of Parental Instruction. Delivered before the Fredericksburg Lyceum, September 28, 1832. (Richmond: Thomas W. White, 1833).

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3, 7.

homesteading days, in the mid-1700s, a “double revolution in religion and political thought” occurred in the Old Dominion, contributing to the Revolutionary War and, in effect, transforming Virginia society.¹⁹² The Anglican Church had been the established church since the Virginia colony was established; however, as early as the 1740s, religious dissenters began pulling away from the state church and formed their own places of worship.¹⁹³ These dissenting denominations, such as the Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists, developed a counter-culture to the established church, hence the gentry, and intentionally sought to evangelize and influence the poor whites and slaves. A new form of pedagogy, revivalism, soon developed.¹⁹⁴ After the Revolution, rampant moral degeneracy contributed to a religious movement, the Second Great Awakening, which directly impacted society until about 1837. The awakening in Virginia replaced the “skepticism and deism of its own aristocracy with a heartfelt faith and a well reasoned orthodoxy.”¹⁹⁵ James Somerville, a practicing alcoholic and a relative of the Howisons on the *Somervilla* plantation, was converted under the effects of the awakening and subsequently abstained from alcohol.¹⁹⁶

According to Robert, Fredericksburg was not under the “positive effects of religion” at the time his parents moved there in 1801. Robert’s older brother by fifteen years, Neil, referred to the alcoholic, card-playing minister of the Episcopal Church as being a negative influence in his own life. Also, when Presbyterian minister Samuel Wilson first came to Fredericksburg around 1805, he stated that “iniquity abounded” in the town.¹⁹⁷ However, by the time Robert’s mother took him to the Presbyterian church, around 1825, the church had positively impacted the local culture.

Howison also experienced another movement in religious and educational reform, the Sunday school movement. Reading, as well as Biblical training was emphasized in the Sunday school Robert attended. Alvey explains, “Some children had no other means of

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 19.

¹⁹² Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 321.

¹⁹³ Isaac, 19, see note.

¹⁹⁴ Cremin, *The Colonial Experience*, 17.

¹⁹⁵ Arthur Dicken Thomas, Jr. “The Second Great Awakening in Virginia and Slavery Reform, 1785-1837”(Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1981), preface x.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 172.

instruction in reading and writing than what they received at this school. The catechisms, Watts' and the Westminster, were taught and hymns memorized.”¹⁹⁸ Since the Sunday schools were open to all classes of people, this form of education leveled class distinctions and helped to pave the way for common day schools.¹⁹⁹

Other institutions in the community played a role in Robert's education. His early employments provided learning opportunities in several ways; he learned about himself, i.e., about his life-style preferences and physical limitations; he learned several trades, such as being a sales clerk and bookkeeper; and one of his early employments provided the opportunity for him to engage in reading books while on the job. Robert considered the reading he accomplished during this job as being a “season of wide acquisition of

²⁰⁰ Additionally, his manager at this job became his friend and probably trained Robert on bookkeeping and even loaned him books to read.

Robert's learning was extended by his participation in another community group, the Young Men's society. Seventeen year old Robert joined the society and was a member for five years. Such was his experience in this society that he attributed many of his later intellectual successes to this organization. Judge John Tayloe Lomax was President of this organization in his later years, and although it is unclear if Howison was a member during his tenure as President, Lomax stressed the importance of Christian education. This emphasis may have influenced Howison's later views and writings on “Parochial

²⁰¹

Self-initiated learning. Robert's education was furthered through his own self-initiated learning beginning at a very young age and continuing throughout his life. His memorization of the pictures in Goldsmith's *Kings and Queens of England*, his early efforts at writing poetry, and his seemingly insatiable desire to read during free times in his employments all testify to his self-initiated learning. Robert was also a self-directed learner

¹⁹⁷ Alvey, 4

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 10

¹⁹⁹ Cubberly, 122.

²⁰⁰ Howison autobiography MS, 80.

²⁰¹ S. J. Quinn, *The History of the City of Fredericksburg Virginia* (Richmond, VA: The Hermitage Press, 1908), 193.

in that he selected and completed a course of reading on legal subjects before attending law school.

The relationship among Howison's parents, school, and church forms at least three primary configurations of education during Howison's childhood and youth, that of parents/school and parents/church. Based on the educative purpose and practices of Sunday School, a configuration also existed in the form of church/school, or more accurately, parents/church/school. Additionally, a configuration was formed by Howison's ability to read on the job as in a self-initiated learning/work configuration. Other configurations, based on Robert learning from his peers are a work/peer and self-initiated learning/peer configuration resulting from his involvement with the learning society. The patterning of these configurations, as well as others, will continue to be examined in succeeding chapters of the study.

Chapter 3

Continuing Education and Scholarship: 1841-1870

Richmond, Virginia in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century

Robert lived twenty-five years of the time frame covered by this chapter in Richmond, Virginia. These years were full of new opportunities and experiences including changing careers, attending seminary, marriage, authoring several books and numerous articles, enduring the privations of a civil war, and culminating in an accident which almost cost him his life.

Robert had visited Richmond once, in 1837, prior to moving to this capital city in 1841. His first impression of Richmond was one of delight at seeing the wide streets and beautiful buildings on Capitol Square, although some of the sights, such as Cary Street, were not impressive to him.²⁰² Another visitor to Richmond around this same time was writer George W. Bagby. Upon seeing Richmond in the early 1840s, Bagby wrote, “there was nothing from one end of the canal to the other to compare with the first sight of Richmond, when rounding corner not far from Hollywood [the cemetery], it burst full upon the vision, its capitol, its spires, its happy homes, flushed with the red glow of evening. And what it looked to be, it was.”²⁰³

It was during the 1850s that Richmond, still somewhat a “country community,” developed into a metropolitan area. The city instituted several progressive ideas characteristic of larger metropolitan areas such as numbering the houses, installing a new fire-fighting system in 1855, and instituting public utilities in 1856.²⁰⁴ Trade with foreign ports was initiated for progress as well as protection from the northern states. In 1857, a financial panic occurred which forced the banks to suspend specie payments and paralyzed business, and by 1860, street cars were being hurriedly installed due to the impending

²⁰² Howison, autobiography MS, 140.

²⁰³ H. H. Smith, “Richmond 90 Years Ago, As Late Dr. Bagby Saw It” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 25, 1927.

²⁰⁴ “Biggest Strides in Civic Affairs Made in 1850’s” *Richmond Times and Dispatch* (Wednesday, September 8, 1937).

war.²⁰⁵ In the 1850s, “Richmond was the industrial center of the South and the region’s wealthiest city, based on per capita property valuation.”²⁰⁶ The population of Richmond increased from 27,000 in 1850 to 38,000 in 1860.²⁰⁷

The city’s leadership, prior to the Civil War, communicated through two extremely partisan newspapers, Thomas Ritchie’s *Enquirer* and John Hampton Pleasants of the *Whig*. The two newspapers were, at least for awhile, critical of the slave system, both felt that having more Northerners move to Virginia would help lift the state’s lethargy, and both urged the establishment of public schools throughout the state.²⁰⁸ Eventually Ritchie retired and left the paper in charge of his sons. One son, Thomas Ritchie, Jr., called Pleasants a coward and spread the rumor that Pleasants was going to start an abolitionist journal. After a bitter editorial controversy, Pleasants, following the gentleman’s protocol, challenged his opponent to a duel on the grounds that his character had been attacked. On the day of the duel, the inexperienced Pleasants, not wanting to duel in the first place, shot his bullets in the air; however, Ritchie mortally wounded him.²⁰⁹ Other newspapers were also available; the young editor of the *Examiner*, John Moncure Daniel, became hated for his editorial attacks on almost every prominent citizen in Richmond. Another newspaper, the *Dispatch*, was founded under the leadership of James A. Cowardin. This paper claimed to be nonpartisan in the beginning, however it was strongly so later. Another journal of importance during these years was the *Southern Literary Messenger*. This literary publication began as a bi-monthly journal in 1834, and soon moved to a monthly format extending over 30 years.²¹⁰ The publication received national attention while Edgar Allen Poe was the editor.²¹¹ Howison contributed to the journal primarily during the editorship of Dr. George Bagby.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Virginius Dabney, *Richmond: The Story of a City*. (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 133.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 129-131.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 131.

²¹⁰ Benjamin Blake Minor, *The Southern Literary Messenger* (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1905), 17.

²¹¹ Dabney, 143.

Although the city did not have a public library or public schools, it did have a library association and many private schools.²¹² A Lancastrian School was begun in 1816, and Howison was part of the leadership of this school in the 1850s.²¹³ This form of schooling was begun by a Quaker, Joseph Lancaster, in England in 1798. The system operated by having older children act as monitors to teach groups of about ten younger children. The Lancastrian system “appealed as a true educational bargain in schools for the

²¹⁴ The school was given a site by the Richmond City Council and a budget of six hundred dollars per year. The inscription on the school’s cornerstone gives information concerning the purpose and population served by this school: “The Lancastrian school is dedicated to the elementary principles of education, to teach the young idea how to shoot, and it erected by the munificence of the corporate Body of Richmond and many worthy, liberal citizens thereof. The children of the wealthy are taught at the most reasonable rates and the children of the poor gratis.”²¹⁵ The school was one of many applicants for money from the state Literary Fund. In 1819, Joseph Lancaster himself visited Richmond and lectured in the Hall of the House of Delegates on several topics including his system of teaching. In 1851, changes were made by City Council concerning the system of free schools in the city. The decision was made to allow the Ward primary schools take in the elementary pupils from the Lancastrian school and transform the Lancastrian school into a high school. This plan was accomplished and the school continued through the Civil War. However, in 1870, the Lancastrian school became a part of the Richmond City public schools and the building was razed in 1909.²¹⁶

The city was a center for social life with many offerings of concerts, lectures, and plays. Charles Dickens visited in 1842, and upon his return to England, he wrote a blistering work, *American Notes*, denouncing the slavery he saw there.²¹⁷ Another English novelist of the day, William Thackeray, lectured in Richmond in 1853 and again in 1856,

²¹² Dabney, 140

²¹³ Ibid., 145-146.

²¹⁴ Margaret Meagher, *History of Education in Richmond*. (Richmond: Works Progress Administration, 1939), 97.

²¹⁵ Cubberly, 98-99.

²¹⁶ Dabney, 145-146.

²¹⁷ Dabney, 141

and he found Richmond to be a “comfortable, friendly, cheery little town.”²¹⁸ The Prince of Wales also visited Richmond in 1860 and was greeted with near mob scenes. Several famous actors also visited the city, notably Junius Brutus Booth, whose son, John Wilkes Booth, would later assassinate President Lincoln. The greatest musical highlight of the era was the concert performed by Jenny Lind, “the Swedish nightingale;” P. T. Barnum marketed her show and publicity was enormous. Rumor spread that she had given money to the abolitionists, and an uproar demanded that she not appear. However, the rumor was checked, and she made a generous donation to the Female Asylum from the proceeds of her concert.²¹⁹

The tension over slavery was continually increasing in Richmond as elsewhere throughout the South, particularly after the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Richmond had a peculiar social structure with whites, slaves and free Negroes mingling in business and industry. Many free Negroes owned their own businesses, such as grocery stores, confectioneries, barbershops, and even a livery stable. One out of every four free Negro families owned property.²²⁰ Additionally, even though it was against the law, many slaves were learning to read.²²¹

Howison’s learning experiences during the years 1841-1870 furthered the educational foundation laid during his early years. When Robert moved to Richmond, Virginia in June, 1841, to begin his law practice, he rented a room in a boarding house and was befriended by a fellow lawyer, Conway Robinson. Later, Robinson and his brother, Moncure Robinson, were Presidents of the Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad; however, Conway also had interests in the legal profession as well as being a scholar. As a member of the City Council he helped to establish the Athenaeum, a building used for lectures and concerts. Part of the building was used for the Virginia Historical and Philosophical Society and the Richmond Library.²²² Conway Robinson provided professional leads to Robert and business came quickly, although at first it was not very lucrative.²²³ However,

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Dabney, 145.

²²⁰ Dabney, 155.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Dabney, 135.

²²³ Howison, autobiography MS, 174.

cases other than criminal trials soon occupied Robert's time, and based on his previous experiences as a clerk and bookkeeper, many merchants and manufacturers in Richmond hired Robert to handle their legal needs.²²⁴

Robert became active in the Richmond social scene and began to attend many parties, and he saw several plays.²²⁵ After attending two plays featuring the famous actor Edwin Forrest in, Shakespeare's *Othello* and Bird's *The Gladiator*, Robert felt, "conscious that something was wanting - a great soul was wanting - Shakespeare was wanting. And I came away with the resolve never to see Forrest act again, unless in a drama composed of the highest of power, therefore, I never saw him again."²²⁶ Howison may have felt this emptiness due to his own soul searching for peace at that same time.

At the time of Robert's move to Richmond, he was in a quest for spiritual enlightenment, and this yearning was assuaged about a year later. Although Robert had attended church since childhood, "the years between childhood and my twenty-second year were passed without any decided change of view, on my part, as to personal Christianity."²²⁷ He had studied the historical claims of the Presbyterian Church, as well as the Scriptures, while he was in law school. Therefore, Robert affiliated himself with First Presbyterian Church in Richmond under the ministry of Dr. William S. Plumer, an "Old School" minister he had heard shortly before leaving Fredericksburg.²²⁸ Plumer's strong preaching, coupled with what was most likely an influence from the Second Great Awakening, led Robert to find the light in his soul he had been seeking:²²⁹

"My impressions became deeper and deeper. At first, they were not at all satisfactory even to myself. I was led to suspect that I had never really believed the truths of the gospel even in a merely intellectual sense, for if I had, it seemed to me certain that I would have accepted Christ and confessed him before man.

But at length the 'sun of righteousness' rose upon my soul with healing in his wings. The hope of forgiveness of Sin and unending peace and happiness came to me, and filled me with a sweet serene joy and rest."²³⁰

²²⁴ Ibid., 176.

²²⁵ Ibid., 132, 179, 181.

²²⁶ Ibid., 180-181.

²²⁷ Ibid., 184.

²²⁸ Ibid., 196.

²²⁹ Ibid., 197.

²³⁰ Ibid.

Immediately after this experience, Robert joined the church, and out of heartfelt gratitude for what Christ had done, he felt he should devote his life to being a minister of the Gospel. After much soul searching and discussion with trusted friends and relatives, Robert decided to enter the service of the Christian ministry.²³¹ To prepare himself for this calling, he enrolled at Union Theological Seminary in 1842, the Seminary then being located in Prince Edward County, Virginia, about 60 miles from Richmond.²³² Robert moved to the campus of the Seminary but took his meals at the home of Mrs. Anne S. Rice, the widow of the founder of the institution, Dr. John Holt Rice. Robert walked the three-quarter mile distance to her home daily as did other students for meals and fellowship.²³³ Mrs. Rice's house "was not just a lodging place, but home to the students," and she also performed the duties of a seamstress for them.²³⁴

Seminary Days: 1842-1844

Robert's previous training had prepared him well for this new scholastic endeavor. "Fortunately, my previous study in Greek and Latin, and even in French, and in mental and moral science and law, and a full academic course had prepared me, to a large extent, for the very comprehensive and somewhat exacting course required by the Presbyterian church for her ordained ministers."²³⁵ Robert took the three year course of seminary study in two years and found the toils of study enjoyable, especially when compared to the study of law: "The studies for the classrooms in the Hebrew and Greek tongues, exegesis, theology, logic, church history, and the indirect helps to a knowledge of the teachings of the Old and New Testaments derived from study of the natural features ... were ever enlivening and fresh subjects when compared with the dry treatises on law to which I had been accustomed."²³⁶

In addition to his studies, Robert participated in several extracurricular activities of an educational nature. Shortly after beginning his studies, Robert was elected as an honorary member to two literary societies on the same day; however, he accepted the

²³¹ Ibid., 198.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ E. S. S. "Mrs. John Holt Rice" *Christian Observer* 46 (March 28, 1867).

²³⁵ Howison, autobiography MS, 198.

