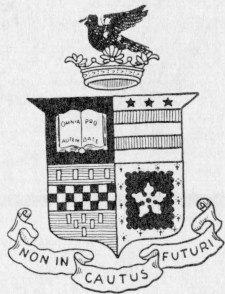




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VIRGINIA WHIGS, VIRGINIA REBELS,
VIRGINIA PATRIOTS: THE JAMES D. DAVIDSON FAMILY
AND THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES

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May 18, 1974

Theodore Henry Amshoff, Jr.

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"A spot of local history is like
an inn upon a highway; it is a
place the national history has
passed through."

- Woodrow Wilson -

FOREWORD

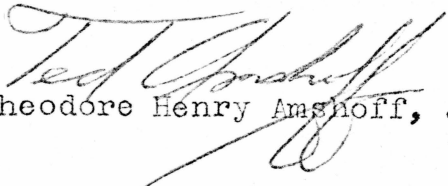
This paper about James D. Davidson and his family is written with two purposes in mind - an analysis of the work & contributions of a man and family who themselves made substantive input into the events of their day and as a window into the social history as a paradigm of the pressures brought upon the families and individuals of the South by the events of the day.

Material for this paper comes in the main from original letters in the archives of the Rockbridge Historical Society and especially from the Davidson files of the McCormick Collection in the archives of the Wisconsin State Historical Society in Madison, Wisconsin.

I have concentrated upon the events surrounding the war in which James D. Davidson and his family had the greatest real effect upon the political and military events of the day. Particular emphasis has been given to portions of the Davidson story not written about before, based largely upon materials from the McCormick Collection.

I want to express particular thanks to Dr. Charles W. Turner, who served as my advisor for the paper and who accompanied me to Madison, for his time and advice; and to Miss Annette Bennett, who typed the final draft of the paper.

Pledged in full,


Theodore Henry Amshoff, Jr.

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History, in the final analysis, is not only stories of governments and churches and wars and movements and institutions. It is rather the story of men, and men's action, and men's ideas fitting together into a collage of interaction and interdependence. To come to a better understanding of the past and the forces which formed it, it becomes necessary to study the actions and ideas of men who shaped these forces and who were to varying degrees shaped and influenced by them.

One such man was James D. Davidson of Lexington, Virginia. His role, and that of his family, in the tumultuous events preceding and during the War Between the States (and particularly Virginia's participation in that War) will be the subject of this paper.

Davidson was a member of what in leadership theory could be termed the second echelon of leadership elite. He was not himself a decision maker, but he was a very definite policy influencer with substantial input into the political process.

The Davidson family letters upon which the majority of this paper is based give a poignant and incisive view into the events of the day. They form a primary source which paints a clear and detailed self-portrait of the local leadership of Virginia and the South.

While the scope of this paper includes the whole war period, the heaviest concentration is upon that part of the period in which Davidson's participation in public affairs was the most important and the most influential (and about which is preserved the largest amount of letters): that being the chain of events leading to Virginia's secession from the Union and the early years of the War.

The story of James D. Davidson and his family is important because it in itself comprises a very significant chapter of local history. Moreover (and more importantly), the Davidson story stands as an excellent paradigm example of local leadership, with family pressures and divisions, and individual sacrifice and opinion in Civil War and late ante-bellum Virginia. As such it provides valuable insight into the overall fabric of Southern Civil War and ante-bellum society and politics, and an inside view of the actual Southern political decision-making process, particularly in the case of Virginia's decision to secede.

With this latter perspective in mind, a study of James D. Davidson and his family becomes more than just simply local history, and it is with this latter perspective and with this latter purpose that this paper is presented.

I.

