

MARGUERITE INMAN DAVIS:
FIRST PROGRESSIVE FIRST LADY OF VIRGINIA

by

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CHAPTER ONE

ANCESTRY, YOUTH, AND EDUCATION

In a quiet graveyard adjacent to the Jefferson County courthouse in Dandridge, Tennessee, lie the weathered tombstones of some of the county's ancestors. Since the years have obliterated the inscriptions on most of these monuments, it is difficult to read the eulogies to the pioneers of Eastern Tennessee buried there. But several tombstones marking the graves of the ancestors of Marguerite Inman Davis survived the years. They bear mute witness to the fact that Jefferson County was then the home of Sam, John, and Hugh Inman, all of whom became prosperous businessmen of the locality. Achieving modest business success by the early nineteenth century, the Inman family had been prominent in this community long before there was a Jefferson County.

The Inman's blood was British. In the middle of the eighteenth century the progenitor of the family in America, Ezekiel Inman, emigrated from England to what became Jefferson County, Tennessee. He had three sons, and, following the precedent established by his parents, gave them the Biblical names, Shadrick, Meshack, and Abednego. Meshack Inman, it seems, did not settle with his father and brothers in Jefferson County, but located in nearby Maryville, where he was brutally massacred during an Indian attack. He was

survived by two sons, Ezekiel and Lazarus Inman. In time, the son of one of these brothers, William G. Inman, became a prominent Baptist minister in middle Tennessee.¹ Abednego Inman, a Revolutionary War soldier,² had one son named Shadrack W. Inman, the father of Sam, John, and Hugh Inman.

The elder Shadrack Inman, grandfather of Sam, John, and Hugh Inman, lived in an impressively large brick home, which still stands three miles from Dandridge on the Valley Turnpike. His son and namesake, Shadrack Inman, built a frame residence in the town which became a center of social activity in antebellum days. The Inmans entertained there such prominent Tennesseans as Andrew Jackson and James K. Polk, in a house which still retains evidence of modest luxury. Its hand-made dining room mantle and most of the other furniture is said to have been shipped from Philadelphia.³ Considering the generality of destruction of property in Tennessee, it is doubtful that much of the old Inman furniture outlasted the Civil War. It is even more probable that Mr. and Mrs. William H. Inman did not take with them such furniture to New York City when poor former Confederates. It is certain that, as they became increasingly prosperous

¹Newspaper clipping, Westmoreland Davis Papers, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va. Hereinafter cited as Davis Papers, U.Va.

²"Samuel Inman," National Cyclopedia of American Biography (51 vols., New York: James T. White and Company, 1891-1966), II, p. 443. Hereinafter cited as National Cyclopedia.

³Newspaper clippings, Davis Papers, U.Va.

New Yorkers, they bought stylist furnishings appropriate to the brownstone Victorian respectability of Brooklyn and later to a Manhattan townhouse of America's Gilded Age.

Marguerite Davis' paternal grandfather, John Inman, settled in the fertile country outside of Landridge, Tennessee, where he married Jane Walker, whose lineage was at least as eminent as his own.⁴ They had two sons, John Walker Inman and William H. Inman, the uncle and father respectively of Marguerite Inman Davis.

Both parents of Marguerite were born during the prosperous decades of the nineteenth century before the Civil War left the South destitute. Her mother, Frances J. Curry, was, like William H. Inman, aristocrat by birth, being a niece of Dr. J. L. M. Curry, later minister to Spain under President Cleveland.⁵

In the late 1850's, William and his wife, Frances, moved from Augusta to Atlanta, where the planter established himself with Shad-rack and Sam Inman, a cotton brokerage house, S. M. Inman and son, and with Hugh Inman an increasingly successful bank.⁶ While her husband served the Confederacy during the Civil War, Mrs. Inman continued to live in Atlanta until it fell to Union troops in 1864.⁷

⁴"John Inman," Who Was Who In America (2 vols., Chicago, Illinois: A. N. Marquis Company, 1963), I, p. 341. Hereinafter cited as Who Was Who, I.

⁵Richmond News Leader, Feb. 1, 1918.

⁶Who Was Who, I, p. 341.

⁷Richmond News Leader, Feb. 1, 1918.

After the war, their fortunes destroyed, William Inman and his brother, John Inman, made their way to New York when each could boast only "a tattered rebel uniform for his sole possession in the whole world."⁸ Commercial genius ran in the family. Both brothers secured positions immediately in the New York Cotton Exchange with the result that, three years later in 1868, they were admitted to full partnership. In 1870, they organized with New Yorker, James Swan, the independent cotton brokerage house of Inman, Swan, and Company.⁹ By 1879, the cotton firm was successful enough to employ its own telegraphic cipher code in communications between the New York office and its branches in Houston and Atlanta.¹⁰

Thus, within five years, Marguerite's father and uncle had gained national prestige as successful businessmen, and before the age of forty had amassed fortunes well in excess of a million dollars.¹¹ Members of the Democratic party before 1861, the Inman brothers remained Democrats in New York, but they belonged to the reform faction which opposed Tammany Hall, and they were personal friends of Grover Cleveland.¹² During the depression of the mid-1890's,

⁸Jay Irby Hayes, "The Cultural and Social Milieu of Westmoreland Davis" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, V.P.I., 1968), p. 35. Hereinafter cited as Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social."

⁹New York Times, Nov. 6, 1896.

¹⁰Telegraphic Cipher Code, Library, Westmoreland Davis Archives, Morven Park, Leesburg, Va. Hereinafter cited as Davis Archives, Morven Park.

¹¹New York Times, Nov. 6, 1896.

¹²National Encyclopedia, I, p. 423.

John Inman supported President Cleveland by making a public defense of his stand for sound money.¹³

Although Marguerite Inman's first residence was in Brooklyn, both brothers ultimately owned sumptuous mansions on Manhattan. Located on 5th Avenue between 68th and 69th Streets, the four-story Romanesque residence of John Inman¹⁴ and his wife, Margaret Coffin Inman,¹⁵ contained a bowling alley, billiard room and drawing room. When Marguerite Davis's father died, he possessed a somewhat more modest residence at 11 West 56th Street and also a summer retreat, Castle Rock, in Branford, Connecticut. In addition, he owned extensive land in Georgia; a house in Atlanta; a farm in Ringgold, Georgia; a plantation in Bullock County, Georgia; and a "cottage" on Hobe Sound, Florida.¹⁶

Frances Inman bore four children. Jane Frances and Willie Lee were the older daughters of William and Frances Inman.¹⁷ "Jenny" was born in Atlanta on September 1, 1864, the night Sherman occupied and burned the city. After Jenny's marriage to William H. Payne, she lived in France until her tragic death in 1924. Willie Lee, wispy and gaunt even as a girl, never married. After her mother's death,

¹³Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 36.

¹⁴Inman family scrapbook, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

¹⁵New York Times, Nov. 6, 1896.

¹⁶Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 36.

¹⁷Davis Archives, Morven Park.

she came increasingly to live with her sister, Marguerite, and her brother-in-law, Westmoreland Davis, at Morven Park.

Robert Walker Inman (1860-1895) was the only son of the William H. Inmans. A charming and debonaire young man-about-town, he had talent and brilliance, but little taste for sustained labor.¹⁸ A dandy of the Gilded Age and an enthusiastic yachtsman, he was a member of the New York Yacht Club, the Larchmont Yacht Club, the New York Club, and the Manhattan Club. Aside from an inherited position in Inman, Swan, and Company, Robert Inman was also head of the East River Silk Company, wrecked in 1894 through the disastrous speculations of the firm's treasurer, Albert S. Moore.¹⁹ Although ten years separated Robert and Marguerite, the two were so fond of one another that he named one of his four yachts for her.²⁰ A clue to Robert's sense of humor was provided by a brief inscription in a child's adventure book, The Tiger Hunt. At the age of eleven in his own boyish handwriting, he carefully inscribed on the first leaf of the book:

This book was presented through regard and good feeling to Robert W. Inman by himself of whom he has always held the most valuable opinion.

P.S. Nobody seems to think likewise.²¹

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹New York Times, Aug. 28, 1895.

²⁰Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 37.

²¹The Tiger Hunt, Library, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

Only three years after Marguerite married, Robert Inman was killed in a maritime accident whose details have been colored to imply that his morals were questionable. When, on August 26, 1895, he took a party of two ladies and one gentleman yachting on his fifty-foot sloop, a collision with the iron steamboat Perseus occurred off Norton's Point, Coney Island. Robert Inman jumped overboard, leaving his guests to fend for themselves.²² Although the yacht was not badly damaged, a blow from the steamer's paddle wheel fatally injured Inman. From her brother's estate, Marguerite acquired a number of furnishings including his silver yachting trophies.²³

Marguerite Grace Inman was born in 1870 in Augusta, Georgia, while her mother was visiting relatives.²⁴ It is probable that Mrs. Inman returned to her girlhood home for the purpose of bearing her fourth and last child. Besides the fact that she had lived in New York only a few years, her father was a respected physician of Augusta.

Marguerite's first recollections were of Brooklyn. Having quadrupled its population between 1850 and 1870, the Brooklyn Marguerite knew as a child was the third largest metropolis in the United States. In the 1870's it was a varied city, impressing transplanted Southerners such as the Inmans with its multiple faces.

²²New York Times, Aug. 27, 1895.

²³Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 37.

²⁴Davis Archives, Morven Park.

While it was a city whose streets were lined with comfortable brown-stone houses which concealed remarkably spacious gardens, it was also a city of filthy tenements, where the exhalations of factories and decaying garbage fouled the air. It was a city where the distribution of income was radically skewed to two extremes. The inhabitants, as economist Rufus Tucker argued, "were either poor or very rich."²⁵ Fortunately, the Inmans quickly progressed from temporary classification in the first to what they expected was permanent status in the latter category. W. H. Inman soon took the New Yorker, James Swan, as his business partner and through the expedient of dinner parties in honor of his associate, Swan provided an excellent entrée for the family into New York society. Meanwhile, the Inmans found companionship among other former Confederates who, like William, were seeking in New York their fortune.

Marguerite Inman was in her eleventh year when her family moved from Brooklyn to Manhattan.²⁶ Even though she probably found the bustle and activity of the metropolis exciting, she regarded Brooklyn as "the place where I would like to live best."²⁷ But the transplanted Georgians had come to feel lonely in Brooklyn after Uncle John and Aunt Margaret with their children, Hugh, Lucy, Frederic,

²⁵Seymour J. Mandelbaum, Boss Tweed's New York (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965), pp. 8-9.

²⁶Davis Archives, Morven Park.

²⁷Inman family scrapbook, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

Nannie, Charles, and John Inman,²⁸ had moved more than a year previously, to Fifth Avenue on Manhattan.²⁹

Marguerite Davis was born with a silver spoon in her mouth. Considering William Inman's wealth, it is no surprise that she and her brother and sisters attended private schools in Brooklyn and Manhattan. For her, these years at school passed in "quiet happiness." Despite her tomboyish spirit, young Maggie enjoyed and did well in her studies, even though they depended inordinately upon memory work. Such of her textbooks as Empirical Psychology, the Art of Elocution, The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and Composition of Style testify not only that prosperous children of the Gilded Age were stuffed with large amounts of data called "fundamentals," but that they were exposed to advanced subject matter, too.

Judging from the numerous books from her childhood remaining at Morven Park, Marguerite Inman Davis enjoyed and read widely both classical and popular novels. Among the latter was one entitled Petals Plucked In Sunny Climes by S. Sunshine.³⁰ Her favorite teacher, who instilled in Maggie interest in literature, taught her students to appreciate American and English poetry, encouraging them to learn passages by heart as a regular school activity. It

²⁸New York Times, Nov. 6, 1896.

²⁹Inman family scrapbook, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

³⁰Library, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

was, doubtless, this influence to which Marguerite owed her familiarity with Longfellow.³¹

At an early age, Marguerite, Willie, Jenny, and Robert read books such as Little Lord Fauntleroy.³² Marguerite undertook at this time to fill the leaves of her books with transcriptions of verse which appealed to her, quoting frequently from her favorite author, Sir Walter Scott. When the whole family played the parlor game called "Capping Verses," it was "nip and tuck" between the sisters as to who would win. In these pursuits Frances Curry Inman joined her children in what was probably for her a combination of filling leisure time, dispelling loneliness, and recreating an aspect of antebellum life. She supplemented their teacher's instruction with lessons in foreign languages and music, deemed essential for the accomplished young women she hoped her girls would become.³³ Marguerite, or Maggie as she was called in her youth, became a "very proficient pianist." Ultimately, she had at least a smattering and perhaps a gentlewoman's proficiency in French and German.

The two Inman families provided for their children a protected and happy environment which depended less on nannies, mammies, and nurses than was often the case among most people of their class. The

³¹Inman family scrapbook, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

³²Library, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

³³Inman family scrapbook, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

fact that the Inmans were expatriate Southerners gave them a kind of ethnic insularity in the 1870's and 1880's. In such a happy child's world, Maggie Inman's favorite occupation at the age of eleven was "running."³⁴ Not even convention's requirement that such little ladies wear a multiplicity of garments when they rolled their hoops in the park restrained Maggie's natural exuberance. Nor was she ever ill-dressed, for inventories indicate that she and her sisters wore dresses and aprons of the finest materials when they first moved to New York City: dresses of piqué, white and yellow linen, pink Japanese lawn, cashmere, chally, and calico.³⁵

The late Victorian Age was a church-going, if not deeply religious, period. Both Frances and William Inman were in this respect true to their times. Mrs. Inman possessed a number of Bibles and religious books; her children regularly attended Sunday school; and Mr. Inman left a generous bequest to the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. Maggie Inman was a favorite of her first Sunday school teacher, Mary A. Wray, who, in 1881, presented the eleven-year-old child Rose Porter's morally edifying tale, *Summer Drift-Wood for a Winter Fire*.³⁶

Vacations in Georgia and Branford, Connecticut, reinforced rather than broadened their somewhat introverted world. Of course, Father William, Uncle John, and Brother Robert Inman had their

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Rose Porter, Summer Drift-Wood For a Winter Fire, Library, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

business associates at the Cotton Exchange. Among these businessmen were other transplanted Southerners such as Temple Gwathmey who served as the Exchange's President when some of the older Inman children were breaking out of this private world and abandoning the Southern tutelary Gods of the Lost Cause--especially the John Inmans who gave evidence of their assimilation by sending their sons to Yale. The William H. Inman's only son, Robert, went directly into business without going to college.³⁷ This fact did not diminish his social prospects, however, nor did it restrict him to the family circle and the respectable orbit of the Southern Society of New York. The eldest daughter, Jenny, broke out of this cocoon, too, when she married William Payne.³⁸

But just as the doors of "Bagdad on the Hudson" were beginning to open for Maggie Inman, three family tragedies in succession slammed them shut in the early 1890's: the death of her brother, the death of her father, and the disastrous investments of the W. H. Inman estate by Uncle John. But these events lay unsuspected just beyond horizons visible to Maggie in the 1880's.

Young Maggie does not appear ever to have complained that her academic studies, which included biology, European history, English grammar, French, German, and the piano,³⁹ were too arduous. Such a

³⁷New York Times, Nov. 6, 1896.

³⁸Davis Archives, Morven Park.

³⁹Library, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

regimen made more attractive her gambols in Central Park and occasional attendance of afternoon matinées. As Maggie approached her fifteenth year, she began to accompany her mother, Aunt Margaret, and cousins, Sally, Jennie, and Connie, to evening performances at the city's theaters. In December, 1885, the two Mrs. Inmans and their daughters made up a box party to attend at Wallack's Theater Shakespeare's immortal "Romeo and Juliet." A month before they had been fortunate to see not only "The Ratcatcher, or the Piper of Hamelin," starring Hubert Wilke as Singold the Piper and Mlle. de la Breyérre as première dauseuse, but a dramatization of Dickens' "The Old Curiosity Shop," which featured Frank Carlyle as Dick Swiveller.⁴⁰

When at the age of twenty she was on the verge of womanhood, Maggie suddenly became Marguerite. As were her sisters, she was slender and petite; but there was about her an air of dignified simplicity and grace that has been described as "being most peculiar to herself." Some admirers thought her handsome; others less certain called her "quite nice looking."⁴¹ Her features did not possess the symmetry of proportion which constitutes formal beauty, being somewhat long of nose and sallow in complexion, but the congenial expression of her face made her acceptable to all who saw her as a woman of more than ordinary comeliness--in fact a girl of considerable fascination

⁴⁰Inman family scrapbook, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁴¹Interview with Miss Frances Reid, March 6, 1970, Leesburg, Va. Hereinafter cited as Reid, Leesburg, Va.

and social grace.⁴² This was the woman that Westmoreland Davis followed to Europe to make his wife, less than a year after he first met her.

⁴² Observations by writer, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

CHAPTER TWO

LIFE WITH MORLEY BEFORE HE BECAME GOVERNOR, 1890-1917

Marguerite Inman first met Westmoreland Davis when her maternal cousin, Walker Curry, invited him to the Inman residence at Branford, Connecticut, for an interview with Mrs. William H. Inman, who was looking for a reliable lawyer to settle her husband's estate.⁴³ Had they inquired into his genealogical and personal background, the Inmans would certainly have approved of young Davis.