²³⁶ Ibid. 214.

invitation of the society whose letter he received first. A frequent attendee at the meetings of the society, Robert formed many new friendships. Another member of the “Rhetorical Society” was Moses Drury Hoge, a descendant of a long line of Presbyterians and a seminary student in the class ahead of Robert, who became a lifelong friend as well as Howison’s family Minister for twenty-five years.²³⁷ Apparently, these two young men had similar reading interests as Robert felt that Hoge’s “talent and wide reading in history and polite literature made him a very interesting companion. I enjoyed his society and conversation.”²³⁸ Hoge and Howison debated almost weekly at the society meetings; some of the general topics that were debated in the group were, "Ought Decatur's motto: 'Our Country right or wrong' to be approved?"; "Do Spectres appear?"; "Was the treatment of the Indians in our country by the colonists, on the whole, justifiable?" "Ought capital punishment even to be inflicted by human government?" "Ought intoxicating wines and liquors to be used as beverage by Christians or by any persons under Christian control?"²³⁹ Apparently the debates were somewhat extended and taken very seriously. One debate in particular, concerning the Indian question, pitted Robert against Moses Hoge. Hoge made an address on the affirmative side of the Indian question, but Robert, about a year later, provided historical evidence that showed the treatment of the Indians was not justifiable. The vote was favorable to Howison’s side.²⁴⁰ Also, as to the use of intoxicants, Howison differed from his friends, Hoge and Fitzgerald, who both favored a moderate use of alcoholic beverages. Howison upheld the views of the General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church, as well as his beliefs since childhood concerning abstinence from intoxicants.

While at the Seminary, Robert had his first experience in teaching. He became a tutor to two daughters of Samuel P. Hawes, a relative of Mrs. Rice’s from Powatan County. Mr. Hawes was a merchant in Richmond and brought his daughters, Anne Almeria and Mary Virginia, respectively fourteen and twelve years old, to Mrs. Rice’s where Robert met them for lessons. Robert enjoyed his duties as tutor and found the girls

²³⁷ Ibid., 202.

²³⁸ Ibid., 200.

²³⁹ Ibid., 201.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

willing to learn, and he taught them for two sessions in French, Algebra, and Geometry as well as encouraged them to read the best of novels, a treat heretofore denied them due to their father's aversion to excessive fiction. Most girls at the time were schooled from nine until about noon and then had about a two hour recess; however, Mr. Hawes had created an eccentric arrangement in which his daughters were under Howison's tutelage from noon until about two-thirty in the afternoon, and he had requested for Howison to "educate them as if they were boys preparing for college."²⁴¹ Apparently the pleasant teacher-pupil relationship was reciprocated, as years later, Mary Virginia, then Mrs. Terhune, wrote her remembrances of these school days with a "beloved tutor" in her autobiography: "Never had learners a happier period of pupilage, and the cordial relations between teacher and students testified to the mutual desire to meet, each, the requirements of the other party to the compact."²⁴² Mary Virginia favored Howison over her former tutor and responded positively to his "easy laugh and winning personality."²⁴³ She further wrote, "Beyond and above the benefit derived from the study of text-books was the education of daily contact with a mind so richly stored with classic and modern literature, so keenly alive to all that was worthy in the natural, mental, and spiritual world as that of Robert Howison."²⁴⁴ Mary Elizabeth felt that the nine months spent at Rice Hill were the most beneficial in shaping her life's character.²⁴⁵

Another educatively significant friendship Robert developed during the two years of his study at the Seminary was with the President of the institution, William Maxwell. President Maxwell was a successful lawyer, and Robert considered his speeches to be "remarkable for learning, wit and satire. And these qualities were carried into the church discussions in which he took part as ruling presbyter."²⁴⁶ Maxwell had moved to the Seminary about four years before Robert came, and Robert, upon seeing Maxwell's well-furnished house thought "his [Maxwell's] large and varied library was very attractive."²⁴⁷

²⁴¹ Mary Virginia Terhune, *Marion Harland's Autobiography: The Story of a Long Life*. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1910), 97.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 96.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ Howison, autobiography MS, 204.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

Maxwell began to teach a class of law students and also established the "Virginia Historical Register" in conjunction with the Virginia Historical Society, and Robert became a Corresponding Member of this organization. The notes to the annual meeting of this society in 1848, allude to the organization being inactive for several years; however, it was being rejuvenated to reawaken the study of Virginia's history and to instill the glory of the state in the minds of its citizens.²⁴⁸

Maxwell died in January, 1857, and his will stipulated for three of his friends, M.D. Hoge, T. V. Moore, and Robert Howison, to select a book or work from his library as a memorial of his friendship. Robert selected the two-volume work entitled *The Amenities of Literature* by Isaac D'Israeli. About twenty-six years later, he obtained the three volumes of the *Curiosities of Literature* by the same author; Robert highly valued all of these works.²⁴⁹

Robert also availed himself to the libraries at the Seminary and found them to be "large stores of wholesome and nutritious food for thought."²⁵⁰ He enjoyed reading works such as Bancroft's *United States*, and later, while writing one of his histories, Robert obtained a copy of this twelve-volume work at a great expense.²⁵¹ One particular work in the library that interested Howison the most was *Discours Historques* written by the French Protestant minister Jacques Saurin.²⁵² In addition to class readings, Howison read (in English) Stackhouse's *History of the Bible* and Farmer on *Miracles*. In discussing this latter work with Rev. Dr. Samuel B. Wilson, Howison's childhood minister in Fredericksburg and now a Professor at the seminary, Robert learned that Wilson thought the work had erroneous doctrine.²⁵³ However, Howison maintained his original view that the work was sound.²⁵⁴ As a young seminary student, Howison was discovering that his previously held beliefs about doctrines in the church were open to interpretation. He reasoned, however, that the basic beliefs of the faith were few and could be understood

²⁴⁸ William Maxwell, "The Virginia Historical Register, and Literary Advertiser. The Virginia Historical Society. The First Annual Meeting. *The Virginia Historical Register, and Literary Advertiser*. Vol. 1 (Richmond: Macfarlane & Ferguson, 1848).

²⁴⁹ Howison autobiography MS, 214.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 218.

²⁵² Ibid., 219.

²⁵³ Ibid., 219-220.

even by a child.²⁵⁵ Other reading material of historical nature which interested Howison included “in the original Greek, the Iliad of Homer, and the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides, and in Latin the Annals, Histories and Argricola of the Roman Tacitus. This enlightened and philosophic historian made an impression as to what history really was or ought to be which has never been lost in all subsequent days. I have thought that Gibbon in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" notwithstanding his stately rhetorical march of words so much less concise and concentrated than that of Tacitus, yet, in the historic spirit and purpose, comes nearer to its great Roman historian than any modern author.”²⁵⁶

While Robert formed many friendships at the seminary, he thought the family of Rev. Dr. Samuel L. Graham especially pleasant. Samuel Graham had received his early education in country schools in Virginia, known as “old field schools” as well as in various academies, and he then attended Washington College in Lexington, Virginia. After a short stint as a tutor, he attended the Theological Seminary at Princeton. After several pastorates in which he labored so strenuously that he took to his bed after the sermon, he accepted the call to a professorship at Union Theological Seminary in 1838, after having rejected several previous offers.²⁵⁷ Graham was Professor of Oriental Languages while Robert was at the Seminary, and Howison found him to be modest and reserved in personality, but possessing an outstanding intellect and sense of humor.²⁵⁸

Graham and his first wife, Elizabeth Arbuckle, had three living daughters, Anne, Mary Elizabeth, and Judith.²⁵⁹ Mary Elizabeth was the daughter who caught young Robert’s eye. She had been schooled in Granville County, North Carolina and in Clarksville, Virginia, and had been taught the usual forms of education available to girls such as Latin and vocal and instrumental music.²⁶⁰ Robert’s first impressions of Mary were not romantic since she was so young; however, when she turned fifteen he realized how

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 220.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 214-215.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit; or Commemorative Notices of Distinguished American Clergymen of Various Denominations* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1858), 622-628.

²⁵⁸ Howison, autobiography MS., 221.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 222.

deeply he really cared for her.²⁶¹ Apparently she had a fair complexion, blue eyes, and auburn hair which hung in curls down to her shoulders. “She differed from me in many traits. I was very much addicted to talking and bons mots. She talked very little especially in general society circles. But what she said was always sedate and sensible. And when she had the opportunity of being with real friends her conversation became bright and animated.”²⁶² Robert’s love grew and he felt “more and more every time I met her that her companionship for life would be a happiness and blessing. She was not like me, but she would be the completion of my best ideal.”²⁶³ When his term of study drew to a close, Robert requested the hand of Mary Elizabeth in marriage; Dr. Graham consented, and the couple was soon engaged to married.²⁶⁴

When Robert finished his seminary training in the Spring of 1844, he received a number of invitations stemming from inquiry letters he had written concerning a future pastoral ministry.²⁶⁵ Several of the offers came from within Virginia and two were from outside the state in Texas and Alabama. However, Howison did not think he should move so far away from Virginia, so he decided to pursue the ministerial opportunities in his home state.²⁶⁶ Robert took the required examinations for licensure and preached before the East Hanover Presbytery at Jerusalem, the County seat of South Hampton, in the latter part of April, 1844.²⁶⁷ This area happened to be the center of the Nat Turner slave insurrection occurring a little over a decade earlier in August, 1831.²⁶⁸ Robert passed the requirements and was appointed a licentiate.²⁶⁹ After visiting relatives in Fredericksburg, he pondered the decision of which pastoral invitation to accept. Part of his decision was based on his own physical characteristics: “There were elements entering into the question of choice which, in the very nature of things were better known to myself and to those who knew of my early life and habits than to any others. A field in the country, like the churches of Brunswick, would have required much traveling on horseback for which I had

²⁶¹ Ibid., 221.

²⁶² Ibid., 221-222.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 228.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 229.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

no skill nor fitness.”²⁷⁰ Based on these circumstances, he scheduled his first candidacy visit to the Presbyterian Church in Staunton, Virginia.

First Pastorate in Staunton, Virginia: 1844-1845

Robert’s visit to Staunton lasted about three weeks, and during this time he was the guest of Rev. Dr. Benjamin M. Smith, who in turn introduced Robert to various families in the church.²⁷¹ After preaching and interviewing for the position, Robert returned to Charlottesville and was the guest of Rev. Dr. White. Robert was invited to preach at Dr. White’s church as well as at the Sunday evening service at the University of Virginia. Every detail interested Robert during his first visit to the University; he was introduced to the head Librarian, Mr. Werenbaker, and enjoyed a conversation with this very learned man.²⁷² Robert also received another invitation whereby he and Dr. White would spend the day and have dinner with the Hon. Henry Sr. George Tucker, Professor of Constitutional and Municipal Law. Judge Tucker gave Robert a signed copy of his published work on *Constitutional Law* which Robert highly valued.²⁷³

Robert was able to indulge his love of history firsthand when another visiting gentleman, Mr. Winn, proposed that he and Robert visit "Monticello," the former home of Thomas Jefferson. The house was now owned by Lieut. Levy of the United States Navy and who was gone most of the time. Robert and Mr. Winn rode to Monticello on horseback and were able to gain admission to the house. Jefferson’s belongings had been removed from the house prior to it’s sale; however, the two visitors were able to examine the architecture of the house and enjoyed the spectacular vistas from the grounds. Robert gave the servant some “metallic souvenirs” to thank him for his part in admitting them into the house.²⁷⁴ Howison’s description is similar to that of others who visited Monticello around this same time; however, several of the numerous English travelers who visited the

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid., 231.

²⁷³ Ibid., 232.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 233.

estate described the ruin of the grounds in great detail, with Jefferson's tombstone being practically chipped away by relic seekers.²⁷⁵

Robert soon received a letter from the Staunton Presbyterian Church that informed him that the congregation had given unanimous consent for him to become their pastor. Robert accepted the invitation, moved to Staunton, and boarded with a family in the church: "Staunton brought to me many enjoyments - religious, literary and social."²⁷⁶ Robert came into contact with several local educators, namely the Rev. Rufus W. Bailey, who was starting an academy for girls, and Mary Julia Baldwin, whose Augusta Female Seminary, now Mary Baldwin College, was "a marvelous success in female education."²⁷⁷

During Howison's tenure in Staunton, the membership of the church grew steadily; however, around November, 1844, Robert's health began to decline and he resigned from this ministry.²⁷⁸ His duties, coming so soon after the exacting life of seminary, became "a draft on my health and strength which was too heavy to be safely borne."²⁷⁹ As a result of Howison's failing health, the officers and church members found others to fill the pulpit and encouraged Robert to rest and visit with relatives in Fredericksburg. After this visit, Robert felt better for awhile, but in a few weeks the weakness and depression returned; "Every topic seemed to repel me, every dawning hope to bring deeper hopelessness."²⁸⁰

Robert decided to move back to Fredericksburg, and over the next year, due to encouragement from his family and exercise in the fresh air, he gradually improved.²⁸¹ At about his same time, Robert's father's health had declined to the point where he was bed-ridden, and he subsequently died in the Summer of 1845. Robert's newly widowed mother decided to rent out the family's house in Fredericksburg and for she and Robert to move to her daughter, Min's, in Richmond. However, Robert's happiness was still incomplete; on the counsel of family and friends, Robert and Mary Elizabeth had mutually broken off their engagement since the extent and duration of his illness was unknown.²⁸²

²⁷⁵ Merrill D. Peterson, ed. *Visitors To Monticello* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989).

²⁷⁶ Howison, autobiography MS, 233.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 235-236.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 237.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 238.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 222-223.

Life in Richmond: 1845-1870

After a full recovery from his despondency, Robert decided on the advice of those close to him to return to the practice of law: “Thus in the Fall of 1845, I was once more established in my office, and was soon enjoying a practice which grew steadily all the time.”²⁸³ He began receiving higher quality law cases and his business was more profitable than that of his initial practice in 1841-42.²⁸⁴

Professional visits. During the winter of 1846-1847 Robert traveled to several northern cities to collect on bad debts for a client, the P. K. White & Company, shoe wholesalers and merchandisers in Richmond. The owners of this company were in financial distress due to the mismanagement of company funds. After trying to obtain payments from their creditors via correspondence, they employed Robert to travel to New England to settle their accounts.²⁸⁵ An acquaintance of Robert gave him letters of introduction to a Professor at Harvard University and to a young lawyer in Boston who was a personal friend of the historian, William H. Prescott. Enroute to this first visit to New England in 1846, Robert stopped in Washington and Baltimore to visit with relatives and to sightsee. He saw the newly opened Smithsonian Institution, the Capitol building, art gallery, and the Washington monument. After reaching Boston, Robert rode in a horse-drawn sleigh and, he stayed at the Tremont House opposite the Boston Commons. At dinner he talked with several people from Europe and enjoyed the cuisine but declined to eat the northern pork and beans.²⁸⁶

After accomplishing his business objectives, Robert used his introductory letters to meet Mr. M. Otis and his son and was invited to dinner at their home. The son, a lawyer and private secretary to the historian Samuel Prescott, agreed to Robert’s request to meet Mr. Prescott, and subsequently arranged an informal evening visit in the Prescott’s home.²⁸⁷ Robert remembered the visit even down to the details of the house; the walls of Mr. Prescott’s library were covered with bookshelves and even had a hidden door that resembled a bookcase leading to a small study. Robert found the conversation with

²⁸³ Ibid., 239.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 176.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 251.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 263.