The Davidson family had long been prominent in the Lexington area. James D. Davidson's father, Andrew Baker Davidson, was a Presbyterian minister and the senior member of the Lexington Presbytery. The senior Davidson was well-known and widely respected for his evangelistic work, and himself founded the Presbyterian churches at Collierstown, Kerr's Creek, and Rockbridge Baths.¹ In addition, for a time he was principal of the Ann Smith Academy and served on the Board of Trustees of Washington College.²

Davidson's maternal lineage was similarly influential in the area. His mother's brother was General Charles P. Dorman, a well-respected Lexington attorney under whom Davidson later read and then practiced law.³

In this environment Davidson grew up, graduating from Washington College in 1828 and teaching a year at a field school in Botetourt County before reading law and being admitted to the bar in 1831.⁴

James D. had four brothers, all of whom also attended Washington College. William L. was a physician who died in 1830, only three years after graduating from college. Alexander H. moved to Indiana and served in the Civil War as a general in the Union army. Charles B. was an Episcopal minister who served most of his ministry in Indiana and Ohio. Henry G. was a Richmond teacher, physician, and businessman. He was later President of the Southern Insurance Co. and during the war served as a surgeon in the Confederate army.⁵

James D. Davidson himself was an amiable, friendly, and respected man. He had a keen wit and a sharp, agile mind.⁶ He had travelled some, including a trip through the South in 1836. (His lengthy diary of his two months of travels provides a detailed and incisive description of Southern life at the close of the Jacksonian Era.) and a visit to the 1851 World's Fair in London.⁷ Nonetheless, he chose to remain in Lexington, even though a lawyer of his ability could doubtless have grown much richer elsewhere, and on several occasions he was actually urged to take up such a practice in a more urban area.⁸

He developed a talent for writing in college, and throughout his life wrote poetry, rhymes, and limericks, once even arguing an entire court case in humorous verse. (The judge, while holding for Davidson's client, was not extremely amused.)⁹

With several others, he published a literary magazine in Lexington called the Mountain Laurel, and contributed both poetry and short stories to it for publication between 1829 and 1831.¹⁰

As an attorney, Davidson was held in wide repute. His forte was chancery law and estate settlement, and he brought an innovative and imaginative style into the courtroom. He was widely regarded as the best lawyer of his generation in Virginia in the above two fields of law.¹¹

Davidson seems to have been a lawyer of great integrity, highly respected by judges, clients, and his fellow attorneys. He was known throughout the Valley and even beyond as the "Country Lawyer," and regarded as the Dean of the Rockbridge Bar.¹²

He was by nature an outspoken man, and once explained this trait in a letter to Governor John Letcher (a very close personal friend) before offering some advice.

You well know it is not my habit to flatter any man. In my early life, I was guided by a remark, made by Sir Phillip Francis, in the British Parliament to a young member, who was praising in a speech another member. Sir Phillip took him aside, and said to him, "I am an old member - let me advise you never praise another member, except in odium tertie."¹³

Though Davidson did not totally follow the above admonition, he did mete out praise only when it was well deserved and could be sincerely given.

He was a slaveowner himself, and according to 1862 tax

records owned four slaves.¹⁴ Nonetheless, certain practices of slaveholding deeply disturbed him. During his 1836 trip through the South, he beheld the New Orleans slave markets and was moved to write in his diary entry of November 9 of the horrors he saw there.

I saw a likely negro woman and her three children being held here at public auction. The mother and children wept bitterly during the sale. I pitied them. But the people here are hardened to such things, and they look upon them with indifference.¹⁵

Davidson retained much of the religious heritage given him by his father, and his letters are peppered with Biblical allusions and quotations. He was also a man of great compassion toward his fellow man and towards animals as well. He once wrote:

I prefer travelling in Steamboats to Stages, the speed of a Steamer is greater and that speed is not at the expense (of) animal comfort. I can repose very pleasantly in a Stage, but the idea that the faithful horse is jaded and oppressed always disturbs me.¹⁶

James D. Davidson's leadership position seems to lie not in any actual financial or political power stemming from fortune or office, but from the respect in which he seems to have been held by the community. In summarizing his personality and character (upon which it is submitted was based his leadership credibility), it is appropriate to look at a letter of one of his compatriots.