The son of Thomas Gordon Davis of South Carolina, a plantation owner and Harvard graduate, and Mrs. Annie Lewis Morriss Davis of Gloucester County, Virginia, Westmoreland Davis was born on August 21, 1859.⁴⁴ There is some conjecture concerning the place of his birth. Several newspaper accounts, including the New York Times, place his birth on the high seas between Boston and Liverpool. Despite this romantic account, his mother's handwritten genealogical notebook states that Westmoreland Davis was "born in Paris 21st of Aug^{ust}"⁴⁵

Westmoreland Davis was only nine months old when his father died. As a child, he saw the family fortune destroyed when the Confederacy

⁴³ Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 34.

⁴⁴ New York Times, Sept. 3, 1942. See also Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," pp. 2-5.

⁴⁵ Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 5.

fell, and, unlike Maggie Inman, experienced the deprivations of poverty as he struggled with his widowed mother to eke a living out of Virginia's prostrate economy.⁴⁶ From the Gwathmey School for boys in Hanover County, Virginia, "Morley" went to the Virginia Military Institute, from which he was graduated before he was eighteen years old.⁴⁷ Westmoreland taught school very briefly, worked at railroading in Richmond, and spent a session at the University of Virginia before entering Columbia University in 1884 to study law.⁴⁸

Following the example of many other Southerners after the Civil War, Davis went to New York City to seek a more prosperous future than was open to him in Virginia.⁴⁹ A man of great energy, he was able to support himself as a law clerk, earn creditable grades in the Columbia University law school, and receive his LL.B. in 1885⁵⁰ before entering the law firm of Eaton and Lewis in New York City. He soon severed this connection to form, with William J. Gibson, their own firm, Gibson and Davis. Westmoreland soon achieved a clientele which provided sufficient material rewards for the young lawyer to consider matrimony.⁵¹ Family tradition suggests that he was engaged

⁴⁶"Westmoreland Davis," Southern Planter, C111 (Oct., 1942), p. 8.

⁴⁷Loudoun Times-Mirror, Sept. 3, 1942.

⁴⁸"Westmoreland Davis," Southern Planter, C111 (Oct., 1942), p. 8.

⁴⁹Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 21.

⁵⁰"Westmoreland Davis," Who's Who in America, (35 vols., Chicago, Illinois: A. N. Marquis and Company, 1889), XII, p. 877.

⁵¹Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," pp. 34-35.

briefly to a Miss Harriman, but there is no way of learning how serious such an attachment may have been.

When Morley and Maggie first met, there is nothing to indicate that she was particularly attracted to this ambitious young lawyer-- although he was undoubtedly entranced by her. Marguerite had been raised in the tradition of great ladies. Her inheritance of stern, fearless qualities possessed by her ancestor, Ezekiel Inman, lay dormant, concealed by the ladylike education which she had received. Despite the serious countenance which was Marguerite's nature, she impressed Westmoreland as gracious, and most of all as one who usually saw the best in others.⁵² Perhaps because he was suffering from an overdose of materialism, Westmoreland Davis was unusually responsive to this idealistic and optimistic young woman.

Since she had grown up in what was called the best society in New York and Georgia, it was fitting that Marguerite Inman study piano in Bonn and Paris. Although her seriousness of purpose in studying piano was questionable, she nevertheless embarked on her European adventure in 1891. Less than a year later, she and Westmoreland Davis, who was probably in Europe on a business trip, were married at St. Margaret's, Westminster, in London.

After returning to the United States, the Davises spent their first married year at the prestigious Waldorf Hotel, which had recently

⁵² Interview with Mrs. Alice R. Proffitt by George G. Shackelford, April and May, 1970, Morven Park, Leesburg and Roanoke, Virginia.

opened on Fifth Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street.⁵³ As early as 1893, the year Westmoreland and Marguerite Davis moved into the hotel, The Waldorf already had become an "institution," a byword for an excellence which drew into its orbit the chic and wealthy of the beau monde when the Gilded Age was becoming an Age of Elegance in America.⁵⁴

Although the genteel tradition restrained Marguerite and Morley from ostentation, they were nonetheless true to their times in their eclecticism. A child of the Neo-Gothic, brownstone, Victorian era, Mrs. Davis consistently preferred the massive and ornate to the early American furnishings of Shadrick Inman's Inn. And, as indicated by a photograph of Mrs. Davis in the society section of the New York Press,⁵⁵ she wore expensive but tasteful clothes, owning furs which ranged from sealskin to Hudson sable.⁵⁶

In 1894 Marguerite and Westmoreland decided to spend more time at their small cottage in the exclusive suburb of Tuxedo Park across the Hudson. For nine years, until 1903, Marguerite and her husband enjoyed the private world of New Yorkers away--but not too far away--

⁵³Jack Temple Kirby, Westmoreland Davis, Virginia Planter-Politician, 1859-1942 (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1968), preface. Hereinafter cited as Kirby, Davis.

⁵⁴Lloyd R. Morris, Incredible New York: High Life and Low Life of the Last Hundred Years (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 236. Hereinafter cited as Morris, Incredible New York.

⁵⁵New York Press, Dec. 14, 1902 (clipping in Davis Papers, U.Va.).

⁵⁶Marguerite Davis, Inventory, June, 1926, Davis Archives, Morven Park. Hereinafter cited as Inventory, Morven Park.

from New York. The social season at Tuxedo, with its horse shows and balls provided opportunities for the young couple to display their talents and win the approval of the Harrimans, Lorillards, Livingstons, and Vanderbilts who ruled Tuxedo and could provide entrée to the glittering world of "The Four Hundred" in the city itself.⁵⁷ By maintaining a suite at the Waldorf, the couple could attend the theater and opera. By retreating to Tuxedo Park, they could recapture the essence of the country gentleman and his lady, safely away from the bustle of city life.⁵⁸

The Davises' house at Tuxedo Park, Bagatelle, was a good example of Queen Anne Revival. A blending of shingle and clapboard reached two and a half stories high at the entrance front, which had a small court of gravel and cobblestone between it and a road which meandered through the park.⁵⁹ Because Westmoreland had intended Bagatelle as a summer retreat and not a permanent residence, Marguerite found that the many windows, while allowing summer breezes to cool the house comfortably, made winter winds distressing. But the verandah, which extended the entire length of the lake side of the cottage, more than compensated for this inconvenience.

Inside Bagatelle, the rooms "conformed to their cottage ideal" only in size. Dark oak columns and panelling separated cozy parlors hung with opulent Brabant tapestries, serving something of their

⁵⁷ Morris, Incredible New York, p. 249.

⁵⁸ Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 39.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 32.

original purpose by eliminating drafts. Marguerite Davis hung family portraits over the tapestries, giving an "odd juxtaposition" of ante-bellum Americans and Romans of the Punic War. The floors were sometimes covered with three thicknesses: a large Oriental rug on which smaller rugs were scattered, and on top of these pelts of fur were thrown at random. The total effect of Bagatelle was sumptuous and elegant for all that it was cluttered. Most of its furnishings Marguerite inherited from her family and later reused them to furnish her mansion in Virginia long after their popularity had declined.⁶⁰

Westmoreland and Marguerite enjoyed horseback riding, and maintained modest stables, which, as was the practice, were not immediately adjacent to their house at Tuxedo Park, but about a quarter of a mile distant.⁶¹ Other recreations for the bewhiskered men and long-dressed ladies included golf, hunting, fishing, polo, and tennis. Marguerite customarily spent the morning outdoors and the afternoon socializing. Then late "on weekday afternoons and on Saturday nights, the cottagers assembled at the clubhouse, where, mingling with the members and guests there, they enjoyed in the afternoon their tea, and on Saturday evenings a somewhat formal dinner."⁶²

There are many reasons why Marguerite could look back on these years at Tuxedo Park as the happiest of her life. Although her sister

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 31-33.

⁶¹New York Press, Dec. 14, 1902 (clipping in Davis Papers, U.Va.).

⁶²Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 40.

Willie Lee remained the only living member of the William H. Inman family in New York, Marguerite maintained many youthful friendships-- and she was surrounded by the love and devotion of a man who idolized her. Lasting almost a half century, her marriage was founded on the sound bonds of love and of mutual respect, even though there were no children. Marguerite looked to her older companion for guidance, while he played the role of her fond guardian and protector.

Between the couple, however, there existed a basic difference in personalities. Marguerite, like her mother-in-law, Annie Davis, loved society and the "less serious life." Remembering the poverty of his youth and his subsequent rise to riches, Davis was never able to relax and rarely ever to ease his pace. Each year Marguerite insisted that he interrupt his work with some pleasurable diversion, and, despite his protests, she usually managed to maneuver him to some foreign or exotic resort. After one such session in which Marguerite tried but failed to get him to the beach, Davis quipped to a friend, "Florida is a nice place to play, but I don't play." Always urging her husband to slow down, it is quite possible that Marguerite Davis was the impetus behind their forthcoming change of residence.⁶³

Tiring of the materialistic world of New York City, Westmoreland and Marguerite Davis began, in 1902, to search for a country home.

⁶³Kirby, "Davis," pp. 24-25.

They were on the lookout for a house to serve as their principal residence in Virginia when, in March, they came to Fauquier County to participate in a series of drag hunts held by the Warrenton Hunt Club.⁶⁴ While in Warrenton, the couple inspected and purchased the Morven Park estate in Loudoun County and, in 1903, moved permanently to the quiet pastoral setting of Virginia hunt country.⁶⁵

Owned for a century by the Thomas Swann family of Alexandria,⁶⁶ Morven Park was an ideal setting for wealthy Americans such as the Davises. Set in the side of Catoclin mountain, the extensive mansion commanded a sweeping view of the gently rolling country of Loudoun County and of the low hills of Maryland rising across the Potomac. On the southeast side, about one mile northwest of Leesburg on the old road to Waterford were the great wrought-iron entrance gates which had been presented to Governor Swann by the city of Baltimore.⁶⁷ One approached the twenty-five acre lawn surrounding the mansion via a mile of roadway winding between imported trees and boxwood gardens, which, under Marguerite's care became nationally famous.⁶⁸ At these three entrances to the lawn were similar wrought-iron gates.

⁶⁴See Alexander MacKay-Smith, The American Foxhound, 1747-1967 (Richmond, Va., 1968). Hereinafter cited as MacKay-Smith, Foxhound.

⁶⁵Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 44.

⁶⁶Nancy Anne Miller, "Thomas Swan: Political Acrobat and Entrepreneur" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, V.P.I., 1969), p. 115.

⁶⁷Richmond News Leader, Feb. 1, 1918.

⁶⁸Kirby, Davis, p. 26.

By the time the Davises first saw the 1,500-acre estate, the mansion had become a blending of the Classic Revival style of 1800 to 1875 and of the Italian Bracketed style of 1830 to 1880. The portico boasted fat Doric columns, a checkerboard of black and white marble squares, and steep red sandstone steps guarded by cast-iron lions.⁶⁹

Although Westmoreland and Marguerite respected Morven Park's architectural past, they subdued most of the external Victorian features by painting white the walls and all of the trim of the mansion, gables, towers, and brackets, in place of a two- or three-color combination of buff, brown, and green. As a result, the exterior became generally consistent with its Doric portico. To further the illusion of a Greek temple, the Davises also leveled the tiered roof-line which the Swanns had once thought they would "improve" by the addition of a large four-story tower.

Yet Marguerite did not intend that the whole represent a literal return to the Greek revival of the nineteenth century. Particularly since the interior of Morven retained only occasional Greek motifs, the mansion itself must be designated as "eclectic."⁷⁰

As mistress of Morven, Marquerite Davis's preference for the eclectic was understandable both individually and as a woman representative of her era. A turn-of-the-century woman of wealth,

⁶⁹ Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 44, and observations by writer, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁷⁰ Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 55.

Mrs. Davis had traveled extensively even as a girl, accompanying her parents to Paris and Italy in the 1880's and studying in Bonn and Paris just prior to her marriage. Understanding that Gilded Age traditions were a unique composite of different aspects of European heritage,⁷¹ Mrs. Davis allowed herself complete freedom in decorating Morven Park with articles of different periods. She and Morley became increasingly unpredictable in their willingness to spend money as they reached middle age, and insofar as their own comforts were concerned, they usually used what they had.

Entering the great hall of Morven Park was like walking into the palace of a merchant prince of the Renaissance. On pale walls were hung four of six Brabant tapestries, depicting the story of Sophonisba as told by Petrarch in his poem "Africa." Although the provenance of the Morven Park tapestries is not known, markings indicate a sixteenth century Brussels weaving. Without doubt, these tapestries celebrating the tragedy of Sophonisba constitute the mansion's finest furnishings.

Other furnishings included besides a profusion of bric-a-brac, armchairs of the settecento studded with nails and rich in antique red velvet and elaborate cassone, or Italian marriage chests, by which the wealth of a bride's family had been judged. Most of this furniture, the Inmans had imported from Milan in the 1880's. Though the mansion contained many reproductions, Marguerite and Westmoreland balanced them with authentic collector's items.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 55-56.

Mrs. Davis constantly added to the mélange of miscellaneous items in the great hall, true to her eclectic taste. From Spain came two large twisted baroque columns, two church mirrors, and a profusion of brass charcoal braziers. From India came a large rug, and from Switzerland several wooden peasant chairs as well as a decoratively carved high back arm chair, reputed to be the mansion's oldest piece of furniture. Foo lions, Buddas, lamps in the form of hooded cobras, and a Chinese temple drum represented the Davises' trips to the Orient.

Marguerite did not stop at letting the elaborate furnishings establish the rich color scheme, but added to the crimson of the chairs and footstools vari-colored velvet pillows on the settees and cassone, and red velvet curtains at the windows and doors. The four tapestries, with their subdued tones of blue, rose, and brown contrasted subtly with the bolder colors of the curtains and chairs. Although the mansion's spaciousness "obviated the clutter" of Bagatelle, there was no scarcity of furniture in the great hall, or for that matter, in any of the rooms of Morven Park.

Adjacent to the Renaissance great hall was the dining room whose motif was a blending of European Renaissance and Jacobean. Much of the furniture for this room was brought to Morven Park from Bagatelle; but while in Milan in 1897, Marguerite and Westmoreland contracted the Mora Brothers, furniture designers specializing in reproductions, to create several pieces for Morven Park's dining hall. Just as Milan furnished the Italian sideboard and china cabinet, so London furnished the ornate high back Jacobean chairs, purchased from the famous dealer

of art, Sir Joseph Duveen of New York. Green velvet curtains and the light turquoise of the Inman's filigree-edged monogramed china by C. H. Pilleout established the color scheme of the room.⁷² Marguerite displayed a second set of gold-edged china in the dining room, but it is conjectural whether it belonged to her or to the Inman family. Consisting of Gorham and Tiffany sterling, Mrs. Davis's silverware was contained by the massive Italian sideboard⁷³ when she was in residence and in a huge silver safe in the pantry when she was away.

Across from the dining room lay the French drawing room. The gilt of French furnishings from Louis XIV to Napoleon III and the two leopard skin rugs contrasted with, yet complemented the heavy Nile green drapery at the windows and doors. The quiet elegance of delicate bisque figures, embroidered velvet, and a Steinway Grand piano presented a more refined appearance than that of the great hall or dining room. Yet, like the two adjoining rooms, the drawing room deviated from its motif.⁷⁴ Here, Marguerite featured a great Parisian porcelain glass and bronze lamp and a carved gilt Spanish Hapsburg mirror.⁷⁵ Scattered around the room were several handsomely executed oil portraits, among them a large framed portrait of Marguerite Davis, painted at Morven Park by Frank Wild of Leeds, England.⁷⁶

⁷²Ibid., pp. 56-62.

⁷³ Inventory, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁷⁴ Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 63.

⁷⁵ Inventory, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁷⁶ Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 67.

Landscapes completed the motif. Edward Gay and de Forest Bolmer were the most famous of the landscape painters whose works Mrs. Davis exhibited at Morven Park.⁷⁷ Edward Gay was an American artist of the Barbizon school, and quite popular between 1880 and 1910, having won the \$2,000 prize competition conducted by the Metropolitan Museum of New York.⁷⁸ Marguerite's admiration for his work resulted in her acquisition of two of his landscapes, "Haymaking" and "The Creek," both of which portray sun-drenched scenes under bright skies.

Each of Morven Park's three public rooms contained a profusion of furniture, some of which were priceless authentic treasures and some of which were rather inharmonious reproductions. Sentiment was the principle raison d'etre for all furnishings. Marguerite especially revered her family and was proud to place undistinguished inherited furniture beside collectors' items. Remarkably, the effect of the great rooms of the house were more functional and in better taste than the sum of their component furnishings suggest.

Because from youth Marguerite had been accustomed to life's fineries, it was natural that she would pay particular attention to the furnishings of her own bedroom. Commanding a sweeping view of Morven's front acres, her room contained not only art and antique furniture, but items reminiscent of her family. Because she revered her family, Marguerite Inman Davis was proud to place her mother's

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 64.

⁷⁸ Inventory and observations by writer, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

tortoise shell hair comb and pictures of her father and brother in conspicuous places as a constant and tangible reminder of her devotion. Although the pale walls and exquisite Brussels lace bedcover presented a feminine atmosphere, Mrs. Davis's preference for heavily carved furnishings was responsible for the presence here of an ornate black walnut chest of drawers and of a rare Spanish traveling desk, whose interior was divided into a myriad of ivory-doored compartments. A decorative French mirror, also heavy and ornate, hung over the mantle.⁷⁹

Life at Morven Park was a mixture of the even temperament of Marguerite and the drive of Westmoreland.⁸⁰ The balls and luncheons the Davises are reputed to have given became a tradition which lasted well into the thirties.⁸¹

Not only was Morven Park a beautiful showplace and social center of Northern Virginia, but a successful, diversified farm as well. Davis's homilies on agriculture as editor of the Southern Planter were buttressed by their practical application at Morven. Blooded stock, much of it stemming from animals selected personally by Mr. Davis on European farms, made Morven the fountainhead of purebred stock of the Upper South.⁸² The emphasis shifted over the years; draft horses were the first to go, followed by sheep. The dairy cattle were sold off

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Kirby, Davis, p. 40.