Prescott very interesting, and they discussed Prescott's published works and perused many of the original documents he owned and used in his writing.²⁸⁸ For Robert, the finale to the evening occurred when Prescott displayed an original manuscript of a story written by Washington Irving: "I cannot in words describe the interest with which I looked on these pages of a brief manuscript sketch inseparably connected with two of the most eminent authors of our country."²⁸⁹ When the evening drew to a close, Robert asked Mr. Prescott for his signature; however; this treasure was eventually lost due to the war and frequent moves.²⁹⁰

Howison also visited Harvard University, and he particularly enjoyed the library tour during which he was able to examine many of the books and paintings, especially some of the pre-Revolutionary tracts. Robert visited at the home of Professor Kent of the Law Department, and found the presence of white servants in this home a novelty.²⁹¹ Howison's visit also took him to the towns of Lynn and Salem, Massachusetts. In Salem, he had his driver take him near the ridge where alleged witches had been hung. He also visited the towns of Danvers, Haverhill and Georgetown. Robert completed his business and felt that his client would be satisfied with the ensuing financial results. On the route back to Virginia, he traveled through New York and visited Yale College and was able to visit the library, meet some of the professors, and even hear a part of a very learned lecture. Howison noticed that most of the students at the lecture were men; however, he was pleased to note that several women were present, as co-education was a principle in which Howison believed.²⁹²

Marriage and Family Life. Although Robert's renewed law practice had achieved some success, he still had unfinished business with Mary Elizabeth Graham. The conclusion to their relationship occurred when Robert received a letter from a friend telling him that another seminary student had fallen in love with Mary Elizabeth and sought her hand in marriage. Robert wrote back stating that he still cared for her, and he

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 264.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 264-265.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 266.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 267.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 268.

²⁹² Ibid., 274-275.

believed she still cared for him as well. Robert had opportunity to speak to Mary Elizabeth in the Fall of 1846, when Dr. Graham, Mary, her suitor, and another friend traveled through Richmond on their way to New York. Robert and a friend, Archibald Alexander Little, visited the travelers in the parlor of the Exchange Hotel. By the end of the next Summer, with the other suitor continuing to persist in his affections, Robert decided to intervene on his own behalf. He visited the Graham family at the Seminary and had several talks with Mary that were “far from calm.”²⁹³

However, Robert’s uncertainty of how the relationship would conclude was soon was relieved, and the couple renewed their engagement, and were married at the Graham residence on November 24, 1847.²⁹⁴ The Rev. Dr. Wilson performed the evening ceremony, and Robert’s brother, Captain Neil Howison, was the first groomsman. Afterwards, the wedding party, which included Robert’s mother, took the stage route through Petersburg since continued storms had broken the James River Canal. After being detained for two days due to a broken wheel, the group returned to Richmond.²⁹⁵ Robert had previously secured a boarding room at the Carlton House on Twelfth Street in Richmond for himself and his young wife.²⁹⁶ The new Mrs. Robert R. Howison received over two hundred visits from well wishers and acquaintances, and apparently she was invited to so many parties that she could not attend them all.²⁹⁷

Recognized Scholarship

Writing a history of Virginia. One of the first gifts Robert presented his new wife, for her nineteenth birthday on February 7, 1848, was the first volume of his work, *A History of Virginia from Its Discovery and Settlement by Europeans to the Present Time.*²⁹⁸ The reason Howison wrote this work seemed very apparent to him, “Having been from early childhood fond of history, and having previous to my permanent settlement in Richmond as a lawyer, studied attentively a large amount of matter consisting in the very best works of scientific history, and of the raw material which furnished the evidences and

²⁹³ Ibid., 224-225.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 225.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 226.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

foundation of history, it was natural that the purpose should have come to me to attempt the composition of a historical work.²⁹⁹ Other considerations included the fact that he was a native of Virginia, and the fact that the young men of the day were “more ignorant of the career of their own state, than that of Greece or Rome.”³⁰⁰

Robert collected material and wrote the work in what time he could spare from professional duties and recreation.³⁰¹ With some difficulty, he was able to obtain, through friends and library connections, original copies of older histories of Virginia, such as those written by Captain John Smith, Beverly, Keith, Stith, Burk, and Campbell, as well as Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia*.³⁰² In his autobiography, Howison states his general philosophy about writing history, “My foundation theory for history was and is very simple. It is that history must be truth, or it is nothing. So many of the historical works I had read had seemed to me to leave out of view many ascertained facts pertinent to the subject, and so to warp and distort even the facts stated as to make them suit a potted theory, that the work finally sent out to public view was not history, but merely arguments and special pleading intended for a partisan purpose.”³⁰³ Robert believed that a writer of history must not spare any pains in seeking all the facts and drawing from them logical conclusions which were philosophically sound: “On this basis, I humbly believe and claim that all of history that I have written and caused to be published is firmly founded.”³⁰⁴

Howison ended the work by discussing the common view that Virginia had fallen into a lethargy, and he listed three sources from which the “evil disposition” of the state had arisen. The first was a want of education: “As the experience of all ages has proved that an educated people will, other things being equal, be the most industrious, most prosperous, most virtuous, and therefore most happy.”³⁰⁵ Howison computed that of the 166,000 school-age children in Virginia at that time, 28, 000 poor children were in the Lancastrian schools, 12,000 were in college, academies, or classical schools, and the

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 242-243.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 243.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 243.

³⁰² Ibid., 244.

³⁰³ Ibid., 243.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 244.

³⁰⁵ Robert Reid Howison, *A History of Virginia From Its Discovery And Settlement By Europeans To The Present Time* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1846)

remaining 126,000 did not attend school at all. He also discussed the state of the Negroes, as being almost entirely uneducated; however he felt that, “The policy which discourages farther extension of knowledge among them is necessary; but the fact remains unchanged, that they exist among us, a huge mass of *mind*, almost entirely unenlightened.”³⁰⁶ Howison did not “pretend to suggest any remedy,” but compared Virginia very unfavorably to her northern counterparts. The final two causes of inefficiency in Virginia included a lack of internal improvements and slavery. Howison compared the prosperity of the older free states with the slave states and concluded that slavery was injurious to public welfare. He summarized that, in general, the populace felt even though slavery was lawful they must control it. Therefore, to most of the people of Virginia, slavery was an evil institution and many spoke out publicly for slave owners to stop the practice.³⁰⁷

Howison completed the manuscript of the first volume in the Fall of 1846, and the work was published by Carey & Hart of Philadelphia, with the second volume being published in 1848.³⁰⁸ Since the distance made it impossible for Robert to correct the drafts in person, this work was done by the publisher in Philadelphia and only a brief listing of “errata” was necessary in each volume.

Newspaper notices of the day were generally favorable to Howison’s work; however, he was critiqued on several points, particularly that of a fault he sought to avoid in writing history – partisanship. A review written by a friend of Howison, John M. Daniel, at Howison’s request, appeared in the *Southern Literary Messenger* and critiqued the work primarily on two points, namely, it described the style of the work as being too “florid, expounded, and artificial” and that the work brought “nothing new” to Virginia history.³⁰⁹ Howison considered the first charge to be minor since historians such as Gibbon and MacCaulay had received similar criticism. However, as to the second charge of bringing nothing new to Virginia history, Howison considered the review to be “evasive

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 512-513.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 519.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 246.

³⁰⁹ Howison, autobiography MS, 245.

and unjust criticism when viewed in the light of the facts existing when the first volume appeared.”³¹⁰

Critics were of different persuasions concerning Howison’s allegedly partisan views towards Presbyterianism as seen by a comparison of three different reviews. A writer in the *Watchman & Observer* noted, “But in doing this [speaking charitably of all denominations] he [Howison] has not unnecessarily gone beyond the proper limits of a conscientious mind in pursuing his historical investigations;”³¹¹ the *Fredericksburg News* reported, “Mr. Howison has certainly been guilty of a significant oversight, in yielding to influences which he should have discarded in an impartial history of the state;”³¹² and a reviewer in the *Southern Churchman*, apparently an Episcopalian, accused Howison of being partial to the Presbyterian Church and exhibiting a spirit of aggression towards the Episcopal Church, “We allude to the unrelenting spirit of sectarianism which pervades

³¹³ Howison responded to the review in the *Southern Churchman* in the next issue of that journal stating that he had personal friends in the Episcopal Church and he intended no sectarian spirit.³¹⁴ Howison felt a reader of his work would not attribute to him a partiality towards Presbyterianism unless the person had formed a previous expectation about what he or she thought Howison would write. As to the charge of bitterness towards the Episcopal Church, Howison stated that he was only quoting Bishop Meade, who in his writings, had reviewed the faults of the church in the past as a warning to present and future generations. Howison had hoped that by referring to the authority of Meade, he might have avoided the criticism he received.³¹⁵

Messrs. Drunken & Morris bought the copyright from Robert as well as the unsold volumes of the work; Howison’s total monetary profit was only about \$450.00.³¹⁶

Howison found his legal work to be instructive and profitable: “During all this time, and especially after my marriage, my practice as lawyer and solicitor constantly increased and yielded larger money income. I soon found that though there was a certain

³¹⁰ Ibid., 245.

³¹¹ “Howison’s History of Virginia.” *Watchman Observer* (February 1848).

³¹² “Howison’s History of Virginia.” *Fredericksburg News* (February 1848).

³¹³ “Howison’s History of Virginia.” *Southern Churchman* (March 1848).

³¹⁴ “A History of Virginia.” *Southern Churchman* (March 1848).

³¹⁵ Ibid.

interest and excitement in criminal practice, it was rarely profitable, and yet more rare - satisfactory. But in the study and work of civil cases and notably in those of the equity jurisdiction, I found both instruction and profit.”³¹⁷ The remuneration Howison earned for his labor was not always in the form of currency. In one particular instance, after rendering legal services for the Knabe Piano Company, Robert received a rectangular grand piano in payment for handling the case.³¹⁸

Even though Howison may not have felt any satisfaction in handling criminal suits, in 1851, he wrote a small book entitled *Reports of Criminal Trials in the Circuit, State and United States Courts, Held in Richmond, Virginia*. His object in writing the work was “to give a full and accurate report of the evidence in each case, so as to furnish to the reader a reflected picture of what passed before the Court and Jury.”³¹⁹ Howison also stated that criminal trials are often illustrious of the saying, “truth is strange — stranger than fiction.” He concludes the preface to the work by writing, “No apology is offered for the insertion of any trial or any evidence herein found. We must look at things as *they are*, and not as we would wish them to be, if we desire to learn the *origin* and the *cure* of crime.”³²⁰ Robert supplied notes to the reader throughout the book, relying often on memory of the case being tried.

As a successful lawyer, Robert was often considered for political office; however, he never held an elected position. Apparently, while he was a candidate for a political office in Richmond, he was criticized for signing a petition on behalf of a slave who had been sentenced to death. In an open letter to the citizens of Richmond, Howison sought to repudiate himself by giving the facts about why he signed the petition. Although he did not need to, he felt impelled to comment on his own involvement with slavery: “Born in the very heart of slave holding Virginia, I have grown up breathing the air of her institutions. With her and her fortunes I expect to stand or fall. A considerable part of the small

³¹⁶ Howison, autobiography MS, 246.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 277.

³¹⁸ “Braehead,” Letter written by Aunt Mamie Howison, n. d.

³¹⁹ Robert R. Howison, *Reports of Criminal Trials in the Circuit, State and United States Courts, Held in Richmond, Virginia*. (Richmond, VA: Geo. M. West & Brother, 1851).

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, Preface.

³²² Howison seemed contented that he was never elected to a public office: “During the years from 1856 to the opening of the "war between the States", my law practice became established in success and profit. I was often tempted by the questions of deep political interest that arose, and sometimes by the solicitations of the those whom I knew to be friends and perhaps not seldom by the movings of the vanity and the false ambitions of which I had my share, to enter upon the doubtful and turbid waters of politics. But I knew that too much politics had been death to the real welfare of many of the lawyers of Virginia, and I was happily able to escape this temptation.”³²³

Also during the 1850s, Robert served in various capacities on the Richmond City Council and local service agencies. The Richmond City Directory of 1855 lists Howison as a Trustee of the Lancastrian School for the Madison Ward as well as for the other Primary schools in this ward. The 1856 directory lists Howison as the Secretary of the Male Orphan Asylum and again in this same position in 1858-1859; the 1858-1859 directory also lists him as President of the Board of State Commissioners of Free Schools in Richmond and a Director of the Young Men’s Christian Association, and Secretary of the Male Orphan Society.³²⁴ In 1860, he was the President of the State Commissioners of Free Schools, and Secretary of the Male Orphan Society. During Howison’s tenure as President of the Board of State Commissioners of Free Schools in Richmond, a report from the Second Auditor, William Moncure, states that the Primary and Free schools in the state would share the \$80,000 appropriated from the state Literary Fund. The report lists the amount each school in the state would receive, presumably for operating expenses.³²⁵

As Robert’s professional duties grew more onerous he found less time for social or literary pursuits. However, by careful time management he was able to accomplish much

³²¹ “To the People of Richmond” *Times Dispatch*, n. d.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Howison, autobiography MS, 283-284.

³²⁴ Richmond City Directory

that interested him outside of the courtroom. In Fall of 1850, Jenny Lind, “the nightingale of Sweden,” came to Richmond, and Robert attended her concert - his wife refused to attend due to the price of the tickets. Howison felt that he had never heard a voice with as much native talent and sweetness.³²⁶ Robert was also among the huge crowds that welcomed the young Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, the oldest son of Queen Victoria of Great Britain, when he visited Richmond in 1860. Richmond Mayor Mayo came by Howison’s office on the day after the visit to show him an autograph he had obtained from the Prince.³²⁷ During times of pressing professional work, Robert sometimes went bird hunting (sora shooting) on the James River about 15 miles below Richmond.³²⁸ The Howison family often spent their summers in Granville County, North Carolina, at Sylvan Hill, the home of Mary Elizabeth’s step-mother, where Robert and the other men would hunt turkey.³²⁹

After boarding at the Carleton House for about five years, in 1852 Robert purchased a lot and house on the corner of Sixth and Clay Streets in Richmond. By this time Robert and Mary Elizabeth had two children, a daughter, Helen Judith, born on October 29, 1848, and a son, Samuel Graham, born on May 7, 1850. Several years later, around 1856, Robert found that he needed additional office space with more light, so he had a house built on Governor's Street and used the front basement as his office. The house was located opposite the Governor’s mansion on Capitol Square, and was close to prestigious neighbors with names such as Conway, Morson, Myers, Crump, Fry, Richardson, and Price as well as the law and equity courts. While living on Governor’s Street the Howison’s third and last child, Mary, was born on March 3, 1859.³³⁰

Scholarship during the War Between the States. The War between the States erupted in 1861. Howison, living in Richmond during the tenuous years prior to the war, saw the early signs that the conflict was coming. He attributed many possible causes to the war; however, he felt most of these causes could have been solved by wise statesmanship

³²⁵ William Moncure, *Second Auditor’s Report* December 1, 1857, Richmond, VA.

³²⁶ Howison, autobiography MS, 240.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 277.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ *Laws*, 137.

through either a gradual emancipation or a peaceful withdrawal of the slave states from the Union.³³¹ The John Brown raid was the turning point for many, including Robert, to openly declare themselves as secessionists.³³² Howison believed that the Southern States ought to withdraw from the Union, establish a confederacy, and defend themselves by arms in case of attack. He knew that secession meant war unless the North would agree to restore the union: “But it is vain to recall, by memory the past only to waste out time in unavailing regrets. No well regulated mind can now review that war and its results without a confirmation of the belief that there is ‘a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will.’ God, in His Sovereign providence made that war a long one, and thereby destroyed slavery, not only in the United States, but throughout the world.”³³³

On the day when Virginia voted on the Act of Secession, Howison, along with Gustavus A. Meyers and James H. Grant, superintended the vote in the Madison Ward. On this day of “warlike enthusiasm,” military bands played the “The Marseillaise;” however, Howison’s excitement was tempered by seeing a Negro-trader and slave auctioneer driving his buggy down the street flying a Louisiana flag. The sight caused Howison to reflect that this man was not a fit representative of the cause and that slavery was doomed. “After the war was really opened, although I deeply felt the sorrows it diffused, I was equally alive to its importance, and to the momentous issues it involved.”³³⁴ Howison, at age 41, was on the verge of military exemption, and believing himself to be of better use on the home front, he paid a Swiss soldier \$1,000 to serve for him. Later on, Howison became a member of the home guard and served in a regiment that resisted the advance at Fort Gilmer on Richmond, Seven Pines, the battle of Fredericksburg, and during the evacuation of Richmond.³³⁵

One highlight of Howison’s life that occurred during the early years of the war was the visit of the famous chess player Paul Morphy to Richmond in the Fall of 1861. Robert had been an avid chess player since childhood, and as a member of the Chess Association in Richmond he had formed many friendships through the game. The group met around

³³¹ Howison, autobiography MS, 286.