Davidson was described as being

...a man of broad humility, of kind heart, of gentle disposition, of genial hospitality and of undeviating honesty, by which qualities he commended himself to all his neighbors and a large circle of appreciating friends.

... as a citizen he was distinguished for his love of country, and his active and intelligent interest in all schemes and enterprizes giving promise of prosperity to his native country and town, and especially for the earnest zeal he constantly manifested in behalf of the educational institutions of Lexington.

... as a member of the legal profession he was conspicuous for his fidelity and devotion to the interests of his clients, for his accurate and extensive learning, for professional amenity, especially to his younger and more inexperienced brothers (who always found in him a ready and safe advisor) and above all for his unquestioned probity, honesty, and integrity in all his business transactions...¹⁷

Davidson was a prominent member of the ante-bellum Virginia political elite. Though he never ran for an elective office, he was at the top of politics in the Valley. Governor John Letcher (also from Lexington) and James D. were very trusted and close personal and political friends (His correspondence has said in regard to this association that "we have been like brothers."¹⁸), and Davidson's opinions and advice weighed heavily with the Governor.

By ideology, Davidson all his life was a Henry Clay American System Whig.¹⁹ In ante-bellum times, he termed himself a conservative and believed strongly in the Union, always at odds with the Southern fire-eaters. Thus by party affiliation, he was a Whig and even after the collapse of the Whig Party, he was a Democrat in name, yes, but still a Whig at heart.

The 1856 presidential campaign found Davidson supporting Franklin Pierce against James Buchanan for the Democratic nomi-

nation. Apparently Pierce possessed much of that political asset we today term "charisma". Davidson light-heartedly wrote of him that the ladies of Lexington would like nothing better than to "go forth and replenish the earth under the operation of such a man."²⁰

Despite his many interests, James D. Davidson also found time for family life. In 1832, the year after he was admitted to the bar, he married Hannah Greenlee. The couple had eight children - six boys and two girls. One of the sons died while only an infant. The other five all served in the Confederate Army, from whose ranks three were killed.²¹

Greenlee, the eldest son, seems to have been the closest to his father. In 1860 he was practicing law along with his father. He practiced not only in Rockbridge County, but also in Bath and Botetourt as well, specializing in the collection of claims.²²

Frederick, the second oldest son, was a student at Washington College at the outset of the war.

Charles (or "Charley", as he was referred to by his father), and Albert were both students at the University of Virginia in 1860.²⁴ Rounding out the Davidson sons was William (Willie), the youngest boy.²⁵

There were also two daughters, Mary and Clara, both of whom became in later years cultural leaders of the Lexington

community,²⁶ and one of whom (Clara) married a prominent Lexington physician, Dr. Harry Estill.²⁷

All of the family were apparently quite close. As individuals and as a unit they were all widely respected. Such was the position of James D. Davidson and his family as the Presidential election of 1860 approached.

II.

The election of 1860 brought confusion and division to Valley politics. All realized the crucial nature of the election, but all were not unanimous in their determination of the best candidate in terms of Virginia's and the Valley's interests, thus splitting the political leaders, the press and the public.

The old Whig leaders, including Davidson and men like Samuel McDowell Moore and Samuel McDowell Reid, supported the Constitutional Union Party and its candidate, John Bell.²⁸

Davidson, still an ardent Unionist, felt Bell's election would best serve the cause of a lasting Union. The respected Lexington Gazette also subscribed to this view.²⁹

Some of Davidson's closest Unionist friends, however, supported Stephen Douglas - including Democratic Governor John Letcher and James B. Dorman, Davidson's cousin and very close personal and political friend. Like Letcher, Dorman also rejected the candidate of many of his fellow Southern Democrats, John Breckinridge, and supported Douglas. The Valley Star, the other local newspaper, editorially followed a similar course.³⁰

The majority of the state's Democratic Party supported Breckinridge's candidacy, and this faction also had its representation in Rockbridge County. Local Breckinridge support was spearheaded by men such as Judge John W. Brockenbrough, who would become ardent secessionists. There was also included among the ranks of the Breckinridge supporters a certain VMI professor by the name of Thomas J. Jackson.³¹