⁸¹ Reid, Leesburg, Va.

⁸² "Westmoreland Davis," Southern Planter, C111 (Oct., 1942), p. 8.

in the 1930's; the horse-breeding ended in the 1940's. In the 1930's and 1940's Westmoreland Davis raised beef cattle, but he was especially proud of his poultry, an enterprise which included 50,000 fancy broilers, 14,000 Bronze Turkeys, and a large flock of Barred Rock hens.⁸³

Davis filled the thoroughbred stables of Morven Park with some of America's best equines. In 1915 he acquired the stallion, Lucullite, whose winnings and stud-fees were estimated well in excess of \$300,000. Davis supplied yearlings in the late summer sales at Saratoga Springs for a decade, netting \$7,000 in 1936.⁸⁴ But despite a full-page write-up in the Washington Post in 1941, Westmoreland Davis was not, and did not pretend to be, a major figure in the horse world.⁸⁵

During the first decade of the twentieth century the Davises' interest in horses was not confined to the race track. The New York Horse Show was then in its hey-day, providing for the high society of that city and of the eastern seaboard an opportunity to ape the English gentry. The commingling of people in evening attire, sables and jewels with those in sporting clothes was visually exciting. Not only were Marguerite and Westmoreland Davis devotees of the Horse Show, but she herself exhibited Lady Godolphin in the Light Hunter

⁸³Handbills, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁸⁴"Tipton-Fasis Catalogues of Saratoga Sales," Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁸⁵Washington Post, June 21, 1941.

Class, winning that event in 1904, the year after they moved their residence from New York to Virginia.⁸⁶

As a member of the Orange County Hunt Club at Tuxedo Park and on the border of Fauquier and Loudoun, Marguerite had gained respect as a daring but proficient horsewoman. In 1902, an article appearing in the New York Times featured Mrs. Davis in a trim riding habit, mounted side-saddle on Lady Godolphin, reputed to be, next to Mr. Ambrose Clarke's heavy-weight Guidon, the most acclaimed hunter in the Old Dominion.⁸⁷ Marguerite had already gained national attention in hunting circles of the United States by appearing on the cover of Rider and Driver, a sophisticated equestrian magazine. Holding the reins of two glossy geldings pulling the Davises' handsome green and black Brewster-made phaeton, Mrs. Davis made an elegant and fashionable figure, surrounded by the correct accouterments of the fashion world: a clever dog on the seat with her, a loyal groom on the rumble, and the scenery of Tuxedo pines and lakes in the background.⁸⁸

Fox-hunting was one of the things that had induced Westmoreland and Marguerite to move from New York to Virginia. When they came to Northern Virginia, they did so under the auspices of the Orange County Hunt Club.⁸⁹ When Marguerite Davis reminisced in her old age about

⁸⁶Trophy, Silver collection, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁸⁷New York Times, Dec. 14, 1902.

⁸⁸Rider and Driver, XX (Jan. 19, 1902), cover.

⁸⁹Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," pp. 72-73.

life at Tuxedo Park, she always spoke kindly of her older friend, E. H. Harriman, a leading figure of the hunt, just as he was in railroad circles, being the principal owner of the Union Pacific Railway. Harriman was a founder of the Orange County Hunt Club in its location in northern Fauquier County.⁹⁰ In 1903, Westmoreland Davis secured Mr. Harriman's aid in establishing the Loudoun County Hunt Club--aid which was vital to the latter's success and national standing.

In a day when virtually everyone rode horses, the hunting field was by no means pre-empted by the wealthy; small farmers were encouraged to ride to lessen questions of securing landowner's permission to hunt their land.⁹¹ As Marguerite's husband described it, "Fox-hunting is a benefit to the community."⁹² Houses are kept open and dinners with pink-coated gentlemen and hunt breakfasts are given by such charming hostesses as Mrs. Henry Fairfax of Oak Hill, Mrs. William C. Eustis at Oatlands . . . Mrs. Westmoreland Davis at Morven Park . . . and many others whose hospitality . . . is delightful if their estates be less pretentious."⁹³

As mistress of Morven Park, Marguerite was noted for her gentility and hospitality. In October, 1906, as the hunting season opened, she

⁹⁰ Frank H. Dixon, "Edward Henry Harriman," Dictionary of American Biography (22 vols., New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928-1938), VIII, pp. 296-300.

⁹¹ Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," pp. 72-73.

⁹² Westmoreland Davis, "Fox-Hunting as a Benefit to the Community," Town and Country, X (May, 1904), p. 15. Hereinafter cited as Davis, "Fox-Hunting," Town and Country, p. 15.

⁹³ Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 73.

gave a luncheon for 600 guests. The menu included 16 gallons of oyster stew, 3,000 oysters on the half shell, 120 pounds of lamb, 150 pounds of ham, 1,000 rolls, 50 pounds of cake, 38 gallons of coffee, and 8½ kegs of beer. Such an elaborate menu was characteristic of her emphasis upon quality and quantity.

Because Westmoreland Davis founded and because he was willing to provide and maintain hounds and huntsmen for the Loudoun Hunt Club, he was elected Master of Foxhounds.⁹⁴ When Davis resigned as Master of Foxhounds in 1908, he and Mrs. Davis seized the opportunity of securing the services of Harry Worcester Smith. Smith was a self-made man of great wealth who retired young to devote himself to fox-hunting.⁹⁵ Although he was known to be a stormy petrel, the Davises hoped that Smith would place the Loudoun Club on so high a level of perfection that it would be financed, not by a few great landowners like the Eustises, Fairfaxes, and Davises, but by wealthy Northerners. Even though Smith's tenure as M. F. H. was only two years, he did succeed in placing the Loudoun Hunt Club on a footing equal to those of many of the internationally known Northern clubs.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 73-74.

⁹⁵ MacKay-Smith, American Foxhound, pp. 71-93. Harry Worcester Smith, organizer of the Master of Foxhounds Association, was the man primarily responsible for arousing enthusiasm in the American foxhound, which eventually was to culminate in its present position of eminence in the United States.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 71-79.

It is probable that, since Westmoreland was past president of the hunt club and Marguerite a New Yorker, a strong friendship grew between Smith and the Davises. Henry Rankin Poore painted a picture during the period Smith was M. F. H., showing Marguerite riding sidesaddle and Smith putting his bounds on the line.⁹⁷

In a move unusual for that day, Marguerite was elected M. F. H.⁹⁸ This was no mean position for the Master of Foxhounds was in many ways the "Arbiter Petronious" of his locality, having many duties to perform and especially in Leesburg where the number who hunted exceeded that in most localities in the country.⁹⁹

Marguerite found that her responsibilities as M. F. H. were not always pleasant, for to her came the complaints of farmers whose property was damaged by the hunts. Under her direction, as was the custom, the Loudoun Club compensated farmers liberally for their property loss.¹⁰⁰ Because most of her cohorts found it comfortable to hunt in mid-morning, the question of luncheons and breakfasts prompted Marguerite to continue to make Morven Park a gathering place for Loudoun Huntsmen.¹

⁹⁷ Ibid., 108. This picture of Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Davis appeared Nov., 1911, in Scribner's Magazine and Sept., 1922, in Country Life In America.

⁹⁸ Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁹⁹ Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 73.

¹⁰⁰ Davis, "Fox-Hunting," Town and Country, X (May, 1904), p. 15.

¹ Harry Worcester Smith to Marguerite Davis, n.d., Davis Archives, Morven Park.

Although she remained a keen hunting spectator, Marguerite Davis gradually withdrew from the hunting field to become increasingly absorbed to her gardens at Morven Park.² She lived in a beautiful home--the showplace of Northern Virginia--and there was no shortage of funds to finance her landscape projects around Morven. When the Davises occupied Morven Park in 1903, Mrs. Davis began expanding the gardens, later adding the magnolia bordered reflecting pool and boxwood terraces.

Boxwooding became Maggie Davis's hobby and here she came to be as energetic gardener as she had been a fox-hunter. In a letter appearing in the Southern Planter, Mrs. Davis urged rural homemakers to become interested "in a hobby that has proved delightful to me, that of a boxwood garden."³ Exhanted with things of the past, Marguerite declared that boxwood was easily propagated by cuttings, and, once established, it would thrive for years even through considerable neglect. These qualities so appealed to Marguerite that she developed formal boxwood gardens of studied elegance. Besides Mrs. Davis also planted jupiter, magnolia, and yew trees which reinforced the resemblance between the gardens of an English country house and her own Morven Park.⁴

²Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 75.

³Marguerite Davis to Southern Planter, n.d., Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁴Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 76.

A younger friend and business associate of Westmoreland Davis, Miss Frances H. Reid, acknowledged Mrs. Davis's absorption in gardening, recalling that it was not an uncommon sight in the 1930's to see trucks loaded with boxwood passing through Leesburg on their way to Morven Park. In any season, but especially autumn, Marguerite could be found sitting quietly in her gardens, clad in coat and hat in cool weather, her hands clasped in her lap. Even through her seventieth year, Mrs. Davis was energetically enlarging the gardens of which she was so proud.⁵

A pleasure Marguerite Inman Davis had enjoyed since her youth was travel. Young Maggie had frequently visited her Georgia relatives and, on the family's grand tour in the early 1880's, she had become accustomed to seeing first-hand the European treasures she so admired. As a young couple, the Davises went abroad whenever Westmoreland's demanding law practice would allow. In 1897, they embarked on a round-the-world tour which took them from the Mediterranean to the Orient. Again in 1903, while Morven Park was being renovated, they boarded the Cunard "ocean greyhound," Etruria, to spend several months in Europe. Although records of their trips abroad are exceedingly rare, it is certain that a couple of the Davises' amiability did not travel without socializing.⁶ The fact that in 1919 Mrs. Davis received several letters from a retired Scottish officer with whom she and Mr. Davis had become

⁵Reid, Leesburg, Va.

⁶Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 76.

acquainted on their 1903 voyage was most likely indicative of a number of friendships formed on their numerous voyages. Oddly enough, this gentleman, although no relation to Marguerite, was named William Inman.⁷

Rather than keeping a diary of her voyages, Marguerite delighted in photographs and mementoes which recorded her travels abroad and to American resorts. A colorful photograph taken in 1910 when she and Westmoreland crossed the Pacific to Japan on the Matsonia depicted Marguerite in a Geisha-girl costume, while another more somber photograph showed her posed costumed for sea-bathing at Atlantic City.⁸

Despite the fact that they frequently travelled, Morven Park and the life of the lady of the manor suited Marguerite Davis perfectly. Between the ages of twenty-three and thirty-eight, she and Westmoreland Davis basked in the warmth of their mutual devotion; together they journeyed abroad for urban pleasures; together they enjoyed the pleasures of the chase; and like the lord and his chatelaine, "they presided over a fitting habitation."⁹

⁷William Inman to Marguerite Davis, Sept. 8, 1919, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁸Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁹Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 69.

CHAPTER THREE

THE WAR YEAR IN THE EXECUTIVE MANSION

On February 1, 1918, Westmoreland Davis became Governor of Virginia and his wife, Marguerite Inman Davis, its first lady. Challenged by new opportunities for feminine leadership, Mrs. Davis made herself the most memorable first lady of the Old Dominion.¹⁰ By personal example and by exhortation, she contributed enormously to the rising influence of her sex. During her four years as mistress of Virginia's executive mansion, she witnessed Virginia's counterpart of the nation's cultural revolution which drastically altered most traditional social institutions.¹¹ One aspect of this conflict was Women's Rights. Another was the Temperance Crusade. The latter undoubtedly worked to make her husband, Westmoreland Davis, publicly a wet and privately a tetotalter, governor because it divided his rivals for the Democratic nomination.

Although Davis had become a statewide figure after 1909, he had never held public office before his term as Governor of Virginia. In fact, until his nomination he was scarcely regarded as a politician.¹²

¹⁰"Morven Park" (Richmond, Va.: Virginia State Chamber of Commerce, 1969), p. 4.

¹¹George E. Mowry, The Urban Nation (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965), p. 23.

¹²Kirby, Davis, preface. See also Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social."

Catapulted into public life by his nomination in 1917, this bustling, stocky figure made what was perhaps a greater impact on his contemporaries simply because he did not fit the usual political stereotypes. Virginia was ready to embrace a cultured Progressive. She was willing to listen to his plea for Progressive Reform because he exemplified how the adoption of new ways could transform the poor boy of Reconstruction years into the wealthy owner of one of the state's greatest country houses, as well as of the respected farm journal, The Southern Planter. Davis's record was an impressive one. He was leader and spokesman for Virginia in the regional crusade for better farming; as Governor of Virginia he set standards of modern, efficient administration which have been emulated ever since; and finally he was one of the few independent Democrats who successfully challenged the dominant political organization of Virginia.¹³ Marguerite Davis set an equally impressive record as wife of the Governor and first lady of Virginia.

Westmoreland and Marguerite Davis left their country estate in Loudoun County for Richmond on Friday, January 25, a week in advance of the inauguration. At the Jefferson hotel, the elegant and fashionable center for the nabobs of the day, the Davises began to prepare for the social events honoring the new administration.¹⁴

¹³Richmond News-Leader, Feb. 1, 1918.

¹⁴Richmond News-Leader, Jan. 30, 1918.

When Marguerite Davis prepared for the inauguration of her husband as Governor on February 1, 1918, she must have considered the train of events which had achieved for him this realization of the American dream. The poor seven-year-old boy of 1865 who with his widowed mother had fled Richmond in the wake of the Confederate Government's departure in 1865, was about to be sworn in as Governor of the Commonwealth. His had been a career of rags to riches. An unusual combination of events had transformed the semi-retired gentleman farmer into a crusading reformer. Similarly, an unusual combination of events had produced a split in the prevailing Democratic organization leadership which made possible the primary victory of Davis. His was now the opportunity to give practical effect to his ideals.¹⁵ Deeply in love with her husband, Marguerite Davis shared these ideals, but with subtle differences which made her a distinct individual, not just her husband's wife. In this respect, she was more the Twentieth Century Woman than either of the Mrs. Woodrow Wilsons. Although her background was similar to her husband's before 1861, the fact that she had been raised in a wealthy Southern home in New York City during the height of the toadstool millionaires and plutocrats had opened up for her horizons of the mind that made her even more receptive to the idealism of the Progressive Era than the Governor-elect.

A freezing rain plagued Richmond the day of the inauguration and drove the members of the legislature and gubernatorial party inside

¹⁵Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," pp. 5-6.

the Capitol to witness the curtailed ceremony. Friends of the Davises, including Mr. and Mrs. William Eustis of the neighboring Loudoun estate "Oatlands," crowded the steps of the old state house to see Virginia's second Progressive Governor sworn into office.¹⁶

It is not known whether the mother of the Governor-elect, Annie Morris Davis, attended the inauguration ceremonies. It is likely that, if she did, she visited with old friends and took pains to stand apart from the official inaugural party. Neither is it known whether Mrs. Davis's sister, Miss Willie Lee Inman, attended the inauguration of her brother-in-law. Considering her periodic ill health, it is probable that she did not, since customarily she divided her time between the Inman cottage on Jupiter Island in Hobe Sound, Florida, or the Inman "Castle Rock" estate at Branford, Connecticut, or her apartment at the old Chelsea Hotel in New York City.¹⁷ Owing to the weather and the war, this dignified occasion was not marked by the usual pomp and fanfare characteristic of previous inaugurations. There was no military review, and only the customary seventeen-gun salute greeted the new Governor and his lady.¹⁸ Although this simplicity

¹⁶Richmond News Leader, Jan. 30, 1918. Andrew Jackson Montague had been a fine Progressive Democratic Governor, 1902-1906. See William E. Larsen, Montague of Virginia: The Making of a Southern Progressive (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1965; Hereinafter cited as Larsen, Montague of Virginia). See also Robert C. Glass and Carter Glass, Jr., Virginia Democracy (Richmond, Va.: Democratic Historical Association, 1937), pp. 291-294.

¹⁷L. A. Merryman to Westmoreland Davis, March 15, 1919, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

¹⁸Kirby, Davis, p. 77.

was not the personal preference of Mrs. Davis,¹⁹ it marked the beginning of her enforced wartime austerity at the Governor's mansion.

The new Governor and his wife received guests at the executive mansion at 9:00 P.M. on the evening of the inauguration, as long had been the custom.²⁰ Despite wartime rationing, the Richmond News-Leader described the inaugural reception as the most fashionable social event of Richmond's social season. Among the "brilliant assemblage" of guests, Mrs. Granville Valentine and Mrs. Pauline Thalhimier were two of the leading ladies present to welcome the new Governor and Mrs. Davis.²¹ Hundreds of Richmond people, as well as many from all parts of the Commonwealth, filled the public rooms of the Governor's mansion with a new expectant gaiety. Despite the simple decorations, the dignity of the century-old mansion²² compensated for its austere appearance. The two drawing rooms, the Grecian ballroom, and the oval dining room, added twelve years earlier during the administration of Governor Claude Swanson, were brightened only with spring flowers.

During the reception, Governor and Mrs. Davis received their guests in the Blue Room, where chief of staff, David H. Leake, made

¹⁹Jack Temple Kirby, "Governor Westmoreland Davis and the Molding of Twentieth Century Virginia" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Va., 1964), p. 68.

²⁰Richmond News-Leader, Jan. 30, 1918.