³³² *Ibid.*, 292.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 293.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 294.

five o'clock in the afternoon for fellowship while playing chess, and often the conversation concerned the impending war.³³⁶ Robert had received a picture entitled "Jeu D'Echecs" as a free gift from being a subscriber to a chess magazine and had framed the engraving. The print depicted Satan, in the form of Mephistopheles, playing the game of chess with a young man who had a guardian angel watching over him. The board was set upon a tombstone and Satan's chess pieces represented the "tempting vices" and the young man's pieces represented the virtues. Several of the virtues were missing from the board as being already captured by Satan; apparently, the young man is playing for his soul. When Mr. Morphy saw the print, he stated that he thought he could win the game if the chess pieces were set up the same as those on the board in the print. He played each of the men at Howison's home that evening and won the game every time.³³⁷

During these turbulent years, Robert's interest in history led him to write a concurrent history of the war: "The deep interest I had always felt in history and especially in American history was deepened immeasurably as the events of the war became known. I formed the purpose to write its history, and collected very large masses of materials suited to the purpose."³³⁸ While working in the Adjutant Generals' office, Howison was able to gain current information about the various battles by corresponding with military leaders, such as General Robert E. Lee, Daniel Ruggles, Edmund Ruffin, and others.³³⁹ He sent a partially typed form letter and filled in the details pertinent to each request. Howison wrote the history based on these first-hand accounts and it was published in serial form in the *Southern Literary Messenger* until the publication was stopped due to a paper shortage. Howison finished the history and eventually donated the handwritten manuscript to the Southern Historical Society. The notice of the society, after receiving the manuscript and letters and other supporting documentation, stated that this gift "one of the most valuable contributions which the Society has yet received."³⁴⁰

³³⁵ Ibid., 294-295.

³³⁶ Ibid., 288-289.

³³⁷ Robert Reid Howison, "Paul Morphy vs. Mephistopheles: Mr. Howison Writes the Detailed Story *The Richmond News* (February 1902).

³³⁸ Howison, autobiography MS, 302.

³³⁹ Robert Reid Howison, "Memo for Gen. R. E. Lee", Virginia Historical Society, n. d.

³⁴⁰ Rev. J. William Jones, Historical Society Papers, vol. 2 (July to December, 1876.) p. 205-206.

Although Howison was able to maintain his business during the war; it was not a pleasant experience. He probated various wills and sought to obtain the highest prices in selling real estate and invested the proceeds in Confederate Bonds.³⁴¹ However, towards the end of the war, the services of even those who had furnished substitutes were needed. After the conscripting officers learned of Robert's reasons for not serving, they detailed him for duty in the Office of the Adjutant General for three months. In this position, Robert was responsible for preparing a report on the treatment of prisoners of war for the Joint Committee of the Confederate Congress. Robert's report was prepared; however, it was burned in the printing office on April 3, 1865 when Richmond fell to Northern troops.³⁴² Robert had first hand experience with the privations of war, when, about four weeks before the war ended, he paid eleven hundred dollars for a barrel of flour for his family; however, it was confiscated on the canal from Lynchburg by General Sheridan's men.³⁴³

Northern troops overtook Richmond on April 3, 1865, and the city was a scene of fear with citizens quickly evacuating. Howison was in his office trying to perfect a plan of evacuation for his family when he was visited by a Captain on the United States Navy, his cousin, Captain Henry L. Howison. Captain Howison offered for Robert and his family to flee to the safety of his ship. Even though Robert was grateful for the offer, he declined: "Yet so long cherished had been the feeling of hostility and bitterness between South and North that, even then, I could not entirely repress it. I thanked him, but said I hoped the fire would not reach our house. He again assured me of his willingness to help us, and bowed and retired. I have never seen him since but have traced his subsequent history with interest."³⁴⁴

After the war, the reconstruction period began immediately after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, with Virginia becoming Military District Number One, and ended when Virginia was allowed back into the Union in January, 1870.³⁴⁵ During the

³⁴¹ Ibid., 300-302.

³⁴² Ibid., 306.

³⁴³ Ibid., 308.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 295.

³⁴⁵ James K. Sanford, *A Century of Commerce, 1867-1967* (Richmond, VA: Metropolitan Richmond Chamber of Commerce, 1967.)

reconstruction period, Robert continued his law business and handled several cases where persons tried to sue for liability for losses of Confederate investments. One particular suit pended for about twelve years and was finally decided in favor of Howison and his client by the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia.³⁴⁶ Another law case was tried before Chief Justice Chase in the United States Circuit Court in Richmond. The case was an equity suit and Horace L. Kent was Robert's client. The purpose of the suit was to overturn his title to, "Rock Island," an estate he had purchased during the War and paid for in confederate currency. Since the war was over, complainant stated the sale was null and void. Robert's legal opponent was the Hon. Revendy Johnson of Baltimore, and Robert prepared well for the hearing and won the case: "This decision was, at once, recognized as of the greatest importance to the people of the South, in bringing something of peace and assurance to their titles. The complainants made no offer to obtain an appeal, and the principles laid down by the Chief Justice prevailed."³⁴⁷

Another situation which caused Robert anxiety during this time involved his suretyship on a bond for his brother, John Howison. John had borrowed money and secured the loan by a mortgage on land and his house in Spotsylvania County. John used the loan to pay off his debt; however, he could not repay his creditor, Mrs. Gordon. In offering assistance to his brother, Robert negotiated a settlement in which the loan (having been received in confederate currency) was reduced to the sum it originally represented in gold. Robert paid off the remaining lien on the deed and became the owner of the estate in 1867. He renamed the house *Braehead* after the estate in Scotland owned by his ancestors. John was deeded a small farm which he called *Moorfields* based on their mother's maiden name. Robert continued selling off part of the *Braehead* estate until he had paid it off in full.³⁴⁸

Robert's wife and children moved to *Braehead* at the time of the purchase; however, Robert was detained in Richmond due to his law business. To alleviate the separation, in the Fall of 1869, the Howison's and their two daughters moved in as boarders with Mrs. Spotswood on Franklin Street in Richmond. Robert's son, Graham,

³⁴⁶ Howison autobiography MS, 310-314.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 312.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 315-317.

then eighteen years old, was left in charge of the farm: “He [Graham] had received careful academic training in the usual studies and in the exact sciences and in the Latin and French languages, and having manifested talents for engineering and agriculture was in full charge of the *Braehead* farm. He has conducted it with success in all subsequent years.”³⁴⁹

The Capitol disaster. By early 1870, the government of Virginia had been restored; however, an election was being held for the position of Mayor in Richmond. Henry K. Ellyson was the candidate preferred by the people, as his opponent, Mr. Chahoon, was from one of the northern states. After the vote, Ellyson was elected, but Chahoon contested the election and called for a duel. However, the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia, made the decision and planned to announce the name of the new Mayor at 12 o'clock on April 29, 1870 in the Capitol building. The courtroom was on the top floor of the Capitol on the same floor with the State Library. A huge crowd had assembled in the courtroom, including almost all of the lawyers in Richmond, as well as Robert: “I was in a point near the center of the crowd in the court room, and remember to have seen very near to me Lewis Webb and Edward A. Eaton.”³⁵⁰ At noon, just as the judges were taking their places on a platform bolted just above the courtroom, “a report upon which sounded to me [Howison] like that of a musket fired under the floor, was heard. Almost instinctively, I turned my face towards the door, but was instantly conscious that the girders supporting the floor had been ruptured by the enormous weight and movement of the crowd, and that we were falling to the floor beneath.”³⁵¹ The floor had collapsed and those standing in the courtroom fell forty feet below to the floor of the House of Delegates, who, fortunately, were not in session.

Howison fell unconscious before he hit bottom, and he awoke felling an impending death, realizing what had occurred. The bodies of others were around and over him and he felt like he was suffocating to death: “Yet even in those moments came the "light that lightens the world" - the hope in Christ the Saviour - the One who died, and died in supreme suffering, that the life eternal might come to sinners.”³⁵² Soon Howison was

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 316-317.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 319.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 320.

³⁵² Ibid., 320.

pulled from the rubble and taken outside with the other victims and laid on the grass. After receiving medical aid, he was taken home.³⁵³

Judge Joseph Christian wrote his wife a letter on the night of the accident and described in detail the horror of that day:

“Judge Joynes & Judge Anderson had entered the room and the rest of us [were] about to enter, when the awful crash came. Suddenly the crowded gallery gave way.... In a moment more the floor of the court room began to sink and sway and then, horror of horrors, it fell with its struggling mass of 4 or 5 hundred human beings *forty feet* into the Hall of the House of Delegates below.... The work of rescuing...soon began.... Those who came out and were brought out could not be recognized by their nearest friends. That dreadful *lime dust* had covered them all and they looked alike in their horrible coating of lime and blood.... The wail of sorrow that went up, as wives recognized husbands, brothers & sisters, brothers, and mothers their mangled and bleeding sons, filled the balmy air of spring, and the blood of the best men in the City and State, crimsoned the green lawn around the ill-fated building.”³⁵⁴

Sixty-eight men were killed and 178 were injured in the accident.³⁵⁵ Among the dead were the two lawyers standing next to Howison as well as others such as Nathaniel P. Howard, Patrick Henry Aylett, and Powhatan Roberts: “How they were killed at the first shock while I was kept alive is a mystery only to be solved by belief in an Infinite and Sovereign Providence.”³⁵⁶ The judges were unhurt since they were seated on a platform bolted to the wall, and they visited the injured the next day. They also announced that Henry K. Ellyson was legally elected Mayor of Richmond. Robert recorded in his autobiography: “From this time although we continued to suffer under the survivals of the reconstruction periods, we enjoyed the inestimable blessing of having our State government Legislative, Executive, and Judicial one chosen by and substantially representative of our own people.”³⁵⁷

³⁵³ Ibid., 320-321.

³⁵⁴ William E. Rachal, ed., “The Capitol Disaster, April 27, 1870: A Letter of Judge Joseph Christian to *Virginia Magazine* (April 1960): 193-197.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 195.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 321.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

Although none of the injuries Howison received seemed to be serious at first since he had not broken any bones or received any cuts; however, soon the shock of the accident settled on his nervous system. He had two causes on the docket of the Supreme Court of Appeals, and he prepared himself well for them and won the causes for his clients.³⁵⁸ However, Howison soon began to suffer effects from the fall:

“The shock to the whole nervous system recurred in the fall in the Capitol had made entire rest the indispensable condition of recovery. Yet I had obtained no adequate rest, and had engaged in mental labor of the most severe and exacting character. The result was languor and depression which grew with every day. Professional work became entirely impossible. Though not confined to my bed, I was unable either to read with pleasure and profit or to do any work. A melancholy which could not be thrown off invested my spirit like a dark cloud. There was no subject of thought presented which gave any relief. The mind seized only on its most gloomy aspects and materials, and sought in food the very matter which depressed it.”³⁵⁹

Howison spent all the Summer and part of the Fall of 1870 at *Braehead* to recover from his injuries. After a few months, he tried to return to Richmond and resume his practice; however, the depression returned. Relatives and other friends encouraged him that his only hope for complete recovery was absolute rest for an indefinite time.³⁶⁰ Therefore, Robert requested for a colleague to assume his outstanding law cases, and Robert recovered at *Braehead* knowing: “never was a trust like that discharged with more skill and true friendship, and unswerving purpose to do the right thing at the right time, and in the right way.”³⁶¹

Conclusion

Howison’s education, during the years 1841-1870, consisted of the sum of his learning experiences up to, and including, this timeframe. Although the effects of learning are cumulative, the learning experiences Howison had during these years will be examined separately from that of his childhood and youth, except when the earlier experience is crucial to understanding the latter. By doing so, each period of his life will be examined in

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 323-324.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 324.

its own detail and the possibility of including unsubstantiated links in his learning, and therefore education, will be decreased. Additionally, Howison can be seen as an educator in several instances during the time period covered by this chapter. His learning experiences during these years were connected with several institutions of education, including his own self-initiated learning. Where possible, the institutions of education will be examined individually first and, if applicable, as part of a larger configuration.

Robert's connection with the Presbyterian Church, as well as his own spiritual proclivities, led to his spiritual conversion. After this experience, he attended a final institution of formal schooling - Union Theological Seminary. While he was a student at this Presbyterian Seminary, Robert learned through his classwork, extra-curricular reading, Rhetorical society membership, and friendships with educationally significant others. Robert's earlier formal training seems to have prepared him well for his course of study here. One result of Howison's interaction with this institution was the opportunity to learn "fresh material" when compared to the subjects he had studied in Law school. Additionally, Robert realized through his Seminary studies that some of his previously held beliefs were open to interpretation, and this seems to have broadened his perspective on church doctrine. Robert utilized the library at the Seminary not only for his required class readings, but he found additional works that interested him for pleasure reading, particularly in history. Robert became a Presbyterian Minister as a result of attending Seminary; therefore, this type of training opened up another career opportunity for him.

Robert's law career also provided opportunity for learning. He found the practice of equity cases to be instructive, and his professional visits to several northern states provided new opportunities for learning. Prior to these visits, he had not traveled extensively, and it was natural for him to be interested in this area of the country. Robert deliberately selected several sights and learned people he wanted to see on this trip. He had hoped to meet the historian William Prescott by obtaining a letter of introduction before he began his trip. The visit with Prescott could be described as the highlight of this trip, particularly when Prescott showed Robert an original manuscript written by Washington Irving. Howison seemed to gravitate to the libraries at the institutions of

³⁶¹ Ibid.

higher learning that he visited on his return home, and he commented about reviewing some of the collections as well as meeting the librarians at these institutions.

While in Richmond, Robert attended numerous concerts and plays and seems to have developed an aesthetic for cultural events. However, after seeing a Shakespearean play, Robert found the play and the actor “wanting.”

The War Between the States and the reconstruction era can be seen as educational events. Maddex explains how Virginians were “educated by war” in that after the John Brown raid, numerous Virginians transferred their “former moderate defense of Southern Rights” and joined the “Southern Rights camp.”³⁶² Even though “the representatives of the farmers and businessmen ...had long accepted the limits that the preservation of slavery imposed,”³⁶³ they “now found themselves committed to a war they had hoped to avert, to protect a society in which they played a subordinate role from one in which their kind played the dominant role.”³⁶⁴ The war also helped to transform the mindset of Virginia’s leadership from secession to working for the re-establishment of Virginia with the Union in 1870.

Maddex goes on to explain that education was one of the most evident areas in which Conservatives abandoned their heritage for the new social order. The ante-bellum educational arrangements were an important part of Virginia’s social structure, and after the war, the public schools continued to be opposed by Southern traditionalists. Professor Robert Dabney of Union Theological Seminary wrote numerous critiques to the effect that public schools gave “demagogic politicians” control of education and the public schools were by their nature “anti-Christian.”³⁶⁵

It is difficult to pinpoint Howison’s mindset concerning his pre- and post-war views, but based on his autobiography, Howison also seems to have been educated by the war as well. He was a slave-holding businessman and did not declare himself to be a secessionist until after the John Brown raid. He also wrote that he expected to “stand or

³⁶² Jack P. Maddex, *The Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1970.), 19-20.

³⁶³ Maddex, 22.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 211.

fall” with the state and her fortunes.³⁶⁶ Howison looked forward to reconstruction and eagerly accepted the passing of the Underwood Constitution granting the right for white men to vote even after being secessionists.³⁶⁷

Howison formed acquaintances and friendships with numerous educationally significant others during the years 1841-1870. On several occasions, in describing these years in his autobiography, Robert mentioned the intellectual traits of other individuals as being something which drew Robert into a friendship, as in the cases of Moses Hoge and William Maxwell. He learned through debate with his peers in the Rhetorical society, and he was President of the YMCA, as a learning society, in Richmond during the late 1850s.