When the returns were in, Davidson and his allies had obviously best done their political homework, and the result was a resounding victory for the Constitutional Unionist candidate John Bell. In the City of Lexington, the vote was 290 for Bell; Douglas 148; and Breckinridge 49. In Rockbridge County, Bell received 1214 votes, compared to 630 for Douglas and 352 for Breckinridge.³²

Similar vote counts were echoed throughout the state as Bell captured Virginia's electoral votes. Bell's victory in Lexington, Rockbridge, and Virginia further contributed to the status of Davidson's political leadership throughout the Valley, and further established him as a leader of the pro-Union forces in a time of rising anti-Union forces with increasingly short secessionist tempers.

Demands for Southern secession increased, and the crisis environment which gripped the entire nation increased as the time for Lincoln's inauguration drew nearer, and this environment was mirrored in microcosm in Lexington and Rockbridge

County. Toward the end of November, meetings began to be held as to how "this alarming state of affairs" could be dealt with.³³

Davidson was much disturbed by the demands for secession, and still favored a conservative course of policy. The story of his actions from the time of Lincoln's election until the firing upon Fort Sumter provide a clear insight into the minds of Southern conservatives in seeking reconciliation and the extinguishment of the enflamed venom of those upon whom Davidson hung the label of "fire-eater".³⁴

Davidson envisioned Virginia as holding the key to the continued existence of the Union. He saw the opportunity for Virginia to act as mediator between North and South and lead the way to a Union-saving compromise. At the same time, in addition to splitting of the Union, he also feared, prophetically, what he predicted to be possible results arising from dissension between eastern and western Virginia concerning a rupture between North and South.³⁵

The message and phraseology of Davidson's letters are consistent and at times identical in various letters. Davidson constantly urged moderation and deliberation. He feared the long term effects of Southern actions taken in haste. He thought time would bring moderation of the more distasteful Northern demands, but saw problems in the fear and hostile obstinance evidenced in the states of the Deep South.

There are favorable signs in the North. If the time is gained, the issue may be settled in peace. But the Cotton States do not want a settlement, & will prevent it if they can. ³⁶

Rumors of impending discord continued to reach him. His son Albert made a trip from the University of Virginia to Washington during the first week of January, 1861. He wrote his father that:

In Washington I saw no one that entertained any hope that there would be a union by the 4th of March. ³⁷

In spite of such information, the elder Davidson still persisted in his belief that the Union could and should be saved. In late January, in a letter of pragmatic and philosophical observations and advice to Governor Letcher, Davidson lamented a rise in secessionist feeling in Rockbridge County, particularly in the Natural Bridge area, and then went on to emphasize again to the Governor the continued importance of Virginia's wait-and-see attitude.

How important therefore is it, that Va. should stand firm, & looking to her own honor and interest, continue her considerate pause. It is the only hope of saving the Union. And if her course fails in this, it will at least cover her with the army of a "pert" cause, & protect her from the Northern foe, in a conflict between North and South. For if we are rash in action, the battle, if it comes, must and will be fought on Virginia soil.

We have then a double motive to pause. First to save the Union, upon which all our hope depends - & second, to avoid a quarrel, in which our blood might flow like

water.

But a few short months ago, our love of the Union was as true as filial love. Now it is perverted into bitter hate. Who could have dreamed last summer such a change would come over us? Bacon has wisely said: "Those things which are ³⁸ best in their nature are worst in their perversion."