²¹Ibid., Feb. 2, 1918.

²²Anonymous, "The Executive Mansion" (Richmond, n.d.), p. 16.

presentations. Mrs. Davis, "beautifully gowned" in a deceptively simple floor-length dress of white satin brocaded with gold flowers, complimented the whiteness of her gown with a colorful bouquet of orchids, violets, and roses. Assisting Governor and Mrs. Davis in receiving the several hundred guests were Lieutenant-Governor and Mrs. Benjamin Franklin Buchanan, Speaker of the House and Mrs. Harry R. Houston, Secretary of the Commonwealth and Mrs. James, and Attorney-General and Mrs. John R. Saunders. After the guests departed, the younger legislators and their wives danced in the long drawing room of the mansion. Meanwhile, Richmond's most notable matrons, including the distinguished Mrs. Anne Bryan of "Laburnam," entertained the receiving party with a buffet supper.²³

Changes of régime in the historic old governor's home every four years always has created curiosity and interest among Richmond society. Richmonders were elated over Marguerite Davis. Not only was she a knowledgeable and modern individual but a charming and gracious woman born to wealth and social position as well. When she announced that she would follow established customs, Richmond society matrons rejoiced that, although she was a New Yorker, she planned no social revolution; formal functions would be held in the same rooms, just as they had been for generations. They agreed that the new first lady would perform her duties with regard for old manners and old customs.²⁴

²³ Richmond News-Leader, Feb. 2, 1918.

²⁴ Richmond Times-Dispatch, Feb. 3, 1918.

The Davises assumed responsibility for leading their state and city through a bitter year of war. Physically, spiritually, and emotionally, World War I was a traumatic experience for all the United States. The exigencies of full mobilization of manpower and of resources were so great that southern governors, Davis among them, declared a moratorium on cherished state's rights for the duration of the war. When Davis was inaugurated, Virginia's economy had for months been controlled from Washington by federal commissioners. The basic tasks of the government, then, were reduced to co-operating with the national authorities, channeling new resources, and coping with meticulous administrative detail.²⁵ The Governor could not fail to observe how much better Virginia was administered under wartime emergency directives from Washington than by the antiquated state machinery he had criticized as being so unbusiness-like. The inauguration over, the reform Governor now had ample opportunity to perfect plans which he had sketched only roughly in his campaign, plans for a thoroughgoing reconstruction on the lines of national progressivism. His wife, Marguerite Davis, incorporated her husband's ideals into her sphere of activity as first lady of the Commonwealth. In doing so, she did not so much overthrow old manners and established customs as did she broaden them.

Richmond during the war typified most American cities in many ways. As early as 1915, Richmond newspapers were devoted to propaganda

²⁵Kirby, Davis, p. 105.

favoring the Allies, just as they had supported Gold Democrats against William Jennings Bryan, and as they had demanded that America become a colonial power at the turn of the century. Few people doubted the authenticity of the newspapers' verdict that Germany's conduct of war was a crime against humanity. Frequent letters to the leading Richmond newspapers, the Times-Dispatch and the News-Leader, parroted the editors' denunciation of reported German atrocities and often demanded that the government take immediate action.

Mrs. Davis and other less notable housewives of Richmond found even the maintenance of simple household duties hampered by a shortage of basic staples. Not surprisingly, the winter and spring of 1918 saw a steep rise in the price of selected foodstuffs. Not only did this cause considerable comment, but a group of irate wives organized the Housewives League of Richmond to boycott certain foods until the prices were lowered. Even printing paper was scarce, forcing retail merchants to deliver all goods unwrapped that could possibly be handled that way. This conservation ultimately resulted in an extended program of household and statewide economy,²⁶ and was observed with pride from the Governor's Mansion to the humblest homes of the state.

Nearly every Virginian did his bit in winning the battle on the home front. Accounts of liberty bond campaigns took equal space in

²⁶Arthur Kyle Davis (ed.), Sentiment Toward German Activities (Richmond, Va.: Virginia War History Commission, 1927), pp. 193-254. Hereinafter cited as Davis, Sentiment Toward German Activities. The editor and Governor were not related.

the press with those reporting the fighting in Europe.²⁷ Both Governor and Mrs. Davis devoted considerable time and effort to promoting the sale of wartime bonds. Eventually, Westmoreland Davis subscribed to over \$30,000 worth,²⁸ but a substantial part of this sum represented reinvestment of William H. Inman's estate, which Davis had placed in government securities before 1900.²⁹

War had brought to Richmond's doors thousands of soldiers for training at Camp Lee near Petersburg. With them, it brought other thousands that reaped profits incident to the flood-tide of legitimate business.³⁰ Although the increased tension and excitement of wartime dislocated many established standards and created a new climate of opinion throughout the nation,³¹ this was particularly true in such former Confederate centers such as Virginia. Governed by a small homegeneous leadership class, Virginia had been one of the most stable political and social units prior to the Civil War. Under this closed system of ante-bellum politics, the people at large seldom challenged the hegemony of the old leadership. But forces set in motion by the Civil War, Reconstruction, and World War I, uprooted the time-honored

²⁷ Kirby, Davis, p. 105.

²⁸ Financial memoranda, Davis Archives, Morven Park, and Kirby, Davis, p. 110.

²⁹ Davis Archives, Morven Park.

³⁰ Richmond Times Dispatch, June 14, 1918.

³¹ Mowry, Urban Nation, p. ix.

society of the Old Dominion--and on all fronts, the values of the old-time political leaders were challenged by Progressives such as Westmoreland Davis.³²

As the wife of Westmoreland and first lady of Virginia, Marguerite Davis exemplified the new climate of change by combining two images: that of a fundamentalist and that of a modernist. While she maintained the best tradition of ante-bellum southern gentility, she also played the role of modern woman and patriot.

The mission to make the world safe for democracy appealed no less to the ladies of the Old Dominion than to its fighting men. Because manpower shortages created a need for women laborers, the movement for feminine equality gained a patriotic respectability that it had not possessed before. Despite the fact that she was fifty years old, Marguerite Davis eagerly set an example for society, promoting patriotic work of every sort and involving herself personally in the national effort. As president of Virginia's Women's Munition Reserve, she did volunteer work at the du Pont war plant at Seven Pines. Later she helped save a peach crop in Northern Virginia from spoiling as a result of the wartime labor shortage.³³ When the influenza epidemic raged throughout the nation between October of 1918 and February of

³² Raymond H. Pulley, Old Virginia Restored (Charlottesville, Va.: The University Press of Virginia, 1968), p. viii. Hereinafter cited as Pulley, Old Virginia.

³³ Kirby, Davis, p. 110.

1919, Marguerite served as a volunteer nurse in the pneumonia ward of the hastily established emergency hospital of the city's John Marshall High School.³⁴

Because Richmond was probably self-conscious of parallels between 1918 and 1862, Mrs. Davis did not make a direct challenge to the traditional role of women, but was careful to maintain the dignity and hospitality characteristic of the Old South. Nor was her entertaining groups of teachers, soldiers, politicians, and children revolutionary, since she impressed all who met her as gracious, hospitable, and most of all as one who set visitors of any social class at ease. But subtle differences, probably not even understood by Marguerite Davis, made her not merely a model of conventional virtues but a prototype of the emerging new woman.³⁵

When Marguerite Davis popularized women's war work in industries by filling silk bags with powder to serve as propellant charges for ammunition, she modelled for the press in "womanalls" to help discourage the use of long dresses for such work.³⁶ On August 29, 1918, Virginia's first lady donned gingham, and carrying her own lunch, departed from reserve headquarters on Third and Broad Streets at 8:30 A.M. to enter training school at the United States Bag-Loading Plant Number Three at Seven Pines.³⁷ Mrs. Davis was accompanied by Mrs. James E. Cannon,

³⁴Richmond News-Leader, Oct. 22, 1918.

³⁵Kirby, Davis, p. 110.

³⁶Davis Archives, Morven Park.

³⁷Richmond Times-Dispatch, Aug. 30, 1918.

wife of state Senator Cannon, who was a member of the personnel staff of the Women's Reserve.³⁸ As president of the Women's Munition Reserve, Mrs. Davis felt that she should lose no time in becoming an expert in sewing raw silk bags and filling them with powder to "help the boys in France crush Prussian militarism." The fact that the Governor's wife donned homely womanalls, provided her own lunch just as other munitioneers, and stopped work with them when the whistle sounded at four o'clock aroused enthusiasm among Richmond's "foremost society women." Under their leadership, the interest aroused by the inauguration of the Women's Munition Reserve was channeled effectively. Enrollment soared as the daily newspapers praised the work being done at Seven Pines as "second only to that of men in the trenches." Richmond women, the editor of the Richmond Times-Dispatch intimated, set an example not only for their sex but for the nation.³⁹

By the first of September more than two thousand women and girls had enrolled in the Reserve and the total was daily increasing. However, of this number, only three hundred were involved in actual work. The sole purpose of the Reserve was to supply women with which to man the United States Bag-Loading Plant Number Three at Seven Pines. All female workers and most government inspectors were furnished from the enlisted ranks of this "feminine army."⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid., Aug. 29, 1918.

³⁹ Ibid., Sept. 8, 1918.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Sept. 8, 1918.

Unemployed girls were the first to be called and, because of this fact, girls and women from fashionable homes, many of whom had never worked, daily employed themselves in filling bags with smokeless powder. All met on the same level, although some were used for direct work in the munition factory and others as government inspectors. All received the same wage scale and there was total absence of distinction between the two classes of workers. All volunteers, including the Governor's wife, received equal treatment and the same considerations, the same opportunities to advance and the same pay. Every worker, the secretary of the organization, Miss Alice Crenshaw, pointed out, worked for a common cause--to help win the war.⁴¹

The poor were equally as anxious to work as Mrs. Davis and her peers; and the Munition Reserve gave the underprivileged an opportunity to serve their country and at the same time earn a share of the family's household expenses. Thus, the Reserve served the ends of necessity while meeting the call of duty⁴² and presented an opportunity for women of all walks of life to meet on a common plane for a common cause.⁴³

The new organization not only sprang into instant popularity, but won national recognition in several ways. Besides providing an example for the women of the nation, it attracted the attention of the nation's press and even drew movie men to the city. As Mrs. Davis commented on

⁴¹
Ibid.

⁴²
Ibid., Sept. 18, 1918.

⁴³
Ibid., Aug. 31, 1918.

several occasions, it was a model industry in every respect, furnishing pleasant quarters for munitioneers and congenial, courteous supervisors.

The training school, presided over by "Professor" Kenna, son of Senator John Edward Kenna of West Virginia, occupied a site in one corner of the giant plant. Mr. Kenna daily taught volunteers how to weigh smokeless gun powder, hem the silk bags, and prepare the bags for immediate use. Each class of recruits was given careful instructions on the explosive and was thoroughly equipped for the work before they were allowed to handle the article.⁴⁴

Not long after Marguerite Davis had announced her intention to accept the presidency of the Women's Munition Reserve,⁴⁵ a disastrous epidemic of Spanish influenza swept the nation.

During the course of the epidemic in Richmond between October, 1918, and February, 1919, the scarcity of labor produced a critical need for volunteer nurses.⁴⁶ There she witnessed first-hand the appalling ravages of this disease which brought Richmond to a standstill.⁴⁷ Schools, churches, and amusement places were forced to close in October and November as the death toll soared to the eight hundred mark. The epidemic proved so serious and wide-spread that few social affairs of any kind were given in Richmond.⁴⁸ Even weddings were

⁴⁴Ibid., Sept. 8, 1918.

⁴⁵Loudoun Times-Mirror, Aug. 28, 1918.

⁴⁶Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁴⁷Richmond News Leader, Oct. 22, 1918.

⁴⁸Richmond Times-Dispatch, Dec. 12, 1918.

hastily changed from church ceremonies to weddings at home in the presence of only the immediate family. Plans for the coming social season dissolved, as the women of Richmond banded together from the Governor's lady to the humblest women of the city to nurse the sick.⁴⁹ Clad in a simple but well-tailored uniform of a Red Cross nurse, Mrs. Davis left the luxury and comfort of the Governor's Mansion to minister to the needs of the unfortunate victims of the influenza.⁵⁰ This unselfish woman recalled in an interview with a staff member of the Richmond Tuberculosis Association that she was happier nursing the sick during the epidemic than at any time during her stay in the Governor's Mansion.⁵¹ Mrs. Davis further expressed her interest in aiding the sick and wounded by consenting to act as chairman of a committee to distribute tobacco to men in the hospital at Camp Lee.⁵²

Marguerite Davis won the admiration of Richmonders from all walks of life for her active support of civil projects and her concern for the unfortunate.⁵³ In appreciation of her untiring efforts in their behalf during the influenza epidemic, the Negroes of Richmond conducted exercises at Ebernezer Baptist Church on November 29, 1918, in honor

⁴⁹ Ibid., Oct. 20, 1918.

⁵⁰ David H. Leake to College of William and Mary, May 11, 1932, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁵¹ Interview with Marguerite Davis, 1928, Davis Papers, U.Va.

⁵² Richmond Times-Dispatch, Dec. 6, 1918.

⁵³ Leake to College of William and Mary, May 11, 1932, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

of Virginia's first lady. Special music by an orchestra from Camp Lee sounded as Mrs. Ora B. Stokes, the pastor's wife, presented Mrs. Davis to a large audience of admirers. Several state and city officials honored Mrs. Davis by attending the testimonial reception.⁵⁴

Recognition for her civic activities did not end with the reception at Ebenezer Baptist Church, although most honors were conferred upon her at the close of her husband's administration in 1922. Perhaps the most touching tribute she received during her first year in the mansion came in the form of a letter from Mrs. Pauline Thalhimer, a prominent Richmond matron and friend of Mrs. Davis's. Praising her qualities of compassion and graciousness, Mrs. Thalhimer revealed her admiration for the first lady in touching prose: "All who are so fortunate to know you, will always treasure the loveliest thoughts of you. It is a rare treat to meet someone so full of the real things in life."⁵⁵

During her first ten months in the Executive Mansion, Mrs. Davis lent the weight of her social position to encourage austerity. The limited entertaining that she did permit in the Governor's Mansion usually fell in the category of irreducible minimum requests for political expediency. According to the social reporter for the Richmond Times-Dispatch, these occasions were always in good taste. In February Mrs. Davis received about seventy-five wives of members of the general assembly at an informal buffet luncheon. The drawing rooms

⁵⁴Richmond Times-Dispatch, Nov. 30, 1918.

⁵⁵Mrs. Pauline Thalhimer to Marguerite Davis, n.d., Davis Archives, Morven Park.

were decorated simply with Richmond roses and palms, and the luncheon table was "beautifully accented" with a centerpiece of pink roses.⁵⁶

Marguerite Inman Davis was accustomed to the world whose meets and bounds were marked in the New York Social Register. It is true that neither she nor Westmoreland Davis belonged to "The Four Hundred" of Ward MacAlister's New York, but they did belong to the private world of Pierre Lorillard's Tuxedo Park and its exclusive club. It was, therefore, part of New York brownstone approach to life that she started to open the Executive Mansion weekly to callers. Each Tuesday afternoon from four to six o'clock, Mrs. Davis received visitors in the drawing rooms of the mansion. Brent Witt, social reporter for the Richmond Times-Dispatch described the Governor's Lady's "at homes" as the most charming events of each week.⁵⁷ As her war work increased, Mrs. Davis was forced to suspend this practice of receiving the public, and did not resume her "at homes" until the next season.⁵⁸

Although the first lady seldom entertained, she and the Governor themselves were entertained at many private dinner parties during the late winter season. Miss Effie Branch was one hostess at a smart dinner party honoring the Davises, and it was here that they became acquainted with Miss Ellen Glasgow, already a celebrated Virginia novelist for such sociological novels as Virginia and Voice of the People.⁵⁹ In

⁵⁶ Richmond News Leader, Feb. 14, 1918.

⁵⁷ Richmond Times-Dispatch, Feb. 20, 1918.

⁵⁸ Ibid., March 6, 1918.

⁵⁹ Richmond News Leader, Feb. 15, 1918.

the latter novel, some persons have suggested that the authoress used Westmoreland Davis as a partial model for the protagonist.

Mrs. Davis gave patronage to countless benefits during the war. Soon after the inauguration, she was guest of honor at a big charity card party given at the Jefferson Hotel for the Retreat for the Sick, one of the hospitals chosen by the government for the care of wounded soldiers. The affair took place in the Palm Room at 3:30 P.M.⁶⁰

Mrs. Davis asked as guests at her table the wives of several members of the assembly in Richmond, including Mrs. Walter Mapp of Accomac.⁶¹

Several days after the card party, the Governor's wife patronized a large charity ball at the Jefferson, given under the auspices of the Girls' Auxiliary to Day Nurseries, of which Mrs. James Smith was president. Before the ball, Mrs. Davis entertained several friends at an informal supper party.⁶²

The "most brilliant" entertainment of Richmond society's spring season took place Saturday evening, April 13, at 8:30 P.M. at the fashionable Jefferson Hotel. Camouflaged in bright spring colors by the Working Girls' Club, the ballroom was transformed for the gaily costumed guests (which included Governor and Mrs. Davis) into a cross between a rural fair and an urban bazaar.⁶³ Besides dancing, parties

⁶⁰Richmond Times-Dispatch, Feb. 4, 1918.

⁶¹Richmond News Leader, Feb. 4, 1918.

⁶²Ibid., Feb. 6, 1918.