Howison’s first recorded role as an educator occurred during Seminary when he undertook a tutorship for the two Hawes girls. Although Howison had no known formal training in teaching others prior to this position, the reminiscences in Mary Virginia Terhune’s autobiography indicate that he was a “beloved tutor” and brought a well-cultivated mind to the classroom.

Another occurrence of Howison’s early efforts as educator was the writing of his history of Virginia. The book served a dual purpose for Howison, that of aiding him in learning more about Virginia history as well as using the work to educate others. Howison intentionally planned for this book to teach “young men” the history of Virginia. No doubt Howison’s membership in the Virginia Historical Society, coupled with his friendship with the President of the society, William Maxwell, influenced his writing of the work. One of the stated goals of the historical society was to renew an interest in Virginia history in the young men of the day.

Howison found other opportunities for scholarship during these years in Richmond. He took advantage of the opportunity presented in his war-time service in the Adjutant General’s office to gather research in order to write a history of the Civil War. Howison based the history on the reports he received from those present in the various battles, particularly from the leaders. The issue of the *Southern Literary Messenger* containing Howison’s first installment of the “History of the War” caused so many copies

³⁶⁶ “To the People of Richmond” *Times and Dispatch*, n. d.

³⁶⁷ Howison autobiography MS, 317-318.

of the journal to be sold that the owners did not provide copies to those who had let their subscriptions expire.³⁶⁸ Also, Howison's service to the Confederacy consisted, in part, of his scholarship in preparing the report on the treatment of prisoners of war.

Howison's self-initiated learning was evidenced through these years in his desire to read and in his researches in preparation for writing his history. The outcome of this self-initiated learning was primarily his history of Virginia and the fact that he became relatively well-known as an author and historian. Another outcome was the knowledge transferred to others as a result of reading the book. Howison's independent study of history, coupled with the fact that, at least at times, he wrote history to teach it to a particular audience, may position him as being an educator simultaneously with being a learner.

Delineating institutions of education for Howison's learning experiences during 1841-1870 is complicated by several factors. His seminary training was completed at an institution of higher learning; however, this institution was essentially an educational arm of the Presbyterian church. This overlap, by the very nature of the institution, automatically creates a configuration of church/school. Other configurations include learning from others in a school/peers configuration, and learning from work, coupled with his self-initiated learning, creates a configuration of work/self-initiated learning. His reading of books for pleasure, coupled with the resources of the community library, creates a configuration of self-initiated learning/books/library.

Several of the above configurations were also present in Robert's early years, particularly the pattern of church/school, school/peers, work/self-initiated learning. The configurations formed during the years of Howison's life as discussed in this chapter are not as closely connected to family, but are more grounded in Howison's self-directed learning and interaction with educative institutions in the community.

³⁶⁸ Benjamin Blake Minor, *The Southern Literary Messenger, 1834-1864* (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1905), 226-227.

Chapter 4

A Completed Education: 1870-1906

This chapter examines Howison's education as it continued to develop through the three decades prior to his death. These years include the establishment of his law practice in Fredericksburg, a return to the ministry, continued scholarship as evidenced through the publication of several more books and numerous articles for newspapers and periodicals, a lectureship on American History at Fredericksburg College, and the completion of his autobiography in 1901, five years before his death in 1906. The events occurring in the scope of this chapter will be examined topically due to the overlap of numerous contemporaneous experiences during this thirty-six year time span.

After the accident in the Capitol building, Robert moved to *Braehead*, his country home near Fredericksburg to recover. He initially tried to return to Richmond to resume his law practice, but his health prevented him from doing so. During the two years that it took fifty-year old Howison to recover, the fresh air, water, and scenery around *Braehead* encouraged him, and he again found pleasure in reading: "History became again a fountain of thought and delight. The fullest and best written articles of the cyclopedias were eagerly studied. But my chief interest centered in books and articles relating to Christ and the faith in Him."³⁶⁹

Law Practice in Fredericksburg: 1875-1880

When Robert's health was restored to the point where he could think about resuming his law career, the question arose as to whether he should return to Richmond or practice in Fredericksburg. Since *Braehead* had become the Howison's permanent home, and since Robert felt that unfavorable changes had occurred in the Richmond Bar, he decided to open his office in Fredericksburg.³⁷⁰ Additionally, his son Graham had been managing the *Braehead* farm so successfully that it was a source of reliable financial support.³⁷¹ Robert practiced law in Fredericksburg from the first of September, 1875, until

³⁶⁹ Howison, autobiography MS, 325.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 326.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 325-326.

the first of March, 1880.³⁷² He walked the two mile distance from *Breahead* to downtown Fredericksburg every morning, ate lunch around two o'clock, and walked home about sunset.

In January, 1880, the Hon. A. P. Rowe nominated Howison for the judgeship of Spottsylvania County. In his nomination, Rowe stated that Howison only sought the office after receiving numerous requests urging him to do so; truly a situation where "the office had sought the man and not the man the office."³⁷³ Rowe also emphasized sixty-year old Howison's qualifications by describing him as having, "a sound and cultivated mind, in an active, vigorous and healthy body, with a *quantum sufficit* of that very rare commodity miscalled common sense, but which is now so very uncommon."³⁷⁴ Rowe encouraged the Speaker and members of the House to consider Howison. However, Robert did not assume political office, presumably he still wanted to avoid political entanglement as he had while living in Richmond.

While Howison was practicing law in Fredericksburg, he was elected a ruling Presbyter at the Fredericksburg Presbyterian Church. He attended the General Assembly meeting in 1879 in Louisville, Kentucky, with the Pastor of the church, Rev. Dr. James P. Smith. At the meeting, both men were appointed members of the Judicial Committee and generally agreed on the cases being tried. This experience, coupled with the reading Howison had done since his accident on topics such as Christ in history, Hebrew, Greek, human creeds, particularly as stated by Rev. Dr. Philip Scharf in his book *The Creeds of Christendom*, elicited a desire in Howison to re-enter the ministry.³⁷⁵

Return to the Ministry: 1880 - 1901

To inquire about the reality of a future ministry, Howison sent letters to several ministers asking for counsel. The response to these requests indicated that Howison should attend the upcoming meeting of the East Hanover Presbytery, and if necessary, have an interview in order to be licensed.³⁷⁶ Therefore, at the next meeting of the Presbytery, at the Third Presbyterian Church on Church Hill in Richmond, it was decided

³⁷² Ibid., 326.

³⁷³ A. P. Rowe, "Speech of Hon. A. P. Rowe." *The State* (January 1880).

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Howison autobiography MS, 328.

that Howison could resume the duties of the ministry; however, he would need to be re-examined since his first license had been conferred about forty years earlier.³⁷⁷ After the examination, Howison became a Licentiate and preached his first sermon at the Union Station Methodist Episcopal Church the next Sunday morning.

Samuel Davies church. Howison was invited to assume a six-month pastorate at the Samuel Davies Church in Hanover County in August of 1880, although he remained in this position for about three years.³⁷⁸ The church would have extended a full-time offer in the beginning; but, the temporary arrangement seemed to be the most appropriate so Howison would not have to change his permanent address.³⁷⁹ As it worked out, Howison traveled to Hanover County on Saturdays and stayed at, *Dundee*, the home of Dr. Lucien Price about three miles south of Hanover, and he returned home each Monday.³⁸⁰ The Samuel Davies Church actually consisted of three small churches, Salem, Beulah, and Bethlehem, located about twenty miles apart in a triangular formation.³⁸¹ Howison nicknamed the churches; Salem he called “the monarchy,” Bethlehem the “aristocracy,”

³⁸² Within a month of assuming this work, the *Central Presbyterian* published the following comments about Howison’s ministry: “But by his faithful and earnest presentation of truth in the pulpit, and his attractive manner in the social circle, he has already secured a warm hold upon the affections not only of the church, but of the community at large, and has great cause of encouragement in his work.”³⁸³ The church services were generally full; however, in good weather movable seats were necessary due to larger crowds. Most of the families traveled to church in a market cart drawn by a horse or mule; however, some of the younger people arrived in elegant carriages or buggies. While in this ministry, Howison was able to visit the home of Samuel Davies, the founder of the church and an early Presbyterian leader in Virginia.³⁸⁴

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 328-329.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 329.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ “News from the Churches: Southern Presbyterian. Samuel Davies Church, Hanover, Co., Va.” *Central Presbyterian* (August 1880).

³⁸⁰ Howison, autobiography MS, 333.

³⁸¹ “Religious Intelligence: News from Our Church. Virginia.” *Christian Observer* (September 15, 1880).

³⁸² Howison, autobiography MS, 330.

³⁸³ “Religious Intelligence: News from Our Church. Virginia.” *Christian Observer* (September 15, 1880).

³⁸⁴ Howison autobiography MS., 335.

While Robert was in the Samuel Davies pastorate he received an invitation to preach the Sunday night sermon for the Young Men's Christian Association at the University of Virginia on the evening of the fifth Sunday in January, 1881.³⁸⁵ Since he had the choice of where he could worship or preach on all fifth Sundays, Robert accepted the invitation. That particular winter was excessively cold with the temperature at *Braehead* sometimes falling to 20 degrees below zero before sunrise, and as Robert rode on the Narrow Gauge railroad from Fredericksburg to Orange, he did not see any travelers on the roads since there was a thick snow on the ground.³⁸⁶ While at the University, Robert was the guest of Professor Frank P. Dunnington whose wife, Minnie Beale, was Robert's niece.³⁸⁷ In the February 9, 1881 issue of the *Central Presbyterian*, Howison wrote a description of his visit to the University: "Many years have passed since I last saw the University, and felt something of the spirit of classic and cultured serenity which dwells within its precincts."³⁸⁸ Howison again met the "venerable librarian," Mr. Wertenbaker, who had "received his appointment from the hands of Mr. Jefferson himself."³⁸⁹ Howison found the reading-room to be "bountifully supplied with the best magazines and periodicals, and on whose reading shelves we noticed nearly every *good* newspaper, secular or religious, with which we have any acquaintance, as well as a very carefully selected library of Christian literature supplied by the exertions of the professors and students who have thus far so well maintained the life, internal and external of the Y.M.C. Association."³⁹⁰ Robert also conducted the Sunday morning service at the University; however, when he was told that the organist was absent he remarked, "I have never preached yet without sacred music, and doubt now whether I can." Robert was persuaded to ask someone in the congregation to "raise the hymn" and soon all were singing "Nearer My God to Thee" without instrumental support.³⁹¹ He also preached at the evening service, under the direction of the Y. M. C. Association, and the crowd was so full there

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 342.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁸ "A Visit to the University of Virginia" *Central Presbyterian* (February 9, 1881).

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁹¹ Howison, autobiography MS, 344.

was not room for everyone and some had to leave.³⁹² On the next day, Howison attended a lecture and demonstration on “Sulfuric Acid” by Professor Mallet in the Chemistry Department. Robert felt the lecture "was accompanied by exhibitions, and experiments so dexterously and successfully presented that some in the class spontaneously applauded, and I shared their feeling.”³⁹³ He also enjoyed a meal at the home of Professor John B. Minor of the Law Department. Howison concluded his description of his visit by stating that the University had, “produced the conviction that all the influences at work there whether educational, philosophical, scientific, or religious, are sound and safe for our young men.”³⁹⁴

Third Presbyterian church. Howison was granted a two month leave of absence from the Samuel Davies Church during the Winter of 1883-1884 due to the inclement weather and the ensuing difficulties of travel.³⁹⁵ The Third Presbyterian Church on Church Hill in Richmond had been without a pastor for more than a year, and requested for Howison to fill the position of pastor during this two-month leave. Robert, not wishing to be idle, accepted the invitation to preach and to perform the most pressing pastoral duties; however, he stipulated that he was not to be considered as a candidate for the open position, and that he would vacate the pulpit when potential candidates came to preach.³⁹⁶ This arrangement resulted in the church not inviting any more candidates to preach, and, on April 8, 1883, the congregation, almost unanimously, called Howison to be their Pastor.³⁹⁷ After meeting with the East Hanover Presbytery and the Samuel Davies Church, Howison accepted the invitation. He was installed as Pastor on Sunday night, May 27, 1883.³⁹⁸ The Rev. Doctor M. D. Hoge preached the sermon, and the Rev. Doctor Thomas L. Preston asked the constitutional questions and gave the charges and responsibilities of each, Pastor and congregation. Howison pronounced the benediction and felt warmly greeted by the congregation.³⁹⁹

³⁹² “A Visit to the University of Virginia” *Central Presbyterian* (February 9, 1881).

³⁹³ Howison, autobiography MS, 343.

³⁹⁴ “A Visit to the University of Virginia” *Central Presbyterian* (February 9, 1881).

³⁹⁵ Howison autobiography MS, 345.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 345-346.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 346.

In order to fulfill the duties of Pastor, Robert and his family rented a suite of rooms on Church Hill at the corner of Grace and 28th Streets.⁴⁰⁰ Howison visited “assiduously” and soon became acquainted with almost all the families in the church.⁴⁰¹ Robert noted that, “Improvements were pressing forward in every part of Richmond, and Church Hill was moving. Lines of electric cars ran to the south eastern borders and connected it with every part of the City. I was able to attend a meeting of all the Presbyterian ministers of Richmond and its neighborhood, every Monday forenoon, and derived pleasure and profit from its debates. And frequent united services were held.”⁴⁰² However, one particular annoyance occurred while Howison was in this ministry, a ruling presbyter wished to become a minister of the gospel and Howison, not thinking him qualified, did not lend his support to the request.⁴⁰³

Howison’s ministry at Third Presbyterian lasted six years, and ended on January 1, 1889.⁴⁰⁴ Due to the difficulties in having his family divided between two residences, including the associated additional expenses of maintaining two living situations, sixty-nine year old Howison decided to resign this ministry and return to Fredericksburg. He wanted to provide ministerial services to churches near *Braehead*, and he wanted to be near the Library and Lyceum in order to carry out his historical research for his next book on the history of the United States.⁴⁰⁵ Upon his leaving, the church expressed their appreciation and wished him well in the future.⁴⁰⁶

Various fields of ministry. After leaving Richmond, Howison was involved in other fields of ministry at Sharpe’s Wharf, Culpeper, Orange, and Ashland, while maintaining his residence at Fredericksburg. Howison pastored at Sharpe’s Wharf on the Rappahannock in Richmond County at Milden Church, about 75 miles away from Fredericksburg. This area known as the “Northern Neck” of Virginia lies between the Potomac and the Rappahannock, and was settled by many of the first families of Virginia. Howison preached regularly in this church for almost two years, traveling there by steamer

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 347.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 348.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 349.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

on the Weems Company's Line running between Fredericksburg and Baltimore. He became friends with many in the congregation, and the church was generally full.⁴⁰⁷ Howison's ministry at Sharp's Wharf ended due to the difficulty of traveling in inclement weather in conjunction with the regularity of the steamer during such times.⁴⁰⁸ While in this ministry, Howison also preached the Sunday evening service at the Culpeper Church 132 miles away from the Mildens Church. His mode of travel often created problems in arriving in Culpeper in time for the service. One particular rain caused the steamer to go downstream instead of up the river, and it took him several days to get back home. This experience convinced him that due to transportation problems he could not continue to minister at "Mildens" and Sharp's Wharf, therefore, he resigned from these ministries and concentrated on the churches in Culpeper and Orange.⁴⁰⁹

The last church Howison pastored was the Presbyterian Church in Ashland, Virginia. Howison rode the train to Ashland on Friday or Saturday and returned home on Mondays. After preaching there for nearly seven years, eighty-one year old Howison preached his farewell sermon at the Ashland Presbyterian Church on Sunday night May 31, 1901: "Out of respect which touched me deeply, services in the other churches were suspended, and though the weather was inclement, the Presbyterian Church building was crowded."⁴¹⁰

Continued Scholarship and Teaching: 1875 - 1901

During the last thirty years of his life, beginning in 1875, Howison "felt impelled by a sense of duty to take part in many printed discussions," and he also wrote several more books. In writing "printed discussions," Howison tried to "discover all the truth applicable to these subjects" and then to present the truth in such a way as to gain the attention of the reader.⁴¹¹ He used the local libraries to aid him in his research.