Davidson believed that if Virginia seceded, her position as not only the largest slaveholding state, but also as mother and leader of the border states, would insure the destruction of the union.³⁹

Finally, Davidson believed the Secessionists formed a distinct minority. He feared, though, that this minority would be able to manipulate a facade of public opinion in such a way as to stampede public opinion-conscious legislators and politicians into a course of anti-Union action which they and their constituents would later regret.⁴⁰

The few Secessionists here were noisy, & I have discovered that one of them will make more noise than ten conservative men. Thus a false impression is often made.⁴¹

Throughout January and February, calls for a Virginia Convention to assemble and meet to consider the secession question were issued throughout the Commonwealth. After such consideration and soul searching, Davidson finally decided that such a course of action would be in the best interest of the Unionist

cause, and he thus advised Letcher of his feelings. Also, he did not think that Letcher could politically afford to ignore completely these demands and still hope to preserve the credibility of his leadership position.⁴²

...it would disarm you to some extent of your influence if you would too boldly resist it, it is safest generally to yield apparently to a strong public sentiment, so as to be in a position to control it.⁴³

Davidson believed that even if Letcher opposed a Convention, one might very well be called anyway by the legislature. Finally, Davidson thought that Letcher was too isolated in Richmond to perceive accurately the will of the people.

The solution which Davidson proposed would politically allow Letcher to respond to the will of the people, and would maintain his position of leadership while at the same time place responsibility for actually calling the controversial convention in the hands of others. Such a course would be less dangerous in terms of political considerations to Letcher, while at the same time would be desirable in terms of democratic philosophy, since it would allow the decision to be made by those in the best position to know the feelings of the people.

The legislature had previously been called by Letcher to meet in special session on January 14 to consider the sale of the James River and Kanawa Canal Company. Directly following

Lincoln's election, ninety-four members of the legislature petitioned the Governor to convene a special session for the first Monday of December to deal with the crisis caused by Lincoln's election. Letcher compromised and moved his call for a special session back a week to January 7.⁴⁴

Davidson's proposal was straightforward. Letcher should seize the initiative and direct the legislature to debate and vote upon the convention issue.

I would therefore suggest as a mere course of policy on your part as to a State Convention (for no one knows today, whether it would be proper to do tomorrow.) that the responsibility of calling a convention might be submitted by you to the Wisdom of the Legislature, whose members are just fresh from the people, & must know their sentiments better than you.⁴⁵

Letcher chose not to follow Davidson's advice, and instead pursued a course of active opposition to a Convention. Davidson's judgement, though, was borne out in the end, as the Legislature did exactly what Davidson had predicted and passed a resolution calling for such a State Convention in spite of Letcher's opposition. Letcher reluctantly then issued a call for such a convention, and the election date for delegates to it was set for February 4.

Davidson immediately plunged himself into the local races for delegates to the convention. The two Unionist candidates were Samuel McDowell Moore and James B. Dorman, Davidson's

cousin and very close friend. C. C. Baldwin and Judge John W. Brockenbrough, who was designated by the legislature to be, along with former President Tyler and three others, a Virginia delegate to the Letcher-initiated Washington Peace Conference of 1961 and which opened in Washington on February 4 also.⁴⁷

Davidson reported to Letcher in the course of the campaign that Dorman was running very well in the upper part of the county, particularly in the Brownsburg and Fairfield areas. Unionist sentiment, though, was expected by Davidson to be considerably weaker in the lower section of the county, particularly in the Natural Bridge area, which was Brockenbrough's stronghold. Demographically, evidence indicates that small farmers, artisans, and mechanics were strongly opposed to secession, and could be counted in the Unionist column in so far as they exercised the franchise.⁴⁸

In addition to the election of delegates, there was also appearing on the February 4 ballot another matter of crucial importance to the Unionist's hopes - a question as to whether or not the results of the convention should be submitted to the people in a referendum before being enacted into law, or whether the convention's work should be final in and of itself. The Secessionists adamantly opposed such a referendum, the Unionists ardently favored it.⁴⁹

The voting of February 4 thus took on double meaning, particularly in the eyes of those who saw Virginia as the key to lasting union or disunion. On Election Day, after ascertaining partial local results but before knowing of results elsewhere in the Commonwealth, Davidson captured the spirit of the day as he wrote Letcher:

This most momentous day, to Va. ... is about closing: for upon the results of this day depend the existence of the American Union. ⁵⁰

He then gave Letcher news of an overwhelmingly smashing Unionist vote for Dorman and Moore, and an even more devastating victory for the proposed referendum. ⁵⁰

The results were much the same all across Virginia, with advocates of immediate secession electing only thirty of the one hundred and fifty-two delegates, and the referendum proposal overwhelmingly passed by a vote of 100,536 to 45,161.