⁶³Ibid., April 3, 1918.

were entertained at individual tables; fortunes were told by amateur palm readers; and war games were introduced to make the affair the "most novel entertainment of the social calendar."⁶⁴

Early in April, Mrs. Davis was guest of honor at a card party for the benefit of the Sheltering Arms Free Hospital.⁶⁵ She was also present when the Godmothers' League conducted a ball in honor and for the benefit of the 319th Ambulance Company.⁶⁶ She allowed news to be printed in early April that she was reserving a table for the May-time ball at the Jefferson. For the occasion, the ballroom was converted into a garden full of spring flowers and lovely young girls dressed in smocks and garden costumes. This ball was for the benefit of the Girls' Auxillary to Day Nurseries, an organization which had been established during the war throughout the city so that mothers could work in industries while their children were cared for during work hours.⁶⁷

Saturday, May 17, at four o'clock Mrs. Davis opened the gates of the executive lawn to admit the immense crowd attending a lawn party and bazaar for the benefit of the War Guild of Grace Episcopal Church. As a jazz band from the aviation station played from a flag-draped

⁶⁴Ibid., March 29, 1918.

⁶⁵Richmond Times-Dispatch, April 2, 1918.

⁶⁶Richmond News Leader, May 8, 1918.

⁶⁷Ibid., April 6, 1918.

balcony, the traditional May pole dance took place.⁶⁸ Although Governor and Mrs. Davis were not members of this church, they frequently supported its charitable functions. Their own place of worship, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, the church Governor Davis's mother attended, also initiated a myriad of charitable war drives. There is no specific evidence to support the assumption that Mrs. Davis supported these drives, but in all probability she aided the Woman's Association in its sale of Liberty Bonds and War Saving Stamps.⁶⁹

From her youth in New York, the stage had held such great fascination for Marguerite Davis that she occasionally managed to put aside her war-work and charitable activities in order to attend the theater. One of the most attractive amateur productions she attended--The Mikado--took place at the Academy of Music in mid-March, 1918, under the auspices of the Rotary Club of Richmond for the benefit of the Associated Charities and War Relief Association of Virginia.⁷⁰ A rendition of a well-known operetta directed by Alvin M. Smith, this production was one of the best private theatricals the Davises ever attended in the South. They entertained a box party during the performance which included Mr. and Mrs. George Bryan, Mr. and Mrs. David Leake, and Mr. and Mrs. John P. Leary.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Ibid., May 17, 1918.

⁶⁹ Davis, Sentiment Toward German Activities.

⁷⁰ Richmond News Leader, March 6, 1918.

⁷¹ Ibid., March 9, 1918.

Other than a few isolated benefits, prospects for the fall social season of 1918 were exceedingly dull. With the war clouds looming darkly over the city, even the most social-minded matrons immersed themselves in war work.⁷² And following Marguerite Davis's example, Richmond society worked with one aim in mind--that of winning the war.⁷³ Even the Richmond Monday German Club, one of the oldest and most exclusive organizations in the country, abandoned its balls because of the war.⁷⁴ Through the dust and heat of the summer and early fall, the work of the Red Cross and War Relief moved steadily forward.⁷⁵

There was little to chronicle of social events for the month of October. A mood of despair crystalized over the Capitol as the epidemic of Spanish influenza brought the city to a complete standstill.⁷⁶ But there was a gleam of light in the dark. Early in November, the influenza ban was lifted and fashionable society came out in force. A "brilliant gathering" of people, including Governor and Mrs. Davis, greeted the first showing of D. W. Griffith's picture, "Heart of the World."⁷⁷ Although there was no abatement in war work, the theatre,

⁷²Richmond Times-Dispatch, Sept. 1, 1918.

⁷³Ibid., July 14, 1918.

⁷⁴Ibid., Sept. 8, 1918.

⁷⁵Ibid., Aug. 18, 1918.

⁷⁶Ibid., Oct. 27, 1918.

⁷⁷Ibid., Nov. 5, 1918.

concerts, and meetings filled the first week in November as society began to come to life after the long months of suffering.⁷⁸

When the armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, Richmond went mad in celebration of the "greatest day in the history of the world." It began with the shrieking of whistles and clanging of bells at four o'clock in the morning. At daybreak the news was confirmed by the Governor and the "excited crys of paperboys." As the news spread like wildfire, people poured into the streets, shouting cheers to each other. Broad Street became a "seething mass of humanity"; flags waved and bells clanged in the spirit of universal enthusiasm.

A delirium of joy gripped the city as stores, factories, offices, and shops closed their doors to allow their employees to pour into the already congested streets. "Hundreds of parade units" passed and repassed each other with hilarious greetings. Hastily improvised floats decorated with flags and packed with Richmonders were drawn up and down Broad Street. For the first time in the history of Richmond, the gate encircling the iron fence protecting the statue of Washington in Capitol Square was thrown open for a chorus of John Marshall students to mount the steps surrounding the base of the statue and join such worthies as Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson.

Led by a platoon of mounted police carrying the Allied flags, the impromptu parade began at 3:00 P.M. Marching behind the colors came Mayor George Ainslie accompanied by many distinguished citizens of

⁷⁸Ibid., Nov. 10, 1918.

Richmond. Leading the Women's Munition Reserve was the Fulton Aviation Supply Post jazz band, followed by scores of units from factories, railroad shops, offices, and stores. Later in the evening the band was taken in automobiles around the city where it played on remote street corners for those who had not been able to join the celebration downtown. Entertainment in the City Auditorium brought the celebration to a fitting close.⁷⁹

Governor and Mrs. Davis celebrated the armistice quietly with little fanfare. Mrs. Davis and her maids hung a peace banner over the front door of the executive mansion--a replica of the American flag and the word "peace,"⁸⁰ encircled by the laurel wreaths of victory. They received news of the victory with deep but quiet thanksgiving. While the city hummed with the talk of victory, Mrs. Davis placidly contemplated her first year in the Executive Mansion.

For the duties Marguerite Davis had assumed as wartime first lady of Virginia, she had excellent preparation as hostess in New York City, Tuxedo Park, and in Loudoun County. For the problems she would face as first lady during the immediate post-war era she had gained a thorough preparation between the inauguration in February, 1918, and the armistice in November, 1918.

⁷⁹Ibid., Nov. 12, 1918.

⁸⁰Davis Archives, Morven Park.

CHAPTER FOUR

THREE YEARS OF PEACE IN THE EXECUTIVE MANSION

Just as her husband, a man of genteel plantation origins, had brought an end to the nostalgic preoccupation of Virginia's officialdom by establishing a twentieth-century model of efficiency,⁸¹ so Marguerite Davis set for her sex a conspicuous example in assuming a new role for women by giving emphasis to the future rather than to lost causes of the past. She spent little time lamenting the passing of the social order of the post-bellum South, an ersatz aristocracy based upon neither wealth nor land, but upon frayed notions of gentility. That she constantly smoked cigarettes reminded one that the diminutive grande dame knew and appreciated her emancipation, and that she was eager to enjoy the fruits of her time.⁸² Yet, Mrs. Davis remained a lady, devoted to good as well as new causes--old traditions and cultural values still played an important part in her life.

The paradox of Marguerite Davis's conventionality and newness made her acceptable both to the leaders of the Victorian status quo and to the twentieth-century Progressives. Generally speaking,

⁸¹Kirby, Davis, p. 104.

⁸²Reid, Leesburg. See Alice Roosevelt Longworth, Crowded Hours (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933).

Virginia developed few examples of the Jazz Age other than Charles C. Wertenbaker and Julien Green, whose stay in Virginia before expatriation to New York and France was brief. Such flaming youths and their elders did not take one another seriously. For Virginia, and in large degree for the nation, Edwardian Progressivism was still up to date, even though the Third Party Progressivism of Robert La Follette was proved as futile a rhetorical exercise as greenbacks and bimetallism.⁸³

Even though actually representative of the middle-aged Virginians, Marguerite Davis did not realize that the times were sweeping by her and the Governor.

Respected for her war work, Mrs. Davis continued with gusto her self-imposed civic duties throughout the remainder of her husband's administration. Always interested in the cause of women's education, she had become aware in participating actively in her husband's campaign and administration that the role of most of Virginia women was one of rural drudgery. Consequently, with these thoughts in mind, she believed that aspects of an agricultural education would enable them more successfully to meet their problems of country life, and ultimately would permit them to enjoy some of the finer things of life.⁸⁴

One of these was gardening for pleasure and for beauty. In 1919 Marguerite's generous donation made possible the transplanting of

⁸³Charles Wertenbaker, To My Father (Farrar & Rinehart, New York, 1936), and Julien Green, Memories of Happy Days (Harper and Brothers: New York and London, 1942).

⁸⁴Suffolk Herald, May 30, 1919. Mrs. Davis also presented two fellowships to deserving students in Leesburg and Richmond.

twenty-five magnolia trees to Capitol Square under the direction of Colonel Richardson, superintendent of Capitol Buildings and Grounds with whom Virginia's first lady consulted in making an overall landscape scheme for the plants.⁸⁵ For such a task, Marguerite brought an educated eye from her observation of great European and Oriental models, and as mistress of Morven Park she had become the accustomed director of horticultural improvements which included the planting of magnolia grandiflora.

If horticultural interests were more in the aristocratic tradition, Marguerite Davis was inspired, too, by the example of such sociological reformers as Jane Addams of Hull House. Whether Mrs. Davis had developed this interest independently or at her husband's instigation is not known. There is, however, a copy of Miss Addams' book in the Davis library at Morven Park.⁸⁶ Not merely content to read about such matters, Marguerite Davis served on the Board of Richmond's Cary Street Settlement House, and frequently lent the weight of her position as first lady of the Commonwealth to raise money for it.⁸⁷ On one occasion she spoke at Ebenezer Baptist Church, where a year before she had been honored by the Negroes of Richmond for her war work. On another occasion when Mrs. Ora B. Stokes, wife of the pastor, conducted the program, Mrs. Davis and a number of prominent Richmonders, including

⁸⁵ Loudoun Times-Mirror, Feb. 19, 1919.

⁸⁶ Library, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁸⁷ Marguerite Davis to Mrs. W. B. Jerman, March 10, 1922, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

Colonel C. R. Keily, Secretary of the State Council of Defense, and Judge J. Hoge Ricks of the Juvenile Court. Over five hundred dollars was raised, and Mrs. Davis was applauded for her "racial liberalism" during the flu epidemic of 1918, when she nursed both black and white patients without distinction.⁸⁸

Marguerite Davis received honorary membership in innumerable local and state clubs during her husband's term as Governor. Besides being elected an Honorary Life Member of the Eightieth Division of the Veterans Association,⁸⁹ she was initiated in 1922 to the Rush Chapter Number Eight Order of the Eastern Star,⁹⁰ and in 1921 given honorary membership in the Virginia Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs.⁹¹ Also in 1921, Mrs. Davis accepted the position of Honorary Vice-President of the Virginia Historical Pageant Association, an organization which proposed to arrange an annual pageant sponsored by one hundred civic, fraternal, and business organizations throughout the state, affiliated for the purpose of presenting to the people of America the "fund of historic lore which places Virginia in the

⁸⁸Richmond Planet, Dec. 7, 1918. Clipping from Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁸⁹Commander George H. Jamerson to Marguerite Davis, Jan. 4, 1937, Davis Papers, U.Va.

⁹⁰Mrs. Hettie Watson to Marguerite Davis, March 2, 1922, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁹¹Elena R. Smith to Marguerite Davis, May 20, 1921, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

forefront of the States of our great Nation."⁹² Marguerite and the Governor almost always observed historic dates of Virginia's past. In May of 1921, despite a hectic schedule, they made a special trip to Fredericksburg to attend the celebration of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the city.⁹³

Today it is taken for granted that wives of politicians be joiners; but it was not so in 1920. In becoming a member of service clubs, Marguerite Davis broke new ground in Virginia. Happily, she took seriously the purposes of many of these clubs, while at the same time dealing in a perfunctory manner with others of which she was only a nominal member. Mrs. Davis was a devoted member of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities,⁹⁴ the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy.⁹⁵ Often accused of being excessively proud of their heritage, these organizations, under the influence of Mrs. Davis and such ladies as Mrs. John H. Southall,⁹⁶ gave perhaps less disproportionate weight to venerating the past and worked to further the civic goals of public work. There were a large number of Confederate veterans and widows

⁹²Virginia Historical Pageant Association to Marguerite Davis, Nov. 21, 1921. Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁹³Richmond News Leader, May 25, 1921.

⁹⁴Richmond Times-Dispatch, Jan. 18, 1920.

⁹⁵Mrs. J. Enders Robinson to Marguerite Davis, Jan., 1920, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁹⁶Richmond Times-Dispatch, Jan. 18, 1920.

of Confederate soldiers who lived in Richmond during Governor Davis's term of office. Their separate Confederate homes, located in a double block on the Boulevard,⁹⁷ were beautified by plantings of magnolia at the same time that the Capitol was, and on official ceremonial occasions gallant Confederates were given a conspicuous place of honor so long as Davis was Governor.

In a sense neither the Armistice nor the Paris Peace Conference ended World War I. There remained from this conflict a background of social unrest in the twenties which was felt as keenly by Marguerite Davis as by the Governor. Although the state in due time made its adjustment to a rapidly changing environment, the era of transition was painful.⁹⁸ This was particularly true of the readjustment of the rural economy. Progressives such as Davis sincerely believed that the small farmer ideal was compatible with big capitalistic agriculture. But World War I with its price controls for agricultural commodities hastened the breakdown of the Progressive agrarian ideal, which fell with devastating effect in 1921 on Virginia. The end of wartime industries such as munitions at Hopewell and shipbuilding at Newport News caused serious dislocation then and did so again in 1945, but the result in 1920 was catastrophic to a Virginia which, except for tobacco manufacture, was very slightly industrialized.⁹⁹

⁹⁷Photographs of Marshall Foch's Virginia visit, Nov. 21, 1920, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁹⁸Kirby, Davis, p. 123.

⁹⁹Pulley, Old Virginia, pp. 172-173.

Woman's suffrage was another aspect of the way that national patterns impinged upon traditionalist Virginia. It was a time of rapid change and of acceptance of social change between one decade of ingestion and another of digestion. Only tentatively had Mrs. Davis exerted her influence in the struggle to alter the status of women in Virginia before 1920. Now the position of Mrs. Davis, as well as of the Governor, was one of cautious approval of woman's suffrage.¹⁰⁰ For the most part, however, she hedged. In retrospect, it appears that her equivocation was attuned to the necessities of the increasingly probable campaign that Westmoreland Davis would conduct to gain the Democratic party's nomination for the United States Senate in 1922. Like many intelligent women of her day, Marguerite Davis disliked profoundly the denial to adult females of the right to vote. In that denial she found a wrong worth correcting--and it was probably only through consideration of her husband's political future that she had not become more actively engaged in the movement for feminine emancipation that had gained such astonishing momentum by 1919.¹

Mrs. Davis's relations with both the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, and later the League of Women Voters were amicable. Such of her friends as Mrs. Henry St. George Tucker were known to disapprove of the Nineteenth Amendment, yet Marguerite still entertained suffragettes at the Governor's mansion. In September, 1920,

¹⁰⁰Kirby, Davis, p. 95.

¹Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle (New York: Atheneum, 1959).

she received delegates to the Suffrage Convention, Mrs. Lila Valentine, Mrs. G. Harvey Clarke, Mrs. C. E. Townsend, and Mrs. Archer C. Jones.²

Two days later she opened the Governor's Mansion for an afternoon reception for members of the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia.³

Marguerite was a late-comer to the movement. As early as 1919 Lila Meade Valentine had organized the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia, and a year later two of Virginia's three most prominent authoresses, Mary Johnston and Ellen Glasgow, had become actively associated with the group. They noted with chagrin that, in contrast to thirty-five states with liberal voting laws, Virginia still saw her elections decided by a small fraction of the electorate which had been significantly restricted in 1901.

Before 1920, Virginia had never taken leadership initiative in the woman's suffrage movement which had been growing nationally for three generations. Nutured upon the tradition of chivalry among men and domesticity among women, most Virginians had jealously guarded their time-honored customs from such unsettling outside influences as the suffrage movement.⁴ At the same time, such enlightened ladies as Mrs. Valentine, Mary Johnston, and Ellen Glasgow were very much aware that a well-organized "machine" dominated the political affairs

²Richmond Times-Dispatch, Sept. 8, 1920.

³Ibid., Sept. 11, 1920.

⁴"Penwoman of Virginia Feminists," Virginia Cavalcade, VI (Winter, 1956), pp. 8-11. Hereinafter cited as "Penwoman," Cavalcade. See also M. W. Fishwick, Virginia: A New Look at the Old Dominion (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), pp. 255-261.

of the state in the interest of rural patronage rather than of urban reform, of Bourbonism rather than Progressivism. They saw the leadership of the Old Dominion in the hands of less well-educated and more parochial middle-class instead of an educated, national, more up-to-date aristocracy. Few of the ladies of the suffrage movement, however, were so democratic as to demand enlargement of the electorate by abandoning payment of the poll tax as a prerequisite for voting.⁵

Without proposing specific means for twentieth century application, Mary Johnson, in her historical novels concerning the gamut of Virginia history from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, held up the ideals of the perfectability of man, of a natural aristocracy, and of aristocratic service. Although she gave to her male protagonists roles of heroic action, her world of the past contained many elements of matriarchal leadership. Since the events of the past were considered admirable, her readers were conditioned to expect that a new golden age would include a larger role for women.⁶ In the case of Ellen Glasgow, her scenes were distinctly twentieth century; but her themes were much the same as her older contemporary.⁷

But as Marguerite and Westmoreland Davis were to discover, many Virginians, grasping for a crutch to carry them through the frustrations

⁵Pulley, Old Virginia, pp. 112-113.