Scholarship for the Fredericksburg lyceum. In March, 1880, Howison was requested by the Lecture Committee of the Fredericksburg Library Association to deliver

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid. 350.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 367-368.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 370-371.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 371.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 383.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 378.

an address on the history of Fredericksburg. Robert accepted the request and presented a lecture entitled, "Fredericksburg, her past, present and future." The *Fredericksburg News*, printing a review of the lecture several days later wrote the following: "It [the lecture] touched many a chord of feeling, grave and gay, and brought the memories of the Past to life again, blended with the activities of the Present and the hopes of the Future, for the old 'Burg, which has a name honored and loved by many generations. The Lecture should be preserved in print and placed in the shelves of our Public Library."⁴¹² Several months later, in early June, 1880, the booklet was printed and published in Fredericksburg by Rufus B. Merchant, and was available for sale at the price of 25 cents a copy, with 6 cents postage for those who ordered their copy by mail.⁴¹³ A review of the booklet in the Richmond *Commonwealth* critiqued the work favorably, "Mr. Howison wields a graceful pen, and is not unused to work of the sort, his 'History of Virginia' ranking with standard works in its elimination of the progress of the Old Dominion."⁴¹⁴

Prize Essay. While Howison was ministering at the Samuel Davies Church, a proposal appeared, in the August 23, 1882 edition of the Central Presbyterian, from a minister in Georgia offering a fifty dollar prize for the best essay for the New Testament plan for educating candidates for the Christian ministry.⁴¹⁵ The requirements for the essay were that the essay present a new approach to this subject, for the writer to gather everything in the New Testament concerning the topic, and the length of the essay was not to exceed 60 or 75 pages. The author was to ascribe a *non de plume*, or pen name, to his work, and to include a separate letter stating the *nom de plume* and providing his real name. All contributions were to be forwarded before January 1, 1883.⁴¹⁶ Howison wrote an essay based on his examination of the scriptures and forwarded it prior to the deadline.⁴¹⁷ The decision concerning the winner and was published in the *Central Presbyterian* on February 21, 1883.⁴¹⁸ The article stated that while all of the essays "came fairly near the line of excellence indicated by the requirement, your committee have no

⁴¹² "Fredericksburg." *Fredericksburg News* (March 11, 1880).

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ *Commonwealth* (June 9, 1880).

⁴¹⁵ "A Proposal" *Central Presbyterian* (August 23, 1882).

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Howison autobiography MS, 338.

hesitation in awarding the palm to the essay bearing the signature ‘Reid;’ the *nom de plume* of the Rev. R. R. Howison.”⁴¹⁹

Howison’s essay, entitled “The New Testament Plan of Educating Candidates for the Christian Ministry” outlined what Howison felt the New Testament taught on this subject. He understood the Scriptures to teach that candidates for the ministry should know the original languages of the Bible, that the preachers sent out by Christ were candidates prior to being preachers, and he used the example of Timothy as a diligent student of the scriptures.⁴²⁰ The essay was published in the October, 1883, issue of the *Central Presbyterian*, and it was immediately critiqued.

Howison felt all of the attacks had one common purpose, that of seeking to lower the Presbyterian church’s established educational requirements for ministerial candidates.⁴²¹ In the January 2, 1884 issue, a reviewer, writing under the pen name of “Clark,” thanked the committee for giving the public a “treat” in the form of Howison’s essay. Clark praised Howison for his thoroughness, his proof that all the preachers sent by Christ were candidates before they preached, and for the “real life” New Testament example of the candidacy of the Apostle Peter. However, Clark went on to write, “Had our author only pointed out the *plan* of educating candidates in New Testament times, or had he only mentioned the *time* that was usually devoted to a strictly theological course, we should have felt like passing around the hat for another \$50 with which to reward distinguished merit.”⁴²² Another reviewer, using the pen name M. L’Imprévu, critiqued Howison’s plan on several points and concluded, “The essay under some other title and with some other limitation than that of a purely scriptural argument might have been a stronger paper, but it is no more ‘the *New Testament* plan of educating candidates’ than it is a recipe for making Limburger cheese.”⁴²³ These two reviews troubled Howison more

⁴¹⁸ “Prize Essay” *Central Presbyterian* (February 21, 1883).

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Robert R. Howison. “The New Testament Plan for Educating Candidates for the Christian Ministry.” *Central Presbyterian* (1883).

⁴²¹ Howison, autobiography MS, 339.

⁴²² “The New Testament Plan of Educating Candidates for the Ministry.” *North Carolina Presbyterian* (January 7, 1884).

⁴²³ M. L’Imprévu. “The New Testament Plan of Educating Candidates for the Christian Ministry” *Central Presbyterian* (January 9, 1884).

than any other reviews he received. He considered Clark's review to be "light,⁴²⁴ and that of "L'Imprevu" as being "dull, pretentious and⁴²⁵ Robert did not find out Clark's identity until 1899, and he never discovered the identity of "M. L'Imprevu".⁴²⁶ Another criticism came from the brother of the two sisters whom Howison tutored during his seminary days, the Rev. Dr. Herbert Hawes. Dr. Hawes' criticism, Howison felt, was a "pleasing contrast" to the *animus* of the articles written by Clark and L'Imprevu and deserved a courteous and thoughtful reply.⁴²⁷ However, Robert felt Hawes' criticism had been a hasty assumption and he responded by showing that the historic record proved that even St. Paul had spent three years acquiring his theological education.⁴²⁸

After printing rejoinders of each position, the *Central Presbyterian* soon published a notice stopping its advocacy on lowering the standard and refused to publish any more opinions on the controversy.⁴²⁹ According to Howison, "The whole result has been that, though many efforts have been made to move our General Assemblies to some action favorable to an educational standard which would omit from its requirements the study and competent attainment of knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, Latin, mental and moral philosophy, logic, rhetoric, and the natural and exact sciences, by her candidates for the ministry, yet all these efforts have been unavailing and have been signally defeated."⁴³⁰

Speculating on the faith. During the pastorate on Church Hill, Howison wrote his only book on a religious topic, *God and Creation* – "a culmination of thirty years of thought and study."⁴³¹ The work dealt with issues concerning the origin of evil, since Howison felt many other works which discussed this universal problem had not supplied satisfactory answers, and the writers of such works had only intensified the darkness and confusion on the subject.⁴³² After devoting as much time as he could to

⁴²⁴ Howison autobiography MS, 340.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 341.

⁴²⁷ Robert Reid Howison. "Paul's Preparation for the Christian Ministry." *Christian Observer* (March 12, 1884).

⁴²⁸ Howison autobiography MS, 340.

⁴²⁹ *Central Presbyterian* (December 1882)

⁴³⁰ Howison, autobiography MS, 341-342.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 351-352.

⁴³² Ibid., 352.

reading the theology of others, Howison was led by the thought that the doctrine of “creation out of nothing” led to the belief, through links of causation, that God was the author of Evil. “This system seemed to me one not to be believed nor encouraged. And yet some human creeds and catechisms taught the doctrine of ‘creation out of nothing’ and asserted that it was established by Holy Scripture! If they were right, then the doctrine must be humbly accepted, although it seemed to cast a pall of darkness over the character of God. But were human creeds right on this point? That was the question from which grew and came to the light, the work known as *God and Creation*.”⁴³³

Robert, like many other seekers of Truth, searched the Bible for answers and felt that the Scriptures did not teach this doctrine. He also argued against the beliefs of other well-known theologians of the day, such as Professor James H. Thornwell, who believed that denying the doctrine of “creation out of nothing” was in actuality denying the infinite power and sovereignty of God. Howison pointed out: “It is really the doctrine of ‘creation out of nothing’ which limits the ever living- ever active - ever wise- ever good and

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God and Creation was published in 1883, and immediately received censure from the Presbyterian community, including the Presbytery. Robert felt that many of the criticisms of the work were “weak and illogical” and would be overthrown.⁴³⁵ He felt one particular comment in the *Central Presbyterian* was unscriptural and was written by someone who “had not learned to distinguish between sectarianism and truth. It is a sad confirmation of the lessons of persecution given in all countries and in all ages since the fall in Eden that it presented itself again in the most brilliant part of the nineteenth century, and when there was least excuse for it.”⁴³⁶

In his defense, Howison recalled the public profession that every Presbyterian minister makes prior to his ordination and stated that many of the truths accepted by Presbyterian Ministers were found in the Confession of Faith, not infallible truth. He concluded: “If therefore any proposition announced as scriptural truth be found not be

⁴³³ Ibid., 354-355.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 355-356.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 359-360.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 359-360.

scriptural truth, not to be taught in the Holy Scriptures or by good and necessary inference from their teachings, then that proposition cannot by any possibility, be a part of the "system of doctrine" taught in the Holy Scriptures."⁴³⁷ Howison also based his defense of the work on the fact that the Westminster Confession had been altered almost 42 times, and that most of the changes in the confession had been made by Presbyterian ministers. "Surely I had a right to do what others of like office and authority had done, and had been

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One reviewer in favor of the work was Colonel J.T.L. Proston a professor at Virginia Military Institute. His more positive review stated in part, "I was charmed with the learning, abundant, varied and (to me at least) fresh in theology, history, natural science, metaphysics, criticism, and (what fell more within the range of my slender requirements) classic reading ancient and modern. Not a few passages are valuable for their practical and developmental effect."⁴³⁹ However, another minister, related to Robert by marriage, brought the work before the East Hanover Presbytery. Robert was indignant over the way this fellow minister handled the situation because he had not discussed the work with Howison prior to requesting for a Presbytery committee to investigate the doctrine taught in *God and Creation*.⁴⁴⁰

Prior to meeting with the Presbytery, Howison had a conference with Moses Hoge. Hoge advised him not to defend himself and to be patient since in due time he might be vindicated.⁴⁴¹ Howison wanted the committee to try to disprove his theory, however this was not the intent or outcome of the committee's actions.

The formal controversy over *God and Creation* ended at the meeting of the East Hanover Presbytery, and the report of the committee assigned to investigate the matter was printed in the *Central Presbyterian* on April 23, 1884.⁴⁴² The report judged Howison's work on two primary points: "First, Mr. Howison's book, 'God and Creation,' teaches doctrines irreconcilably at variance with the Scriptures . . . notably on such points

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 357.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 358-359

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 360.

⁴⁴¹ Howison, autobiography MS, 362.

⁴⁴² "Mr. Howison's Book." *Central Presbyterian* (April 23, 1884).

as the eternity of matter, the federal headship of Adam, and the human nature of Christ. The Presbytery does therefore emphatically condemn the book as heretical in its teachings and calculated to lead its readers astray on points of grave importance.”⁴⁴³ Secondly, the committee reiterated its conformity to the Presbyterian Book of Discipline which cautioned for errors to be examined in the light of whether “they strike at the vitals of religion or whether they arise from the weakness of human understanding, and are not likely to do much injury.”⁴⁴⁴ The conclusion of the committee, therefore, was that since Howison disclaimed inferences from other doctrines, coupled with the fact that Howison seemed to hold his views as a “matter of speculation than of practical faith” and had never taught these ideas from the pulpit, and that Howison had agreed to not circulate the book further, the Presbytery decided to take no further action other than accepting the report of the committee.⁴⁴⁵

In his autobiography, Howison recorded his reaction to the report as containing no personal censure and that it did not interfere with his position as a pastor. He felt like he had been left to “bide his time” and, “As to the work (the book itself) they had made no attempt to refute it, and all past history had shown that a mere fulmination of a church censure against a book which contained three thousand references to authorities, seven hundred of which were to Holy Scripture never had availed for its refutation. All the copies of the book which had been prepared for publication had been sold or legitimately disposed of in proper methods. Therefore, it was not my purpose nor desire to press its further circulation.”⁴⁴⁶ Apparently Howison felt vindicated, when several years later the Presbyterian Church of England revised its confession of faith and excluded the doctrine of creation out of nothing: “No sane and reasonably well educated person now believes this: and it is quite certain that as fast as the work of revising and amending human creeds had taken place, such statements will be eliminated from them.”⁴⁴⁷

Writing a history of the United States. Howison had made arrangements to write a history of the United States before he left Richmond on January 1, 1889. The J. W.

⁴⁴³ “Mr. Howison’s Book” *Central Presbyterian* (April 1884).

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Howison, autobiography MS, 363.

Randolph Company had sent him copies of various school histories of the United States as well as other material they had in stock on this subject. Howison wrote the work during all the hours he could devote to it including time when he was on the steamer or train. He completed the work early in 1891, and it was printed and published by the Everett Waddey Company of Richmond in 1892.⁴⁴⁸ It was published in one 936-page volume, a disadvantage according to Howison; however, it included the history of this country from the coming of the Norsemen in 1002, A. D. and ended with Benjamin Harrison's presidency in 1892.

Howison stated twelve reasons why he wrote the work to his intended audience of school children, young people in colleges and universities and “for general readers at home and for all who desire intelligently to study the history of the United States and to profit thereby.”⁴⁴⁹ The primary reasons for writing the book were that he felt a work of one volume was needed to embrace “all the really important facts of our history; to put in the text, not the footnotes or appendices, information important to the reader; to give full references to the source material so the reader could examine the same sources in order to trace the impact of the old World on the New; to narrate the colonial period with “fresh reality;” to give only the truth concerning United States history; to show that the United States is based on democracy, not party politics; to explain the causes of the extermination of the Indians; to discriminate between the Revolution in the eighteenth century and the War of 1775-1783; to prove the doctrine of States rights; the right of the states in secession; and to recognize the place of the supernatural in United States history.”⁴⁵⁰

Howison also explained some of his philosophy of education by planning for the book to have “no maps or parts of maps of any kind” since the work was a history, not a geography. Also, the book contained very few pictures, since according to Robert, pictures, or object lesson were for children, since the ideas conveyed in pictures were simple to understand. “Language, therefore, and not ‘object lessons’ and ‘pictorial

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 363-364.

⁴⁴⁸ Howison autobiography MS., 373.

⁴⁴⁹ Robert Reid Howison, *A History of The United States of America* (Richmond, VA: Everett Waddey Company, 1892), preface 5.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., preface 5-6.

illustrations' must be relied on as the instrument for educating human beings when they

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The book received favorable reviews from educators in prominent journals and newspapers. The book was even used as a textbook in several of colleges in Virginia.⁴⁵² "The Board of Public Education in the State consisting of the Governor, Attorney General and Superintendent of State Instruction have recommended the work to the local superintendents and teachers as occupying, in substance, the position held by Green's *Short History of the English People*."⁴⁵³ Howison concluded, "It is remarkable that though the work has been for some years, in full view of all who might feel inclined to study it with purpose to find fault with, and criticize its statements, yet not one single historical statement in it has been successfully impeached as erroneous."⁴⁵⁴

During the latter years of his life, Howison wrote numerous articles, both historical and religious. One position paper he wrote concerned the establishment of parochial schools and was published in the *Central Presbyterian* in the March 1899 issue. He wrote the paper due to the upcoming meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Richmond where the question of whether the church should establish parochial schools would be decided. Howison's own position on the matter was based on history and the experience of the church; he states, "Parochial schools were not known in the opening years of the Christian era, and the best lights of both revelation and reason were against them. Revealed truth, in Holy Scripture inspired of God, was always to be taught to the children and the people. But secular knowledge, science and art belonged always to the sphere of the world."⁴⁵⁵ Howison based his argument on Christ's words to "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are Gods."⁴⁵⁶ Howison also used the Roman Church's history of establishing parochial schools for the purpose of teaching secular and religious learning as a negative example for the Presbyterians to avoid. Howison concluded his argument by stating that the adoption of

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., preface, 7.