⁶"Penwoman," Cavalcade, pp. 8-11.

⁷Ellen Glasgow, The Woman Within (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1963), and Allen W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 (Charlottesville: University Press of Va., 1968), pp. 346-47. Hereinafter cited as Moger, Bourbonism to Byrd.

that attended post-Reconstruction, turned increasingly to an idealization of ante-bellum days for solace. For these Virginians, values associated with Old Virginia assumed the utmost importance in directing the political and social affairs of the Commonwealth. For such people, reforms resulting from Progressivism and World War II appeared to be alien forces which threatened to dislocate, if not destroy, the status quo glorified as two hundred and fifty years of "orderly growth."⁸

Marguerite, despite her Northern upbringing attempted with considerable success to reconcile the Old Virginians' fear of reform with the Progressive tenor of her husband's administration.

Over-all, perhaps both Governor and Mrs. Davis's caution in 1919 and 1920 may be explained by lack of precedent and the presence of wide-spread opposition to feminine equality. In the second half of his administration, Marguerite applauded her husband's efforts to be more solicitous of women. At the request of the League of Women Voters, he established in 1921 a Children's Code Commission which fostered a number of laws protecting minors and mothers. But even before this compliance on the part of the Governor, who in 1921 was undoubtedly soliciting ladies' votes, Westmoreland Davis had appointed thirty-one women to state offices, some as significant as the Second Council of Defense and the State Board of Charities and Corrections.⁹ He won the enthusiastic approval of such notable suffrage leaders as

⁸ Pulley, Old Virginia, pp. viii-5.

⁹ Kirby, Davis, p. 95.

Mrs. Lila Meade Valentine, who since 1909 had led the fight in Richmond for political equality among women.¹⁰

Although Marguerite Davis had to go abroad in 1919 and 1920 because of her sister Jenny's illness,¹¹ she continued to entertain as democratically during her last three years in the executive mansion as she had done during World War I.

On February 16, 1920, the Governor and Mrs. Davis held a public reception and in April of 1921, they extended invitations to the members of John Marshall High School to attend a reception in their honor at the Governor's mansion. James C. Harwood, principal of the school, was much impressed with the fact that this was the first time a Governor of Virginia and his wife had ever entertained a graduating class in the history of the Richmond high school. As Marguerite had always admired the school's cadet uniforms, she requested that graduating members of the cadet battalion wear their full dress uniform.¹² For one young lady this attractive affair had disastrous results in a much publicized clash with her pastor because she ignored religious injunctions in order to dance "two sets" at the reception. After declining to make a public profession to be reinstated into the

¹⁰"Edith" to Westmoreland Davis, Aug. 1, 1922; H. H. Hibbs to Westmoreland Davis, Jan. 17, 1919; Mrs. Landon Randolph Dashiell to Westmoreland Davis, n.d., Davis Archives, Morven Park. See also Kirby, Davis, pp. 94-97.

¹¹Westmoreland Davis to M. W. Kozminski, April 4, 1919, and fare clippings, Feb. 7, 1920, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

¹²Richmond Times-Dispatch, April 13, 1921.

church, Miss Julia Priddy of Woodland Heights received a standing ovation at her high school graduation.¹³

Marguerite Davis gave three receptions in May of 1921. The Confederate Veterans of Richmond were greeted on May 10 at the executive mansion by the Governor's wife and a group of U.D.C. members, and entertained by the John Marshall High School Band and Selden Walke, who sang a selection of popular songs.¹⁴ After receiving delegates to the state convention of the Woman's Auxiliary to the American Legion in Richmond on May 13,¹⁵ Mrs. Davis "threw open the doors" of the mansion to delegates of a rural life conference. Because Westmoreland Davis had championed since 1903 in the Southern Planter a statewide movement for farmer progressivism, it was natural that he secured for the conference's principal speaker, Henry Wallace, senior, United States Secretary of Agriculture. In a drawing room filled with gladioli and pink carnations, Dr. Albert Shaw, editor of Review of Reviews and Mr. Wallace received with Governor and Mrs. Davis delegates from the Virginia countryside.¹⁶

A year after the Davises entertained General John J. Pershing,¹⁷ the former allied commander-in-chief Ferdinand Foch, Marshall of France,

¹³Richmond News Leader, June 10, 1921.

¹⁴Richmond Evening Dispatch, May 10, 1921, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

¹⁵Richmond News Leader, May 13, 1921.

¹⁶Ibid., May 18, 1921.

¹⁷Richmond Times-Dispatch, Feb. 29, 1920.

visited Richmond. For twelve hours, the Marshall's "sojourn in the one-time capital of the Confederacy was a round of activity." Upon arriving at Richmond's Broad Street station by special train, he was allowed to rest on an inconspicuous siding until 9:45 a.m., when the Governor and first lady boarded his car to extend an official welcome for Virginia. As the Marshall and his party stepped from the train, a salute of seventeen guns was fired by the Richmond Howitzer battery, stationed in the field adjoining the station. A part of the demonstration at the Broad Street station saw three lads dressed in symbolic costume: one, an Uncle Sam, one a La Fayette, and another, a General Pershing.¹⁸

To the Davises was accorded the honor of entertaining the General.¹⁹ The Governor's cook prepared a luncheon of game²⁰ brought by a delegation of Pamunkey Indian to Mrs. Davis who had received them cordially a year before in the executive mansion.²¹ It was a matter of pride to Virginians that the first lady's background enabled her to converse with the famous Frenchman in his own language rather than through the medium of an interpreter.²²

¹⁸M. Clifford Harrison, "The Generalissimo Salutes My General," Virginia Cavalcade, VIII (Summer, 1958), pp. 32-35.

¹⁹Richmond Times-Dispatch, Nov. 2, 1921.

²⁰Ibid., Feb. 2, 1922.

²¹Davis Archives, Morven Park.

²²Richmond Times-Dispatch, Feb. 2, 1921.

Richmond was intent that General Foch pay tribute to the heroes of the Confederacy. Not less so was Westmoreland Davis, who as a child of the 1860's knew from personal deprivation the humiliation of Appomattox and could appreciate the logic behind the effort to reconstruct antebellum society through resurrection of the Confederate cause. But Marguerite Inman Davis had grown up as a child of Brownstone Brooklyn and Manhattan. To her, the South was the Southern society of New York; and she argued with her Atlanta cousins' concern with the boosterism of Henry Grady's New South and the faster social pace of the Piedmont Driving Club, instead of dwelling upon the faded voices and tattered memories of a mythical ante-bellum Tara. It was perhaps illogical to Marguerite that the victorious allied commander-in-chief should place a wreath in homage to the defeated Robert E. Lee, honoring the Confederate dead rather than those who had suffered through the horrors of the war just past. But trained as she was to be a hostess in the age of Edwardian elegance, Marguerite gloried in having bagged one of the greatest social lions of the era. The honors of the day were shared by Governor and Mrs. Davis with Mayor and Mrs. George Ainslee and such nabobs of Richmond's financial, legal and social world as the John Stewart Bryans, the John Kerr Branches, the General Eppa Hunttons, and the Egbert G. Leighs.²³ Apparently, Richmond society approved of the way that the Davises organized this belated celebration of the armistice. There was no pretence of being

²³Ibid., Nov. 24, 1921.

egalitarian in making out a guest list. But on the other side of the ledger, the Governor and first lady of Virginia soon afterwards set a hearty, democratic example for the Christmas holiday by entertaining all the newspaper delivery boys of Richmond at the Governor's house with music, ice cream, and delicacies. Since there were over two hundred newsboys in the city, Marguerite arranged to divide the entertainment, one half of the boys to be received December 7 between 5:30 to 7:00 P.M., and the remaining one hundred to be entertained December 14 during the same hours. Tickets were distributed by the News Leader in two colors to prevent any ice cream enthusiasts from being tempted to act as "repeaters."²⁴

Similarly, more than one hundred girls from factories and department stores of Richmond were entertained in the Governor's mansion on December 10, 1921, by Marguerite Davis, who throughout her four years in Richmond took an active part in the program of the Industrial Club of the Y.W.C.A. Assisted by Mrs. J. K. Bowman and Miss Laura Mag Sydnor, Marguerite Davis, who had planned the program herself, secured the services of Greenhow Johnson, a local distributor of motion pictures who also produced advertisements and short subjects. Engaged to show several films during the evening, he surprised both the Governor and Marguerite by including pictures covering every section of Morven Park. Films of the vocational school of the State Fair Grounds and movies of the Governor's first airplane flight were also shown.²⁵

²⁴Richmond News Leader, Dec. 3, 1921.

²⁵Richmond Times-Dispatch, Dec. 11, 1921.

Closely associated with Mrs. Davis's interest in the Y.W.C.A. was her patronage of the Pierrot charity ball held at the Jefferson Hotel by the Girls' Club,²⁶ and the "Vanity Fair" fashion show and bazaar presented by Sunnyside Day Nursery.²⁷

The executive mansion was thrown open in January to the Federation of Mother's Club of Richmond, with Marguerite Davis acting as hostess. For such a group, entertainment was subordinated to an address from the first lady dealing with the question of child welfare and the social responsibility of women. Mrs. Davis applauded the efforts of the Mother's Club before launching into a speech. "Self-government is based upon self-control," she argued; "and self-control is learned in childhood." With the idealism of a Wilsonian Progressive, she did not hesitate to preach the glories of the American Democracy.

A democracy is dependent upon a belief in the people, and childhood is a time of faith and trust. A democracy is dependent upon an educated constituency, and childhood is the time of education. Self control, faith, education, these three are the foundation form of government.

Declaring that "mothers were given . . . control of the plastic heart of youth," Marguerite Davis assured her guests that the nation and perhaps all mankind was fortunate that American women had been called "to a wider sphere" when they were enfranchised. Describing the new twentieth century woman as one who could "give rather than

²⁶ Ibid., Dec. 13, 1920.

²⁷ Ibid., March 27, 1921, and March 30, 1921.

take," she prophesized that the power of women ultimately would achieve unprecedented progress in the Old Dominion, particularly because they would bring "fresh energy" into the political life of the Commonwealth.²⁸ Preferring patriotic small talk instead of a speech in May of 1921, Mrs. Davis received officers and delegates of the Woman's Auxiliary of the American Legion at the Governor's mansion.²⁹

The last public reception of the Davis administration saw the Governor's mansion gay with Christmas greens, holly, and mistletoe. Governor and Mrs. Davis opened its doors to the people of the city on December 27, 1921, for the first New Year's reception since William Hodges Mann was Governor. Assisted by members of the official staff in receiving, Maggie and Westmoreland danced late into the evening.³⁰

It is commonly believed that politicians politicate by shaking hands and kissing babies. The Davises did lots of handshaking, but they seemed more interested in the care rather than the kissing of babies. They excelled, however, in an occupation not usually associated with politicians: dancing. It had been the custom of the venerable and exclusive Richmond German Club to invite the Governor of Virginia and his lady for its quarterly balls which were then held at the Jefferson Hotel. The Davises attended the Christmas, 1920, ball,³¹

²⁸ Clippings, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

²⁹ Richmond Times-Dispatch, May 14, 1921.

³⁰ Ibid., Dec. 11, 1921.

³¹ Ibid., Dec. 30, 1920.

the January, 1921, ball,³² and the March, 1921, Easter German, at which the celebrated leader of cotillions and Germans, General Jo Lane Stern, chose Marguerite to lead with him the main figure.³³

Besides concerts, dansants, receptions and theatrical performances for the benefit of such worthy causes as the Stuart Hall Alumnae Association,³⁴ European Relief,³⁵ the V.M.I. Alumni,³⁶ the Crippled Children's Hospital³⁷ and the Sheltering Arms Hospital³⁸ Marguerite Davis was with her robust husband an honored guest at V.M.I.³⁹ and University of Virginia football games⁴⁰ and horse shows at Orange⁴¹ and Warrenton.⁴²

Before relinquishing her reins as first lady of Virginia to her successor, Mrs. E. Lee Trinkle, Marguerite Davis was the central figure of one of the most impressive testimonials ever paid a woman of the

³²Ibid., Jan. 20, 1920.

³³Ibid., March 27, 1921.

³⁴Ibid., Dec. 16, 1920.

³⁵Richmond News Leader, Feb. 26, 1921.

³⁶Richmond Times-Dispatch, May 2, 1920.

³⁷Ibid., April 17, 1921.

³⁸Ibid., May 2, 1920.

³⁹Ibid., Oct. 9, 1921.

⁴⁰Ibid., Nov. 6, 1920.

⁴¹Ibid., Aug. 15, 1920.

⁴²Ibid., Aug. 31, 1920.

state. Representatives of every woman's organization in the city--war, civic, social, religious, and historical--gathered in the Flemish Room of the Jefferson Hotel to express their appreciation of the "honest co-operation of Mrs. Davis in every endeavor that concerned the women of the city."

Mrs. G. T. Kein acted as toastmaster and, on behalf of the Service Legion, presented the first lady with a booklet bound in vellum and in which were inscribed the names of those "in which lives the recipient had meant so much." Mrs. Cabell Smith, State President of the State Service Legion, acknowledged Mrs. Davis's civic patriotism as did Mrs. C. Granville Valentine on behalf of the Colonial Dames, and Mrs. Christopher Tompkins for the Woman's Club. Speaking for the Council of Jewish Women, Mrs. Sylvan R. Livingstone "paid a fitting tribute" to Marguerite Davis for her work among the settlement houses of Richmond. Mrs. Thomas Cary Johnson represented the Godmothers' League of which Marguerite Davis was honorary president, and Mrs. J. K. Bowman spoke for the Woman's Auxiliary of the War Camp Community Service, of which Mrs. Davis was also honorary head. Marguerite's work for the War Relief Association was recounted by Mrs. J. Allison Hodges, and Mrs. Robert M. Blankenship conveyed the appreciation of the Woman's Munition Reserve. Miss Rosalie Haxall Noland was in Richmond to speak for Mrs. Davis's own county of Loudoun, after which Mrs. Stuart Michaux told of Marguerite Davis's work at John Marshall during the Spanish influenza epidemic and also at the Debarkation

Hospital Number Two at Westhampton during the war. The League of Women Voters was represented by Miss Mary Irvin Moore who "related the activities of Marguerite Davis on its behalf." Dr. Kate Waller Barrett spoke for the American Legion, commending the prison Reform work of the Davis administration.

Happy memories must have crowded into Marguerite's mind, as she responded to these eulogistic remarks with a touching reply:

No other organization can ever have for me the same association and priceless memories as does the Service Legion. Its name will ever be a reminder of those glorious days of service, when our hearts, burning with the sacred flame of patriotism and our soul aglow with the reflected glory of our boys in khaki, sought every avenue of opportunity through which we might serve the cause of liberty and freedom. The memory of the happy busy days . . . will never fade from my heart, and I shall ever be faithful to the pledges to which I have made the women of Virginia--to work with them and to help them to the utmost.⁴³

Few governor's wives ever proved more acceptable to the general public than Marguerite Davis. She democratically made the people of the state very much at home in the Governor's mansion, entertaining during her husband's administration guests ranging from General Foch to the paper boys of the city.⁴⁴ When the Davises left the executive mansion early in 1922, the Governor's official staff presented

⁴³Ibid., Jan. 27, 1922. See also Loudoun Times-Mirror, Feb. 2, 1922.

⁴⁴Ibid., Feb. 2, 1922.

Marguerite a large silver basket vase, paying tribute to "her graciousness by which . . . official duties were made a happy personal privilege."⁴⁵

Six years later upon the request of President Julian A. C. Chandler of the College of William and Mary, several of both Marguerite's and Westmoreland's friends commissioned for the college's collection what proved to be the last portrait of both the former Governor and his first lady. Her portrait by Leopold Seyffert and his by Irving Wiles depicted respectively a magisterial Davis in the gown of a Doctor of Philosophy and a Marguerite of 1920 sophistication. Davis's former staff colonel, David Leake, presented these in 1932.⁴⁶

Letters received long after she left the Governor's mansion attest to the numerous friendships Marguerite Davis formed during her four years in Richmond. Notable Richmonders such as Mrs. Jordan Leake, Mrs. Pauline Thalhimer, and Mrs. Anne Bryan found early in 1918 that beneath Marguerite's shy, formalized surface there was a very human, compassionate woman.⁴⁷ As seen earlier, Marguerite did not quickly warm to people on general introductions; among close friends, however, she was warm, considerate, and witty.

⁴⁵Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁴⁶Leake to College of William and Mary.

⁴⁷Cornelia Adax to Marguerite Davis, Feb. 2, 1922; Lisa B. Leake to Marguerite Davis, Feb. 16, 1922; Marguerite Davis to Mrs. Pauline Thalhimer, March 15, 1922; Mrs. Jordan Lfak to Marguerite Davis, March 17, 1922, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

On February 2, Marguerite and Governor Davis attended the ceremonies incident to the inauguration of Governor Lee Trinkle. Despite a severe snow storm they returned to Leesburg the next day so that the former Governor could perfect plans for his campaign to secure the Democratic nomination for the United States Senate in opposition to Senator Claude A. Swanson of Chatham.⁴⁸

When, earlier in the twentieth century, Andrew Jackson Montague completed his term of office, he had made peace with the dominant organization, then led by U. S. Senator Thomas Staples Martin. As a result, the organization did not oppose the popular Montague when he offered himself as a candidate for Congress, where he served with distinction from the administration of Theodore Roosevelt to that of Franklin D. Roosevelt.⁴⁹ The experience of Carter Glass of Lynchburg was little different in that he was never Governor and that he fought the organization tooth and nail to win election to the U. S. House of Representatives. Gradually, an accommodation developed between Glass and the machine in the spirit of party harmony.

But Senator Martin's death and Davis's belief that he could rely upon Glass, the man he had appointed to fill Martin's unexpired term, seemed to some to herald a new day. Besides, Davis presumably might expect to reap a harvest of grateful votes for the previous four years of patronage at his disposal.

⁴⁸Richmond Times-Dispatch, Feb. 2, 1922.

⁴⁹Larsen, Montague of Virginia, passim; and Pulley, Old Virginia, p. 163.

At the close of his governorship, Westmoreland Davis, an innately combative individual, decided to do battle with the remains of the Martin machine in contesting in the Democratic primary of 1922, the incumbent Senator Swanson.

No one has ever suggested that Marguerite Davis discouraged her husband's aspirations and there is every evidence to attest that she encouraged him to attempt to break the stranglehold of the old Martin political machine and to establish an independent Progressive Democratic machine of his own. Remaining discreetly in the background so as not to offend the majority, Marguerite hosted huge political luncheons at Morven Park and directly involved herself with the mechanics of her husband's campaign.

Although there was no conflict of issues, the campaign was a typical one of bitter words. In a contest of personalities, Davis's half-bald head and bulging torso offered little attraction beside the tall handsome senior senator. Both men were highly regarded public officials, but even to the nonaligned voter there was "no reason to replace one good man with another."⁵⁰

Despite his tenacity, Davis lost the election and Marguerite, for her efforts, lost her health. He took the defeat hard. Even Marguerite's cajoling did not erase the bitterness that remained with the Governor until his death two decades after this humiliating defeat.

⁵⁰Kirby, Davis, pp. 150-156 and Moger, Bourbonism to Byrd, pp. 331-33.

CHAPTER FIVE

LAST YEARS

Freed from the pressures of public life, Marguerite Davis resumed the life of a country lady. Although she sought to conceal the fact that she had passed her fiftieth birthday, she never took up horseback riding again. Instead, she enjoyed supervising the maintenance of a large steam yacht for voyages between her seasonal residences at Branford, Connecticut, Hobe Sound, Florida, and New York City, and of her principal residence, Morven Park. Although she no longer rode to the hounds, her delight in yachting and gardening was responsible for Westmoreland's purchase of the Virginian in 1920 and her intermittent expansion of the gardens and greenhouses near the great house at Morven Park.

Following Governor Davis's defeat in November, 1922, by Claude A. Swanson for the United States Senate, Marguerite and Morley embarked on their first European tour since 1903. Although she was then approaching late middle age, Marguerite listed on her passport as the date of her birth, 1882, making her ten years old at the time of her marriage. Departing from New York on February 27, 1923, the Davises landed at Cherbourg and went immediately to visit Marguerite's oldest sister, Mrs. Jennie Inman Payne, in Paris. As Marguerite and Westmoreland had been hosts to Marshall Foch when he visited Virginia in 1921, the couple returned the visit and were introduced to several

French dignitaries who escorted them to battlefields of the First World War. The Davises were tendered reviews both by American occupation troops at Mainz and by French troops in the Ruhr before relaxing at the seaside resort of Gerstemunde and enjoying the mineral waters of Baden-Baden.⁵¹ Both Marguerite and Westmoreland were made keenly aware of the economic devastation of war-torn Germany by the disrupted train service, complaining that even a short twenty-mile trip frequently took four or five hours. But despite this inconvenience, the Davises found the Ruhr Valley "very interesting," its people "well fed and clothed, and distinctly resentful."⁵² The couple returned to America in early April aboard the White Star liner, Pittsburgh.

In 1926, Marguerite and Westmoreland made their last trip to Europe. Again they sailed from New York to France, disembarking at Cherbourg, and again Marguerite falsified her age. Although Mrs. Davis's sister, Jennie Inman Payne, had recently died in Paris, the couple was not without American friends. In 1921, when Marshall Foch had visited Virginia, the Richmond Light Infantry Blues had so impressed him that he invited the unit to France. After five years of planning, the Blues departed for France. In May of 1926 the Davises met the unit in Paris, where Marguerite, Westmoreland, and the battalion were guests of the French President Doumergue at a reception in their

⁵¹ Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 77.

⁵² Westmoreland Davis to Alice Hunter, March 6, 1923, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

honor at the Elysee Palace. After the battalion returned to America, the Davises remained in France until March of 1927, when they sailed from Southhampton.⁵³

In 1920, Marguerite and Westmoreland Davis purchased a yacht which they christened the Virginian. Although her home port was nominally Alexandria, the craft's usual mooring was in the marine basin at South Brooklyn, New York, except when the Davises took it on winter cruises to Florida, vacationing in fashionable Hobe Sound where they stayed with Miss Willie Lee Inman who had inherited a cottage from her father's estate. The couple spent enough time yachting that they had Tiffany and Company print stationery with the letterhead, "On Board the Virginian."⁵⁴

The Virginian was as commodious as Robert Inman's yacht, the Marguerite, requiring a captain and two crewmen. Besides crew's quarters, galley, engine room, and companionway, there was a forward cabin, an after cabin, a dining room, and berths for ten guests. Marguerite furnished the craft with blue, Edwardian wicker furniture and covered the floors with Oriental carpets. The mahogany super-structure and teak planked deck presented a refined appearance,

⁵³Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," pp. 77-78. John A. Cutchins, A Famous Command: The Richmond Light Infantry Blues (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, 1934), pp. 254-284.

⁵⁴Davis Archives, Morven Park.

reinforced by the Davises' standing orders that the steward wear a white uniform and the captain were either "blues" or "whites" as season required.⁵⁵

Another pursuit which occupied much of Marguerite Davis's time was extensive interest in reading. She was a regular patroness of the Balch Memorial Library at Leesburg, and she and her husband possessed a fine library of their own. In fiction, her tastes ran less to the American than to the English and French classics of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries; but to judge from the well-read volumes of Thomas Hardy and John Galsworthy, she "kept up" until the 1920's. Their library includes few novels of lasting merit published after 1930. Margaret Mitchell's Gone With the Wind was, because of the parallels between the Inmans and the O'Haras, a special exception.

Frail and weighing less than one hundred pounds, Marguerite was constantly plagued by ill health. Believing that the day had gone when women should prize weakness as a feminine attribute, she voraciously consumed books such as Physical Training For Women and The Physiology of Bodily Exercise, and appears to have attempted to follow their instructions. Although her background included little that would prepare her for specialized medical textbooks, Maggie owned

⁵⁵Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," pp. 80-81.

The Practice of Auto Suggestions, Strengthening the Eyes, and Concerning Osteopathy, a book given to her by the Inman family physician, Dr. E. H. Merkley.⁵⁶

All of her adult life Marguerite Davis struggled against a shy, retiring personality. And yet her husband's prominence in public life required that she meet and freely converse with dignitaries from all corners of the globe. Without being passive or submissive, Marguerite sought her husband's commendation in almost everything she did. Rarely did her love for him permit her to entertain views contrary to his,⁵⁷ and her efforts to please him in public life are attested by two books in her library: How To Win Friends and Influence People and Conquest of Fear.

Despite the fact that most of the library at Morven Park was devoted to history, biography, economics, and political science, a conspicuous section of books indicate that Marguerite dabbled in a variety of subjects including archery, chess, art, decorating, and bridge. Four books on the latter subject⁵⁸ attest to her devotion to this game--one in which her husband refused to participate. Mrs. Davis seems to have been ever ready to play for pleasure and relaxation with her personal friends, Mrs. Charles Harrison, wife of the mayor of

⁵⁶Library, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁵⁷Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 88.

⁵⁸Library, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

Leesburg, and Mrs. Edwin Garrett, wife of a local lawyer. Morven Park became a usual and favorite meeting place for the Leesburg Bridge Club, of which Marguerite Davis was a member.⁵⁹

A subject which fascinated Mrs. Davis was cooking. Even while she lived in New York, she aided the Inman family cook, although her interest was probably limited to the preparation of exotic foreign dishes and delicacies. Despite the fact that she owned four gourmet cookbooks and directed her servants at Morven Park in the preparation of culinary masterpieces, Marguerite seldom assisted in the actual preparation of the food.⁶⁰

Firm and unyielding with her employees, Mrs. Davis often reflected in household management the procedures her husband prescribed for efficient farm management. She required that her servants account for all expenditures, showing receipts for even such basic household purchases as soap.⁶¹ Intent in her resolution that servants work in an atmosphere conducive to steady and productive labor, she had signs bearing her instructions and signature printed and posted in appropriate areas around the mansion. Two such signs hanging in the kitchen bore the instructions: "Anyone using dishes or anything in kitchen must wash and put back in place," and "Anyone mixing garbage in cans will be fined \$1.00."⁶² Clear and precise in her commands, to her servants

⁵⁹Reid, Leesburg, Va.

⁶⁰Flynn, Morven Park.

⁶¹Receipts, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁶²Davis Archives, Morven Park.

Marguerite's presence was marked by a firmness which made more gratifying the occasional amiability she displayed or the five dollar bill unceremoniously slipped into a palm for a job well done. Not one to overlook thirty years of dedicated service, Mrs. Davis left upon her death \$200,000 to her chauffeur, Walker, and \$20,000 to her trusted general maintenance man, Mr. Robert Flynn.⁶³

Until well into the thirties, Marguerite continued to entertain at Morven Park as she had done in the years before she assumed the role of First Lady of Virginia. The fox and hound were still the most popular topics of conversation in Leesburg as the "leading spirits" of the Loudoun Hunt Club, Westmoreland Davis, William C. Eustis, and Henry Fairfax gradually shifted their meeting place from the Old Club House on Market Street to Morven Park. Establishing friendly relations between the Davises and their neighbors, landowners, and tenant farmers, these meetings made Morven Park a regional center for sportsmen and farmers--and their hosts renowned for their gracious hospitality.

"In revival of an old custom," on November 14, 1928, at 12:30 P.M., Mr. and Mrs. Davis invited local farmers to a luncheon⁶⁴ so large that 20 waiters, 1 head waiter, and 5 women were required to serve the fare consisting of 55 turkeys, 12 hams, and 1,500 rolls. The Davises also furnished a seven-piece brass band to entertain their guests.⁶⁵

⁶³ Interview with Mr. Robert Flynn, March 4, 1970, Morven Park, Leesburg, Va. Hereinafter cited as Flynn, Morven Park.

⁶⁴ Loudoun Times-Mirror, Nov. 8, 1928.

⁶⁵ Guest lists and invoices for parties, Nov., 1928, Davis Papers, U.Va.

After prohibition was repealed in 1933, beer and liquor again appeared at the Davises' gala affairs.⁶⁶ At a 1938 party given for the Eightieth District American Legion, Marguerite invited over two hundred guests, including Theodore Reid and Judge J. R. H. Alexander. Lasting from 4:00 P.M. until well into the night, the party featured beer and "delicious cakes" from the Charles Schneider Baking Company in Washington, D. C.⁶⁷

From 1932 to 1934, Governor and Mrs. Davis opened Morven Park for Historic Garden Week in Virginia. In 1935, however, Marguerite was so preoccupied by her sister, Willie Lee Inman's, illness that she was unable to accept the invitation of the Garden Club of Virginia to open her gardens to the public, even though she was a long-time member of the Loudoun County branch of the club and "applauded its historic and horticultural goals."⁶⁸

Besides hosting their own luncheons and balls, Marguerite and Westmoreland attended numerous functions in all parts of the state. In October, 1928, Mrs. Davis was a guest of honor among such notables as Lady Astor and Mrs. Harry Flood Byrd, wife of Governor Byrd at a Governor's Ball given under the auspices of the Virginia League of Women Voters in Richmond's Grays' Armory. Recalling a similar ball for General Foch during her husband's administration, Marguerite

⁶⁶Kirby, Davis, p. 41.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 15.

⁶⁸Clippings from Southern Planter, Nov., 1940, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

must have paused to remember the days when "the whole regiment of social life in Richmond" revolved around her.⁶⁹

In 1931, Mrs. Davis attended a luncheon in Yorktown, given by the Governor and the Virginia Yorktown Susquicentennial Commission,⁷⁰ and in April of 1931 a dinner at the executive mansion, then occupied by Governor and Mrs. John Garland Pollard, in honor of Leonidas Pitamic, minister from Yugoslavia to the United States.⁷¹

As she approached old age, Marguerite Davis's interest in entertaining gradually waned. Indeed, after 1938 she became increasingly content to enjoy only the company of her aging husband and the simplicity and solitary life that Morven Park offered.⁷²

In the depression decade, the Davises became greatly interested in helping poor, deserving girls learn stenographic chores. There were usually several of these girls at Morven Park--learning and practicing shorthand and typing, often with disastrous results for the efficiency the Governor preached. Mrs. Davis was also generous in providing scholarships and special purposes money to aid Home Economics students at Virginia Polytechnic Institute on whose Board of Visitors her husband sat from 1939 until his death. Such concern

⁶⁹Richmond Times-Dispatch, Sept. 30, 1928.

⁷⁰Formal invitation, Oct. 16, 1931, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁷¹Richmond Times-Dispatch, April 22, 1931.

⁷²Reid, Leesburg, Va.

for young people undoubtedly helped Mrs. Davis compensate the growing realization of how narrow her life was becoming.⁷³

More or less estranged from her cousins in Georgia and having no in-laws, Marguerite could look only to her sister, Willie Lee Inman, for familiar comfort. Intermittently an invalid for almost a decade, Willie Lee frequently visited the Davises, but most of her time was divided between the Inman cottages at Branford, Connecticut, and at Hobe Sound, Florida. Early in August of 1942, she was desperately stricken at Branford. Feeling a great responsibility for the last remaining member of her family, Marguerite did not hesitate in leaving Morven Park to spend, what doctors feared, would be the last few weeks of her sister's life. In her absence, tragedy struck at Morven Park.

Governor Davis, still amazingly hardy for his eighty-three years, fell ill after motoring to Blacksburg for several days of meetings of the Board of Visitors of Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Because of his advanced age, doctors thought it advisable to take him to Johns Hopkins University Hospital, where he died three days later from "natural causes resulting from advanced age."⁷⁴ Mrs. Davis arrived at the Baltimore hospital from Connecticut only a few hours after he had drawn his last breath. Since she had been at the Governor's side in every thought and action for the forty-one years of their wedded life, she never forgave herself for not being with him at the end.

⁷³ Flynn, Morven Park.

⁷⁴ Obituary clippings, Sept. 3, 1942, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

At Episcopal services in Leesburg on the next day, he was laid to rest by the Rev. J. Manly Cobb, rector of St. James Episcopal Church,⁷⁵ in a mausoleum which he had designed for himself and Marguerite amid the billowing greenery of their boxwood gardens.⁷⁶

Feeling very desolate, Marguerite bore the heavy burden of loneliness for the remaining twenty-one years of her life. She had only a few neighbors in Loudoun County who could be considered candidates for intimacy, since Mrs. Fairfax of Oak Hill had died before the 1930's. Of the great landowners of the county when the Davises bought Morven Park, only Oatlands remained in the same family, having descended from William Corcoran Eustis to his daughter, Mrs. David E. Finley whose husband was a long-time friend of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. But most of the great landowning families had been replaced by newer and younger people who stood in awe of and at a distance from the formidable dowager of Morven Park.

Frail as she was, close friends feared Marguerite would break under shock of losing Morley. But, instead, she bore the burden with determination, keeping alive her husband's memory by contributing to philanthropic and social causes.⁷⁷

⁷⁵Loudoun Times-Mirror, Sept. 3, 1942.

⁷⁶Hayes, "Davis, Cultural and Social," p. 87. Mrs. Thomas Gordon Davis, his mother, had been interred there a decade earlier.

⁷⁷Reid, Leesburg, Va.

Unable personally to work in the war effort of World War II, as she had in World War I, Marguerite did, however, give generously.⁷⁸ Because Governor Davis had been an honorary member of Veterans of Foreign Wars and an honorary colonel of the Honor Guard of the American Legion, Mrs. Davis gave in his name billard tables from Morven Park to the Soldiers' Recreation Room at nearby Fort Belvoir. Besides sending three of her pedigreed Doberman Pinschers into the army K-9 corps to be trained as war dogs and converting two passenger cars into ambulances for civil difense, Marguerite invested much of her husband's estate in war bonds.⁷⁹

Three years after the death of Westmoreland Davis, Senator Carter Glass died.⁸⁰ Inflamed by the laudatory eulogies heaped upon him, Mrs. Davis publicly issued through the Richmond News Leader which was edited by Douglas Southall Freeman, an old admirer of Governor Davis, a tart reminder that Senator Glass had not been true to his promise to Davis when the latter appointed him to the United States Senate. She declared that Glass had come to Leesburg shortly after the death of Senator Thomas S. Martin to consult with her husband concerning the vacancy in the Senate resulting from the death of Martin, the long-time leader of Virginia's Democratic machine.

⁷⁸Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁷⁹S. Gardner Waller to Marguerite Davis, Nov., 1942, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁸⁰Davis Archives, Morven Park.