⁴⁵² Ibid., 374.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Rev. R. R. Howison. "Parochial Schools. Ought our Church to Attempt to Establish Them?" *Central Presbyterian* (March 14, 1899).

parochial schools would entail a union of church and state, and “we would be sinning

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In the June 5, 1899 edition of the *Central Presbyterian*, Howison’s article on the meeting of the General Assembly reported that the “Scheme of Parochial Schools,” as recommended by Rev. Dr. R. P. Kerr, was adopted. Howison, missing the meetings of the Assembly due to being out of town, had learned of the proceedings through the local newspapers. “Of all the legitimate powers of the civil government, the power and duty to establish State schools and institutions of instruction, in all branches of education requisite for preparing for the duties of good citizenship such children as cannot thus be educated by their parents or guardians, have been the functions longest established and most thoroughly recognized by the governments of civilized and enlightened nations.”⁴⁵⁸

Howison also pointed out that the State common schools were almost “universally established” and that in such schools, one little textbook such as *Hygienic Physiology* written by Prof. I. D. Steele, “has done more to promote sound morality, and to discourage the use of intoxicating liquors and narcotics, and to add to the happiness of homes, than all the teachings of all the ‘parochial schools’ that ever have ever existed in

⁴⁵⁹ Howison further stated that if such schools were to be built, lumber, boards, nails, and other building material would be needed to build the schoolhouses, and that finances would be needed to pay the teachers, all of which was “of the earth -

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In another article in this same publication, published in June, 1899, Howison concludes with the following statements, “‘Parochial schools in all ages and countries have been nurseries and hotbeds of error and sin. . . . This plan will not deserve the blessing of God. No wise session will adopt it. And no prudent parent or guardian will ever send a child to such a school. The whole scheme will die of the disease which President Cleveland so felicitously designated as *innocuous desuetude*.’”⁴⁶¹ Another article

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ “The ‘Parochial School Plan’ *Central Presbyterian* (June 1899).

written by Howison on this same topic urged that the majority of people in the land believed in non-sectarian schools since the majority of those attending colleges and universities were enrolled in non-sectarian institutions. Howison attributed this to the “true spirit of Americanism” and that parochial schools would fall before this spirit.⁴⁶²

In the July 19, 1899 edition of the *Christian Observer*, the Rev. E. C. Gordon took Howison to task for his views on parochial schools; “He [Howison] marshalls his facts effectively. His logic halts.”⁴⁶³ Gordon questions Howison’s admonition to trust the spirit of Americanism; “In God’s name, I ask what is the true spirit of Americanism in

⁴⁶⁴ Howison responded that “a very brief article” was all that was necessary to respond to Gordon, who “cannot be recognized as a competent and impartial judge to sum up on this subject”, since “a large, opaque beam of unsound theory is in the

⁴⁶⁵ Howison proceeded to list his tenets of Americanism, which are namely, a rejection of monarchic power, overthrow of privileged order and nobility, separation of church and state, and regulated self-government. He concluded by stating that he felt the spirit of Americanism was a *holy spirit*, “It is the spirit which requires that the children of pious parents shall be dedicated to God from their infancy, and shall be trained for salvation, by their fathers and mothers and devout guardians, and by the Sunday schools and the pastor’s visits, and the preaching and ordinances of the Church of Christ, and which absolutely forbids the Church to usurp the sphere of the State by attempting to infuse the very being and life of the Church into secular schools and universities and colleges, and, above all, by ‘parochial schools’.”⁴⁶⁶ In a final rejoinder to Dr. Howison’s “antagonism,” the Rev. Gordon responded with, “Has the Lord inspired Dr. Howison to assure his people that they may rely on the schools endowed and managed by the State, or by individuals admitting no responsibility to the Church, to teach our children a true biblical theology?...After a child has learned ‘to read, to write and to cipher,’ every branch of a liberal education involves the principles of religion, and may be

⁴⁶² Rev. R. R. Howison. “The Light of Statistics. On Sectarian Universities and Colleges, and on Parochial *Christian Observer* (July 5, 1899).

⁴⁶³ Rev. E. C. Gordon. “Americanism.” *Christian Observer* (July 19, 1899).

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Rev. R. R. Howison. “Sectarian Colleges. Holy Scripture, Fact and Principle Are All Against Sectarian Universities and Colleges and Parochial Schools.” *Christian Observer* (August 2, 1899).

so taught as to promote either unbelief or faith in God and in the Gospel of his Son.”⁴⁶⁷

Howison’s response in the September 13, 1899 edition of the *Christian Observer* was the finale to the parochial school controversy.⁴⁶⁸ Howison, wishing to end the controversy, stated that this article was his last on the subject and that he had no controversy with the Rev. Gordon personally, but with his position on the subject. Howison drew on his lifelong study, “A large part of a life which is already a long one, has been spent by me, not merely in the practice of law and afterwards in pastoral and ministerial duty, but in systematic and earnest study of many important subjects, such as jurisprudence, history, languages, ancient and modern, and the useful sciences, including the highest of all sciences, theology, the ‘knowledge of God’.” He stated his belief that the Presbyterian form of church government is the closest to the heavenly ideal of the visible Church of Christ.⁴⁶⁹ Howison further stated that, “And I enjoy the quiet satisfaction of knowing that the views and opinion and measures which I have humbly advocated, as a co-laborer with many others, have been, to a very great, and, in fact, almost complete extent, approved and adopted by our Southern Presbyterian Church.”⁴⁷⁰ After enumerating about eight such measures, Howison stated that he felt sure the church would “in due time, see the strong objections from Scripture, history, experience, and sound financial policy, applicable to ‘parochial schools,’ and that her members and adherents will spend no money in establishing and maintaining such schools.”⁴⁷¹ A small, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, article appeared in the August 24, 1899, edition of the *Presbyterian Standard*, stating in its entirety, “Dr. Howison is still writing about ‘the unhallowed precincts of a sectarian college or a parochial school’. We presume that he had different views while professor at Fredericksburg College.”⁴⁷²

Howison wrote articles, book reviews, concerning subjects as diverse as how to pronounce the word, automobile, since this vehicle was only about three years old. He

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Rev. E. C. Gordon. “Church Schools.” *Christian Observer* (August 23, 1899).

⁴⁶⁸ Rev. R. R. Howison. “Sectarian Colleges and Parochial Schools. Finale.” *Christian Observer* (September 13, 1899).

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² “Dr. Howison. “ *Presbyterian Standard* (August 24, 1899).

told the readers that the word should be pronounced in four syllables such as, au-to-mo-bi lee. Howison also participated in a lengthy written debate concerning whether or not the twentieth century had actually begun. The *Free Lance Star* of January 3, 1901 called halt to the 20th century controversy stating, “The consensus of opinion is pretty much in favor of this being the first year of the new century, but there are scholars - Dr. Howison among them - who cannot see it that way. No newspaper controversy will convince an ardent adherent of either side that he is in error.”⁴⁷³ Another article written by Howison, entitled “Rev. Devereaux Jarratt” was published in the *Central Presbyterian* in May, 1899.⁴⁷⁴ Howison wrote this article to “give such light as may be useful generally to the cause of Christ and of truth, and of special interest to some of the readers of The Central.”⁴⁷⁵

Lecturer at Fredericksburg College. The Assembly’s Home and School, including Fredericksburg College began, under the leadership of Rev. Dr. A. P. Saunders, the Minister of the Fredericksburg Presbyterian Church, in 1893. Saunders, a former missionary to Greece had contracted small pox and the mission field and feared for the well-being of his wife and children in the case of his death. He vowed that if he lived, he would found an institution to care for and train the widows and orphans of deceased ministers and missionaries.⁴⁷⁶ After moving to Fredericksburg, he learned that the Presbyterian Church sponsored the Female Orphan Asylum, and, although it had not been in operation since the Civil War property was connected with this defunct organization. After discussing his vision with the Synod and the General Assembly of the United States, the institution was granted a charter from the General Assembly of Virginia in the same year to carry out its primary purposes of caring for and educating orphans of missionaries as well as children and families of both home and foreign missionaries and deceased pastors; however, it eventually opened its doors to the general public as well.⁴⁷⁷ The co-educational, non-denominational school was funded from contributions from those in the

⁴⁷³ “Let’s Call a Halt.” *Free Lance Star* (January 31, 1901).

⁴⁷⁴ Rev. R. R. Howison. “Rev. Devereaux Jarratt” *Central Presbyterian* (May 1899).

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁶ “The Assemblies Home and School at Fredericksburg, VA.” Charter adopted by the General Assembly May 1893 (Richmond, VA: Whittet & Shepperson, 1895).

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁹ He preferred the students to be familiar with “Old World” history prior to signing up for his class and he used his book, *A Student's History of the United States*, as the textbook. “The written examinations were highly satisfactory, and often indicated the historic instinct in a very unexpected manner. The successive graduating classes of young men and young ladies, in this study, who have gone out into the world of active exertion will, I verily believe, compare favorably with the graduates of any college in our country.”⁴⁸⁰

Howison’s three grand-daughters attended Fredericksburg College, and eventually, the organization went through several years of financial difficulties and then reorganized under John W. Rosebro, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church and President of the College.⁴⁸¹ The college eventually was severed from the Home and School department and closed in 1914.⁴⁸²

Writing his autobiography. Howison completed his autobiography and signed the preface on May, 16, 1901. In closing the work, he copied a letter, written on Feb. 24th, 1901, from his former student, Mary Virginia Terhune, now a grandmother living in New York during part of the year.⁴⁸³ Her letter was full of past recollections as well as thanks to Howison for his influence on her life; she wrote in part, “If I had Aladdin's carpet, I should spend an hour with you, my dear old tutor, and talk you into an untimely grave. . . . I wonder if you ever dreamed how much good you did me in my salad days, when I was green of judgment "and in every other way." I am grateful to you every day I live for some

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 376-377.

⁴⁸¹ “The Assemblies Home and School at Fredericksburg, VA.” Charter adopted by the General Assembly May 1893 (Richmond, VA: Whittet & Shepperson, 1895).

⁴⁸² Alvey, 77-81.

⁴⁸³ Howison, autobiography MS, 380.

things you taught me.”⁴⁸⁴ She concluded with the following postscript; “Do finish and publish that book, before I am too old to read it. You seem to ‘flourish in immortal youth.’”⁴⁸⁵

Howison also concluded his "Twice Forty Years of American Life" with thoughts under four main headings concerning the increasing growth of the population in the United States, the increase in human discoveries and inventions, the increase of knowledge, and the establishment of the relationship of human creeds to the Word of God. He wrote, “I do not know how I may, more appropriately close this work of reminiscences than by a brief notice of the progress of creed reform in the Calvinistic churches.” Howison reported that the Presbyterian Church unanimously had adopted a doctrinal statement eliminating the doctrine of "creation out of nothing." It seems that, at last, Howison felt vindicated for his controversial work *God and Creation*. The final words in his autobiography were: “The signs are manifest that a universally reformed system of faith is near to us, in which all previous human deeds will be relegated to the dominion of history, and no doctrine will be received and believed except such as may be sustained by conformity to the threefold basis of the inspired word of God, of historic truth, and of right reason in her highest ideal. Then unity will be realized, and sectarianism will die! Even so, come Lord Jesus.”⁴⁸⁶

During the latter years of Howison’s life he was the first honorary member of the Columbia Historical Society of Washington City (now the District of Columbia). He also received an honorary LL.D. from Hampton-Sidney College. Robert felt that this title, in comparison with the title of “Dr.,” was “always bestowed because of acknowledged attainments in law or other learning, [and] has much higher value.”⁴⁸⁷

Robert kept personal scrapbooks during the last decades of his life in which he glued copies of his publications, news of interest to him, as well as the unending stream of death notices of friends and family members. On September 2, 1903, Robert glued his last entry on the twelfth page of a two hundred page composition book designated as his scrapbook, the newspaper notice detailing the death of his wife. Mrs. R. R. Howison had

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 381.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 384.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 205.

died, in her 75th year, at *Braehead* on Saturday, August, 29, 1903. Apparently her health had been failing, but her death came as a shock to those close to her. The eulogy in the *Free Lance Star* read in part, “She was a woman of the highest Christian type, calm, equable, devoted to her home, and leaves behind her a fragrant memory of unselfish deeds and prayerful words as a legacy to family and friends.”⁴⁸⁸

Robert was overcome with grief at her death and, “from this sorrow he never recovered, but walked the rest of his pilgrimage under a cloud of grief and darkness of mind, till in God’s mercy clouds and darkness passed away in the eternal light and glory of

⁴⁸⁹ This statement is further verified by the remembrance of Howison’s granddaughter, Margaret Howison. As a child at Braehead, she recalled seeing her grandfather sitting in the south bedroom, catching a breeze from the open doorway, reading his history books without having much interest in talking to children.⁴⁹⁰

Robert Howison died at *Braehead* on November 1, 1906. The East Hanover Presbytery included this paragraph in the memorial notice, “No member of this Presbytery was more regular in attendance, more interested in every matter before it, or more deeply concerned in everything that affected the welfare of our beloved church. His genial presence, his uniform courtesy, his sincere loyalty and piety, we can not forget. We now rejoice in the full assurance that he is beholding the King in His beauty.”⁴⁹¹ His simple tombstone in the Confederate Cemetery in Fredericksburg bears the following inscription - Robert Reid Howison, June 22, 1820. November 1, 1906. “In Thy Light Shall We See

Conclusion

This chapter spanned the final thirty-six years of Howison’s life. Historically, the period extended from Civil War reconstruction to the opening of the nineteenth century. These years brought new learning experiences into the life of Robert Howison as he came into contact with various institutions of education, such as his continued involvement with

⁴⁸⁸ “Mrs. R. R. Howison Dead: This Aged Lady Passes Away After a Long and Useful Life - The Funeral *Free Lance Star* (September 1, 1903).

⁴⁸⁹ “Memorial of Rev. R. R. Howison, LL.D.” *Minutes of East Hanover Presbytery*. Overbrook Church, Barton Heights, VA. April 13th to 16th. Richmond, VA: Whittet & Shepperson, 1903.

⁴⁹⁰ Personal interview conducted with two sons of Margaret Howison (great-grandsons of Robert Reid Howison), Roxwell and Morton Smith in February, 1998 in Montreat, NC.

the Presbyterian Church and its related publications, preaching, writing, a lectureship at Fredericksburg College, receiving various honors, writing his autobiography, and the final lessons of his life were perhaps the most difficult of all, learning the anguish of grief over the loss of a loved one and facing one's own mortality.

The Richmond Robert left in 1870 was just a twelve years away from obtaining the third telephone exchange in the United States and twenty years away from having the first electric trolley service in the nation.⁴⁹² Robert Howison and others would live to see the introduction of automobiles in the late 1890s, after having grown up in horse and carriage days and experiencing the wonders of the steam locomotives. Richmond and Virginia had survived the war, and the state would end her ante-bellum days with implementation of a new state constitution in 1902.⁴⁹³

During these years, Robert continued his membership and support of the Presbyterian Church. He pastored numerous churches and conscientiously purposed to publish his views in numerous church and related religious publications. He handled these written debates in a very concise, lawyerly manner, proposing to explain the "truth" of each situation about which he wrote. One of the major editorial discussions he had during this period occurred after the publication of his "New Testament Plan for Educating Candidates for the Christian Ministry." Howison believed in maintaining the old standard, and he prevented at least one elder from being licensed due to a lack of qualifications. In the Parochial school discussion, he provided many evidences for why he believed schooling was the responsibility of the state and not the church.

Howison's writings provide insight into his philosophy of education. He usually grounded his writings in Scripture and wrote with a lawyer's propensity for thesis development and marshaling of evidence. He must have spent lengthy amounts of time preparing these articles by honing his own position as well as reading his opponent's, and others, points of view.

Howison's only book on a religious topic, *God and Creation*, was "a culmination of thirty years of thought and study." This work requires careful examination in order to

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² James K. Sanford, 8.

⁴⁹³ Moore, 137-148.

understand his apparent heretical breach with the Presbyterian Church. Howison stated that the work was a result of speculating on the faith; however, his extensive research and writing showed that he was at variance with the stated beliefs of the church as well as noted theologians of the day, such as James Thornwell. One writer states that the impact of the book “was perhaps the most manifestly heretical book published by a Presbyterian minister in the era, but ‘in the purest body of Presbyterians the author’s ministerial

⁴⁹⁴ Howison, although censured, was “among friends” in the Presbytery and was allowed to remain in the pulpit. The impact of the work probably was minimized since he was not allowed to circulate the book or have it reprinted.