"Mr. Glass then and there stated that he was in full accord with Governor Davis's reforms and would assist to the best of his ability the Governor for a more progressive state government." From the beginning, Davis had acclaimed Glass for his work as "Father" of the Federal Reserve Banking Act and his own reform program was "dear to the Governor's heart," Mrs. Davis wrote. Thinking he could rely on Glass remaining an anti-machine reformer, he appointed him to the Senate in November of 1919. "Scarcely many months had passed after his appointment when Mr. Glass swallowed machine politics hook, line, and sinker, and forswore his promises." More particularly, Glass declared first neutrality when Davis unsuccessfully sought in 1922 to defeat the incumbent Senior Senator Claude A. Swanson; and later he collaborated with Davis' mortal foe, Harry F. Byrd after the latter succeeded Swanson in 1933.

Marguerite Davis indicated in her letter that her own political views had lost none of the "anti" sting. Arguing that machine politics had penetrated and won control of Virginia's governmental apparatus, she blamed the low salaries provided teachers and the poll tax on Byrd's reactionary influence.

Retention of a poll tax aiding vote control
and many backward policies keep our beloved
state from giving the many advantages to our
people that people of more forward states
enjoy as a matter of course.

It was a sad commentary upon politics in a democracy, the Governor's wife charged, that a political machine could crush so

thoroughly independent thought in Virginia and block able men such as her husband. The gubernatorial administration of the Democratic moderate, James H. Price, between 1938 and 1942 had been welcomed by both Governor and Mrs. Davis, but the stubborn reaction of the Byrd machine had found willing tools among rural legislators such as Thomas B. Stanley to thwart the liberal program Price espoused. "The only hope for Virginia," Marguerite believed, "is that conditions will get so bad that at long last people will do something about it."⁸¹

Implicit here and throughout her subsequent public and private utterances on the subject of Virginia politics, was a grim determination that justice be accorded her husband who in twenty-five years of bitter opposition to Harry Byrd's political organization remained a staunch progressive, evolving from Wilsonian to New Deal liberalism. Two decades after the Governor's death, Marguerite still maintained that "on a stormy winter night" in November, 1919, Secretary of the Treasury Glass had traveled from Washington to Morven Park and pledged himself to fight the organization and help Davis found a new "independent" machine if Davis would appoint him to the Senate.⁸² And she never relented.

In contrast to the sympathetic and objective letter from Douglas Southall Freeman, who believed that Senator Glass had been generally and pragmatically true to his promise in that "the old man was

⁸¹Richmond News-Leader, June 12, 1946.

⁸²Kirby, Davis, p. 151.

essentially independent in mind," the widow of the wartime governor received a number of letters applauding her courage and honesty.⁸³

Reprinting Mrs. Davis's letter to Douglas Southall Freeman, Norman R. Hamilton, the Portsmouth Star's anti-machine editor gloated that her statements substantiated what he had long printed as speculation.⁸⁴

Marguerite was heartened by the election of Colgate W. Darden as Governor in 1942 because, even if he had been acceptable to the Byrd organization, he had been an anti-machine follower of Davis in his youth. Mrs. Davis and Governor Darden corresponded occasionally, and although his administration was preoccupied with wartime problems, its liberal tenor justified her confidence.⁸⁵ On the other hand, she and Morley had opposed the demons of the machine for so long that Marguerite Davis probably missed the excitement of battle.

Marguerite Davis's life at Morven Park ended with the death of her husband. Although she resumed the "tenor of her way," after forty-one years of married life, a sense of forlorn remained with her to the end. The little lady's resolute determination simply disappeared. And yet, as her onslaught against Glass bespoke, there was no lessening in her loyalty to the Governor's principles, although there was increasingly less purpose in defending them.

⁸³Douglas S. Freeman to Marguerite Davis, June 30, 1947, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁸⁴Norman R. Hamilton to Marguerite Davis, June 29, 1946, Davis Archives, Morven Park.

⁸⁵George Green Shackelford, memorandum of interview with Colgate W. Darden, May, 1968, Williamsburg, Va.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

As the general debilities of old age descended on Marguerite Davis, she lived more and more at Branford, Connecticut, with her friend and companion, Mrs. Alice Proffitt, who previously had nursed Willie Lee Inman. Wasted in health, Mrs. Davis could not as a general rule ride upright in an automobile when making trips to Hobe Sound or Leesburg, but reclined flat on her back on the rear seat of her automobile. The greatest pleasure that she derived from this period in her life was planning how she could best commemorate Westmoreland Davis.

One certain way was to establish educational scholarships. Another was to reward faithful family retainers. For some time it appeared that Washington and Lee University, which had bestowed an honorary degree on Governor Davis, might inherit her fortune. Mrs. Davis emphatically ruled out that possibility not only because Washington and Lee gave Senator Harry F. Byrd, Sr. an honorary degree but because she enlarged her philanthropic ambitions beyond awarding conventional scholarships and feeding conventional educational endowments.

Although her friendship with the Eustises and Finleys of the neighboring Loudoun estate of Oatlands had become less intimate since World War I, Marguerite Davis was interested in the role which David E.

Finley took in the historic preservation movement which blossomed in the years just after World War II. His friendship with Franklin D. Roosevelt may have caused some great landowners to look askance, but it endeared him to Marguerite Davis. When, at the request of her fellow members of the Loudoun Garden Club of the Garden Club of Virginia, she opened Morven Park for Historic Garden Week, she knew that the proceeds of such visitation would be used to restore historic gardens such as those at Monticello. Although Mrs. Davis probably did not know of the Finleys' intention to present Oatlands to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, she did know that he was Chairman of its Board and applauded his purpose of restoring and preserving monuments in their original character for artistic, historic and scenic purposes. In 1947, Finley, previously director of the National Gallery of Art, had been instrumental in organizing the Trust, which he created along the lines of the National Trust of England.⁸⁶

Following Finley's footsteps, Marguerite Davis founded in 1955 the Westmoreland Davis Memorial Foundation. In creating the Foundation, Mrs. Davis specified that its primary objective would be the operation and preservation of Morven Park as a "place of historic and cultural value."⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Albert Rains (ed.), With Heritage So Rich (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 48. President Truman signed into law the Act of Congress which incorporated that the trust be authorized to facilitate public participation in the preservation of buildings of national significance and empowering it to receive donations of buildings, site, and objects significant in American history and to administer them for public benefit.

⁸⁷ Loudoun Times-Mirror and interview with David E. Finley by George Green Shackelford, August 13, 1970, Leesburg, Va.

The Foundation's work of implementing the historical, cultural, and educational goals established by Marguerite Davis was expanded in scope and momentum in 1966; its program for providing college educational scholarships to deserving young men of Virginia exceeded \$64,000 in this year. The University of Virginia, Virginia Military Institute, Washington and Lee University, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute each received \$15,000, covering scholarships for students from Virginia, and Governor Davis's alma mater, Columbia University, received \$4,000 to provide scholarships for two Virginia boys with a contingency arrangement for additional funds should the amount of this award prove insufficient. In June of 1966, the Foundation had entered into contracts under which approximately \$160,000 was to be spent on restoration work at Morven Park, including a comprehensive program for reconstituting the landscape beauty of the estate as it was under Mrs. Davis's care.

At the Foundation's Annual Meeting on March 1, 1966, Mrs. Alice Proffitt, long-time friend of Mrs. Davis and a Vice President since the formation of the Foundation, was elected President, replacing Henry C. Diefenbach, President since the inception of the Foundation. In addition to Mrs. Proffitt and Mr. Diefenbach, Mr. Leonard Scully, Mr. Cornelius J. Sweeney, and Mr. Pandia C. Ralli were re-elected as Trustees. Mr. Scully joined the Board in 1955; Mr. Sweeney in 1962; and Mr. Ralli, who took the position previously filled by Mr. Frederick M. E. Puelle, in 1965.

In reestablishing Morven Park as a cultural center, the Foundation in the autumn of 1967 displayed to the public the four main lines of development that have been followed since that time. At the dedication of the Marguerite I. Davis Memorial Boxwood Gardens in October, United States Senator William B. Spong of Virginia, a respected progressive whose leading interests at the state and federal level have been education and protection of the environment, expressed great interest in the prospects for Morven Park as a "center of activity" reflecting the life of Governor and Mrs. Davis. Later in the ceremony, Mrs. Benjamin Parrott of Roanoke, recognized George Green Shackelford as Consultant for Historical Management and Charles L. Otey as Resident Manager. The affair was preceeded by a luncheon for about one thousand which reproduced in part a 1907 hunt breakfast at Morven Park.⁸⁸

Marguerite Inman Davis's life ended on July 15, 1963, at Branford, Connecticut.⁸⁹ She was laid to rest beside Morley at Morven Park.⁹⁰ For well over a half century, she had achieved striking success in every course she had pursued: as mistress of one of the largest country houses in Virginia; as wife of a Progressive politician; and as wife of an elder statesman.

⁸⁸Westmoreland Davis Memorial Foundation, Annual Report, 1966.

⁸⁹Richmond News Leader, July 15, 1963.

⁹⁰Reid, Leesburg, Va. Pallbearers included Edward C. Norman; Thomas B. Hutchinson; James Pierpoint; Sterling M. Harrison, Commonwealth Attorney for Virginia; Robert Flynn; J. Terry Hirst; Lucas D. Phillips, then a member of the House of Delegates; and Dr. Paul Sanders of the Southern Planter staff.

Progressivism was in full swing in 1918 when Marguerite and Westmoreland moved into the executive mansion in Richmond. As Governor of Virginia, Westmoreland had only to deal with the political exigencies of a state which had already challenged the hegemony of the old political leadership. Marguerite, as first lady, had the task of reconciling her husband's Progressive ideals with those of a society still struggling to resurrect antebellum traditions and ideals. In this traditionalist oriented atmosphere, Marguerite Davis combined two images with remarkable ability. While she maintained the best tradition of antebellum Southern gentility, she also played the role of a modern woman. Just as she was a model of conventional virtues, she was the prototype of the emerging new emancipated woman.

Marguerite Davis's life presents a study in contradictions. The dichotomy of her conventionality and newness was as enigmatic as the paradox of her character. Shy and retiring from girlhood, Marguerite met and conversed freely with people from all walks of life, impressing all who met her as gracious, magnetic, and most of all as one who set at ease visitors of any social class. Not only a knowledgeable and modern individual, Mrs. Davis was a charming and hospitable woman, born to wealth and social position.

In response to the challenges posed to traditional American values during the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era, Marguerite Inman Davis ameliorated rather than changed the society which had produced her. She viewed, as did Ellen Glasgow, many of the traditions of the old

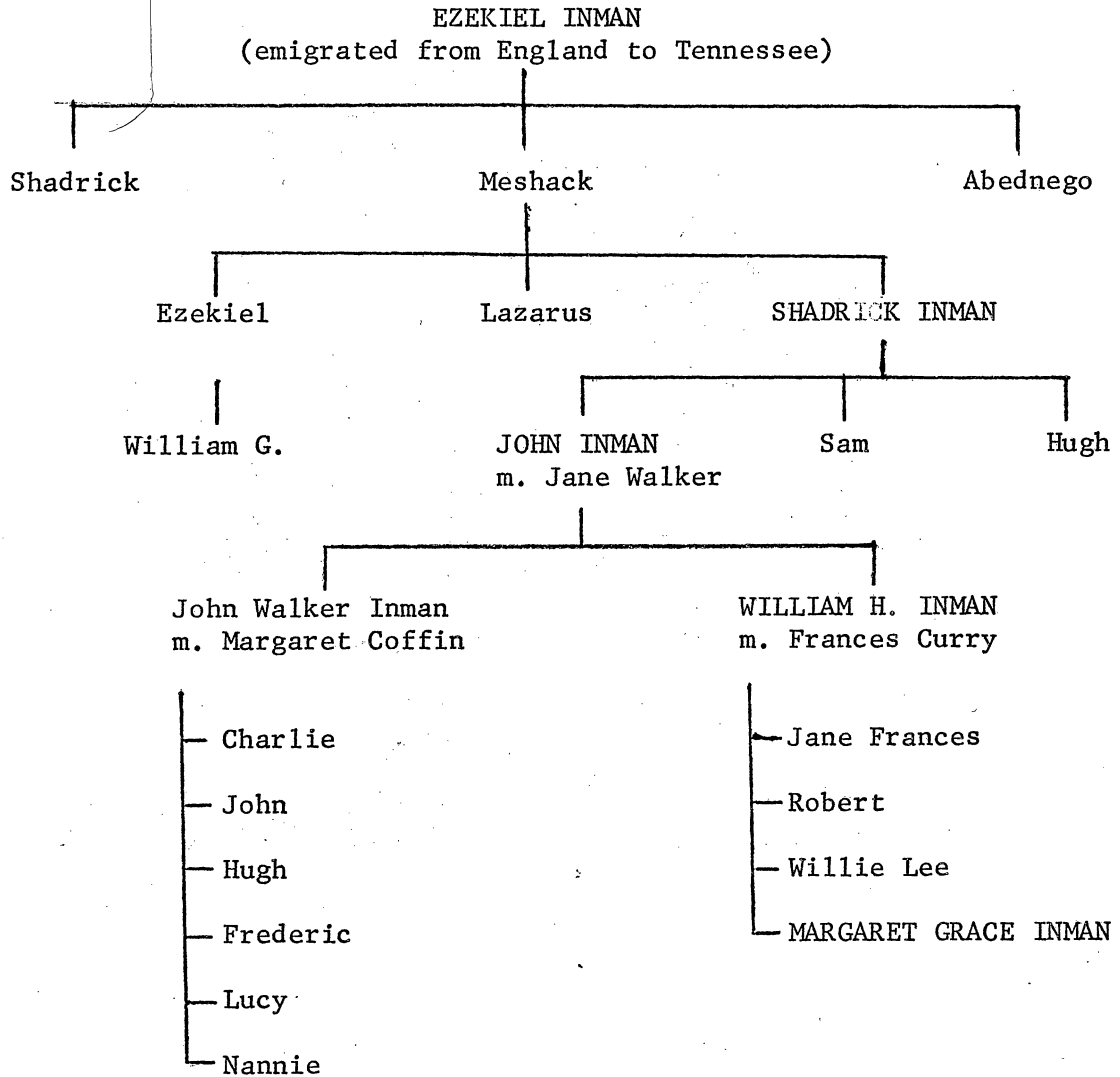
South with polite disrespect. Yet as a person she continued the luxurious manner of living to which she had been born, not violating that manner but making it more ample and modernizing it.⁹¹

Through consideration of her traditional upbringing, one can appreciate that Marguerite Davis reconciled the progressive spirit of modern America and the conserving tendencies inherent in the culture of the Old Dominion.

⁹¹See James Branch Cabell, Let Me Lie (New York: Farrar, Straus and Co., 1947), pp. 231-267.

APPENDIX

Geneology of the Ezekiel Inman Family



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Mr. David E. Finley, Sr. by George G. Shackelford, Little Oatlands, Leesburg, Virginia, August 9, 1970.

Mr. Robert Flynn by the author, Morven Park, Leesburg, Virginia, March 4, 1970. Mr. Flynn was for many years the general maintenance man of Morven Park.

Mr. Charles Otey by the author, Morven Park, Leesburg, Virginia, March 4, 1970. Mr. Otey is the Westmoreland Davis Foundation's Resident Manager.

Mrs. Alice R. Proffitt by George G. Shackelford, Morven Park, Leesburg and Roanoke, Virginia, April and May, 1970. The companion and friend of Mrs. Davis, Mrs. Proffitt, is now President of the Westmoreland Davis Memorial Foundation.

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ABSTRACT

Born to wealth, Marguerite Inman Davis (1870-1963), daughter of a New York cotton broker of Southern lineage, grew up in the best societies of Georgia and New York and studied piano in Bonn and Paris. After her marriage to Westmoreland Davis in 1893, she continued to travel extensively in Europe and the Orient. In 1903, after she and her husband purchased the 1,500 acre Morven Park estate in Loudoun County, Virginia, Mrs. Marguerite Inman Davis assumed the life of a hostess and pursued her talents as an equestrienne and gardener.

As first lady of Virginia during World War I, Marguerite Davis consciously set an example for women of the state and nation to enter war work. She volunteered, as president of the Woman's Munition Reserve, to sew silk bags and fill them with smokeless gun powder at Seven Pines outside Richmond. Later she helped save a peach crop from ruin during the war labor shortage. In the course of the Spanish influenza epidemic which swept Richmond between October, 1918, and November, 1919, she served as a volunteer nurse in the pneumonia ward of the John Marshall Emergency Hospital. Yet, while Marguerite Davis played the role of a modern woman and patriot, she also maintained the tradition of southern gentility and hospitality. Entertaining groups of soldiers, students, politicians, and suffragettes, she democratically made the people of the Old Dominion very much at home in the executive mansion during the Davis administration (1918-1922).

From her husband's defeat in the 1922 senatorial primary until her death, Mrs. Davis contributed generously to many philanthropic and social causes. Unable personally to work in the war effort of World War II as she had in World War I, Marguerite Davis donated two ambulances, several pedigreed Doberman Pinschers, and invested a large part of her husband's estate in war bonds. Throughout her life, Marguerite was generous in giving scholarships to deserving Virginia students.

Mrs. Davis retired from public life after the death of her husband in 1943, and moved to her sister's home in Branford, Connecticut. She continued, however, despite her advancing age to attack the state of Virginia politics. Inflamed by the laudatory eulogies heaped upon Senator Carter Glass at his death in 1947, Mrs. Davis publicly condemned both Glass and the Byrd organization. In establishing the Westmoreland Davis Memorial Foundation, Marguerite Inman Davis displayed enlightened philanthropic views by providing munificently not only for ordinary scholarships but to make historic Morven Park an endowed center. She remained at Branford, Connecticut, until her death on July 15, 1963.