A Student’s History of the United States was the last major work Howison wrote. The preface to this work contains many comments about Howison’s philosophy of education. For example, he states that the work contains no pictures since the book is neither a geography or a book for children.

Howison’s Professorship at Fredericksburg College positioned him as a faculty member in this Presbyterian school. After his strong stance about not supporting Christian schools, Howison was chided in a brief newspaper article for teaching in such a school.

Several of Howison’s sermons preached during these years also reveal his thoughts on learning. In one particular sermon, he warned against the dangers of reading Christian fiction. He felt this form of literature was not based on truth, and as such, could not be relied upon to teach moral truth.⁴⁹⁵

Howison’s autobiography can be considered the final educative event of his life. His life’s story is based on a case study of one - himself, and as such, is actually a history in itself. Thomas Cooley, in *Educated Lives: The Rise of Autobiography in America*, writes that education, both formal and in a larger sense, played an important part in the lives of those writing autobiography around the turn of the century.⁴⁹⁶ Olney also writes, “it is also, intentionally or not, a monument of the self as it is becoming, a metaphor of the

⁴⁹⁴ “The Materialism of Robert R. Howison” Presbyterian Historical Society (n. d.).

⁴⁹⁵ Robert R. Howison, “The Formation of Character” Sermon at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Montreat, NC.

⁴⁹⁶ Thomas Cooley, *Educated Lives: The Rise of Modern Autobiography in America* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press).

self at the summary moment of composition.”⁴⁹⁷ Howison’s “metaphor of self” can be seen in the selection of content contained in his autobiography. *Twice Forty Years of American Life*. In the preface he stated, “This book is largely one of actual memories, and of persons and events of deep significance. Probably, if it have merit, its central merit will be found to be its truth....As the whole work arranges itself around the life of one person, the personal pronoun ‘I’ is used in preference to any dubious forms of pretended humility... ‘I’ ought to mean all that is best and most valuable in, and connected with a person.”⁴⁹⁸ Throughout the work, Howison emphasized truth as being something to be sought after.

Autobiography also reveals the identity of the individual, including behaviors, tastes, styles, and educations. Olney writes, “A man’s autobiography is like a magnifying lens, focusing and intensifying that same peculiar creative vitality that informs all the volumes of his collected works; it is the symptomatic key to all else that he did and, naturally, to all that he was.”⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁷ James Olney, *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography* (Cambridge: Princeton University Press, 1972), 35.

⁴⁹⁸ Howison, autobiography MS, preface.

⁴⁹⁹ Olney, 3-4.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

The two primary purposes of this study were to develop an educational biography on the life of Robert Reid Howison based on his significant lifelong learning experiences and to look at the practices of Howison as an educator. These two purposes will be concluded by discussing the results of the study as applied to the life of Robert Howison and drawing conclusions about Howison as a learner and educator.

Education is defined as a process consisting of the sum of an individual's learning experiences at any point in the lifespan. The research genre of educational biography investigates the meaning of education within an individual's life by examining significant educative experiences within a historic context. An educative or learning experience can occur when the individual comes into contact with an institution of education; however, whether or not the experience was educative depends on how the individual interacted with and perceived the experience. The individual's perspective concerning these interactions is perhaps the best determinate of whether learning, and therefore, education took place. As Lawrence Cremin points out, the whole point of educational biography is to examine the range and complexity of education in an individual's life. It is the work of the educational biographer to piece together these educative events and to create a biography highlighting the impact of education in the learner's life.

Suzanne Caswell states there are four major components to education: external influences, internal influences, the learning process itself, and the products or outcomes of learning.⁵⁰⁰ These components will be discussed as applicable to the life of Robert Reid Howison with additional insights concerning his education.

Howison as a Learner

The primary institutions of education that impacted Howison's life were the external institutions of family, school, and church, learning societies, social movements and even war. Howison's self-initiated learning is evidenced through his proclivity for study, reading, and scholarship as well as his interest in attending cultural events. Both

Schooling. Howison's early schooling, in particular, provides an excellent study of both fragmentary colonial schooling practices as well as ante-bellum practices and reforms. Since the plantation system was still in existence during Howison's childhood, the tutorial form of schooling, usually found on plantations, was being practiced in Fredericksburg and its environs. Howison may have had opportunity to participate in this form of schooling on the *Somerville* estate.

The academies were the second form of schooling Robert experienced in his childhood. Robert learned numerous subjects at these academies, such as reading and writing, advanced mathematics, the basics of a classical education, and public speaking. The academy movement trained many children in the nineteenth century who would have had no other opportunities for schooling. Understanding nineteenth-century school

⁵⁰⁰ Caswell, 427.

⁵⁰¹ Emmett and Jane Snead, interview by author, tape recording, Fredericksburg, Virginia, 20 November 1995. The Sneads, neighbors of the Howison family, knew Robert Reid Howison's youngest daughter, Miss Mary Howison, also known as "Aunt Mamie." Mrs. Snead remembered the then ninety-one year old Aunt Mamie as saying that she was educated by her father.

⁵⁰² Cremin, *The Colonial Experience*, 28-29.

reforms, such as the academy movement, from the viewpoint of one who actually experienced them alters our conception of how education was practiced in the past and puts a more realistic face on the efforts of the reformers, such as Madame Herard's disastrous Infant School experiment.

Robert also attended law school and seminary. His law school experience was conducted in Fredericksburg by Judge Lomax who had helped to establish the legal training at the University of Virginia. Lomax' philosophy of education was grounded in the practical as well as theoretical. Robert's training prepared him well for his course of study at Union Theological Seminary. At the seminary, Robert increased his knowledge of the ancient languages and Bible doctrines, and he soon learned that the doctrines he had been previously taught were open to interpretation. Apparently Robert read and studied on his own to determine his beliefs as evidenced by his controversial work *God and Creation*.

Employments. Howison's employment's also provided learning opportunities throughout his life. His earliest employments provided training in basic business skills and broadened his mindset by allowing him to come into contact with many different people and business practices. Robert's career as a lawyer was educative in that he learned from his cases and he even wrote a book on criminal trials to help unearth the causes of crime. Howison's career as a Pastor was conducted primarily on a part-time basis, except for the six years he ministered at Third Presbyterian Church in Richmond. As a Pastor, Robert would have been able to indulge his love of reading study in sermon preparation, and he was able to educate his flock through his sermons.

Church. The Presbyterian Church was perhaps the institution of education with which Howison interacted with the most throughout his life, other than his own self-initiated learning. Robert attended Sunday school and church beginning when he was five years old. In the Sunday school he would have had opportunity to learn to read as well as learning the catechism and Scriptures. As Robert grew older, his own souls' yearnings, coupled with the teachings of the church led to his spiritual conversion. An initial outcome of this experience created a desire in Robert to change careers and become a minister of the gospel. In addition to his role as pastor, Howison contributed to the publications of the

church through his scholarship and he undoubtedly learned through the scholarly debates in which he took an active role.

Self-initiated learning. Howison's self-initiated learning is evidenced through his proclivity for study, reading, and scholarship, particularly in the area of history. His earliest self-initiated learning occurred in the home when he memorized the kings and queens in Goldsmith's historical work. Howison stated in his autobiography that he enjoyed the "toils" of study, a fact evidenced by his completing the three year course of seminary study in two years. Most of his scholarship efforts were connected with some form of his employments or avocational interests. He felt the "divine afflatus" of poetry when he was nine years old and wrote a poem depicting one of his favorite hobbies - fishing. He wrote his first published work, *A History of Virginia* due to his own interest in history as well as the need he saw for "the young men of the day" to learn Virginia's history. This work may have been influenced by President Maxwell at Union Seminary as well since Maxwell was a friend of Howison and was instrumental in rejuvenating the Virginia Historical Society. Howison's only work on a religious topic, *God and Creation* seems to detail Howison's own system of theology as the work was at variance with the teachings of the Presbyterian church at the time and was a culmination of thirty years of his thought and study. After Howison's death, Howison's youngest daughter, Mary, sold off many of his books and the letters she wrote Earl Swem, librarian at William and Mary College, for advice on the pricing of these works reveals that many of these works were of a historical nature.⁵⁰³ Additionally, Howison's library is still at *Braehead* and many of his remaining works are also on historical subjects.

Configurations of education. During Howison's childhood, external institutions of education, such as family, school, and church were prominent and seemed to configure less often as he grew older. As he matured, his self-initiated learning, coupled with other institutions in the community, was a more common configuration. Church was a continual institution of education in Howison's life, whether he was in the pew listening to his family pastor, or whether he himself was in the pulpit preaching to others. Sermon preparation was undoubtedly educative as Howison read and studied in order to be able to feed his

⁵⁰³ E. G. Swem to Mary Howison, Raccoon Ford, VA, 5 April 1920.

flock spiritually. Naturally, formal schooling became less important as he grew older, although he was involved in some type of formal schooling, whether in the classroom as a learner, or teacher, or on the board for Lancastrian schools, for many years throughout his life.

The learning process itself is important to an individual's education. Cremin writes, "If the process of education is indeed a series of transactions between an individual with a particular life history and institutions of education that tend to relate to each other in configurations, then the nature of the transactions themselves must also be at the heart of a new problematic for the history of education."⁵⁰⁴ Howison's discussion of his learning transactions in his autobiography provides great detail of these experiences and, at times, he realized he was in the midst of a learning experience, as when he refused to indulge in alcoholic beverages as an adult based on his vicarious learning as to the ruin alcohol brought into his oldest brother's life. When Howison decided not to drink alcoholic beverages as an adult, he knowingly based this decision on his childhood experience as well as the teachings of the Presbyterian church.

The outcomes of Howison's education impacted himself as well as other individuals and society. The major impact of his education, if it were summed up in a few words, although not explicitly stated by him, can be construed to be a process of finding truth. Howison continually searched for truth in everything he wrote and evaluated. He even stated that the merit of his autobiography was truth. If the writings of an individual reveal the essence of the writer, then *God and Creation* is Howison's most intensely personal scholarship effort, other than his autobiography. This work, considered to be heretical at the time it was written, reveals Howison's own theological system based on his thought and study. In light of the recency of the *God and Creation* experience when writing his autobiography, the enigmatic learning experience, occurring when Howison was three years old, that the soul and body were not one and the same, may best be explained in conjunction with the philosophy he espoused in *God and Creation*.

The most tangible outcomes or products of Howison's learning transactions, his writings, were the learning/educating experience that netted the most impact on society.

⁵⁰⁴ Cremin, *Traditions of American Education*, 153.

His history of Virginia established him as a well known and respected author and historian. Howison's serial history of the Civil War sold out the copies of the *Southern Literary Messenger* in which it was first printed and prompted the owners to remove the names of those arrears in their subscriptions and put the publication on a cash basis. His periodical writings from the years 1875-1901, excluding his autobiography, perhaps best detail his philosophy of education. Although his autobiography is an important document in describing his educational experiences, his writings, when submitted to a secondary analysis beyond their original intention, provide rich data for understanding his educational viewpoints.

Howison as an Educator

Howison was an educator of others in numerous ways. His first recorded instance of teaching others occurred when he was a seminary student and became a tutor to the Hawes sisters. The outcome of this teaching effort was evidenced by the recollections in Mary Virginia (Hawes) Terhune's autobiography as well as in the letter she wrote to Howison in his later years. Mary Virginia attributed to Howison as being a "beloved tutor" and was grateful to him every day of her life for things he had taught her. Howison also taught others through his writings, as already mentioned, his history of Virginia was written with the intent to educate others.

Educational Biography Methodology

Educational biography is a hybrid methodology, combining educational theory with historical research. As such, this research method has advantages as well as limitations. The writer of educational biography must first of all posit a definition of education and then examine educative events from the life of the subject of the study. After selecting these events, it is incumbent on the researcher to determine the impact of education on the individual's life. To do so, the biographer must be conversant with educational theory and be able to select the *most significant* educational events in the subject's life, including outcomes from institutions of education other than the more obvious institution of schooling. It is at this point that autobiography and the subject's own writings are of utmost assistance. The contribution of third party descriptions of the subject are also useful. In order to write a proper educational biography, the researcher must establish

these learning experiences as being valid, particularly, if possible, from the learner's viewpoint, as they form the basis of the study.

As a historian, the educational biographer must situate the individual's life, and learning experiences, within the social, political, economic, religious, and cultural context. After highlighting significant educative experiences, other facts about the individual's life serve to fill in the historical record and round out the story. A challenge is presented here in that this form of biography could easily become lopsided and end up highlighting education as being more important than what is really was in the individual's life. This error could be avoided by using the subject's own references to his or her learning experiences. The educational biographer must determine what influences in the past shaped society and the individual. Macro social movements may not have impacted the individual as much as micro-movements on the local level. Even within a particular locale, major differences are present in the experiences of individuals. For example, Howison was born and grew up in Fredericksburg, Virginia, a small town on the "fall line." This imaginary line divided the state into two unequal and dissimilar sections of eastern and western Virginia. Had he grown up further west in Spotsylvania County or had he been born further east to plantation owning parents, his educational experiences would have been vastly different from the educational opportunities available to him in Fredericksburg.

To elaborate on Howison's learning experiences, tenets from the work of William Dilthey were incorporated in this study. Dilthey's emphasis on entering the subject's point of view, through letters, diaries, and writings such as autobiography, has been incorporated in this study by using Robert Howison's autobiography to determine the experiences he considered the most educative in his life. Sayre writes, "What people choose to preserve in an autobiography is not accidental. It is chosen over other experiences and then written down in a particular way."⁵⁰⁵ Additionally, the emphasis Dilthey placed on positioning the microcosm of the individual's life within the larger macrocosm of the world around him helped to situate the life of the subject of this study, Robert Reid Howison, within a nineteenth-century context, and helped to eliminate "presentism" when studying his life. Robert Howison's lifelong learning experiences have

⁵⁰⁵ Sayre, 8.

been elucidated throughout this study. The learning experiences he recorded in his autobiography have been highlighted as significant since he selected and wrote the content of his life's story. Educational facts can be verified, but educational biography has the ability to offer the perspective of the individual who actually experienced the educational process under consideration. This level of insight is not as apparent in other forms of research.

Not only are historical events recorded in autobiography, but the end product of autobiography is history. Sayre points out that autobiographies detail a form of history he calls "scrapbook history." This form of history includes random, bits of history that might not otherwise be remembered. Howison's manuscript contains scrapbook history in that it details descriptions about his experience in three nineteenth-century academies, a biography of William Maxwell of Union Seminary as well as a long treatise on the practice of dueling. It also explains Howison's insights about his writings, including his opinion of his critics, and presents his remembrances and opinions concerning past events that probably are not recorded elsewhere.

Autobiography also exemplifies the conception of the self as being totally unique. Sayre writes, "An autobiography not only reveals an author's broad concepts of the self as ...a participant in the progress of American civilization... it also reveals those quirkier or more specific modes of behavior styles, tastes, educations, and vocations which might be called 'forms of identity'."⁵⁰⁶ Howison's autobiography informs us as to his relationship with his "twice forty years" of American life. It is unclear why he used the term "twice forty" instead of eighty years; however, a scriptural conjecture recalls the use of "forty" numerology in many instances such as when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness forty years, and the number of days of rain during the great flood was forty. Although it is unclear why Howison selected the title for his autobiography, he was clearly relating his life to the larger, American scene. Cremin concludes that earlier autobiographies, such as that written by Benjamin Franklin, "affected the very way in which Americans would come to write autobiography... namely, as the larger education of the individual in the active

⁵⁰⁶ Sayre, 12.

living of the American life.”⁵⁰⁷ Howison can be seen as an example of a nontraditional nineteenth-century educator in that he educated through his writings, preaching, and membership on educational boards governing the education of others more often than he taught in the classroom.

In conclusion, the education of Robert Reid Howison extended throughout his entire lifespan. His interactions with lifelong institutions of education reveal a broad array of learning experiences from which his education was derived. Although his life has been largely forgotten by contemporary history, Howison’s life’s work is deserving of further study.

⁵⁰⁷ Cremin, *The Colonial Experience*, 29.

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Vitae

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