Davidson was exceedingly pleased with the results of the vote. A week and a half after the election, Davidson wrote to Dorman and described the disarray of the secessionists in the Valley.

"Lord, how dumbfounded, are the secessionists here! I really pity them. But a few days ago, & they were high up stairs, & clamoring from the house tops. But 'such a getting downstairs, I never did see. ⁵¹

In spite of having been defeated at the polls, the immediate secessionists still continued to pursue their goal utilizing any means still open to them to try to advance their position, including personal attacks on the more conservative governor.

As the convention drew near, the political conflict between the two sides grew even more intense. Letcher wrote Davidson of the intense pressure which he had been under, and which he expected to remain.

I know that no effort will be spared to impair and weaken any influence I may have had at a time like this, when madmen are seeking to overthrow the peace of the country, by overturning its constitution. ⁵²

Davidson advised Letcher of one form of ad hominem attack his enemies were displaying, and advised Letcher to remedy the situation at once. Letcher had no drinking problem, but did attempt to be a hospitable man towards his guests. Nonetheless, his political foes tried to paint this personal attribute into an untrue and damaging political liability. Davidson, in Lexington, wrote the following to Letcher on February 7, 1861, just six days before the convention was to open. The incident is not that important per se, but it does well illustrate the tenor and excited depth of feelings in the political arena as that momentous event was about to commence.

You well know how well your enemies have been perverting your hospitalities, to your --- (? , M.S. unclear). Since my return I have heard one remark about the free use of whiskey in your Mansion, by your visitors - and heard it mentioned (by?) - M.S. unclear - your best friend in this county that he had heard, that you kept it in your office, at the Capitol. I have heard these things spoken of before: and you and I have spoken of them together. Now for many reasons consistent (??) (M.S. unclear) with your public position & for a due regard to public sentiment, I make these suggestions.

"As the convention is approaching, the City will be crowded with visitors from the country - and many from this County will go down. Before the convention meets, could you not, by degrees withdraw the bottle from your reception room; and whenever you have particular friends, whom you know well, ask them into a private room? Or even if you still keep it under lock in your receiving room, do not offer it promiscuously. You would thus shut the mouths of many babblers, who talk for talk's sake, or with an evil mind.

And moreover, there never was a time when sounder heads are needed, upon the men who will go into the convention. They cannot be safe under the influence of spirit, & the open use of it there would excite some remarks. More than on any other occasion, we (? , M.S. unclear) all will feel that they hold in their hands our lives & our liberties. And if any one should say or do a rash act, under the influence of excitement, in this Crisis, & it were known that he had just enjoyed your hospitality, there would be enough to charge it upon you. ⁵³

Letcher was surprized and angered by the information received from Davidson. He did enjoy an occasional drink, but did not mix bourbon and business. He greatly resented such smear tactics, and took Davidson's advice by setting out to arrest it immediately.⁵⁴

Davidson soon thereafter went to Richmond himself to lobby for the Unionist position and meet with Dorman, Moore, and other political compatriots. The convention, though, did little of

substance during the weeks immediately after opening, occupying itself with speeches and learning the varying persuasions of the delegates, and awaiting the outcome of the Peace Conference in Washington, and the message of Lincoln's Inaugural.⁵⁵

Letcher, Davidson, and the other Unionists realized that if the rising tide of secessionism was to be withstood, new ammunition would be needed. Detailed and inside information and assurances from Washington could provide exactly the material the anti-Secessionists needed to buy time and nip the Secessionists' surge.⁵⁶

Accordingly, the stage was set for one of the most important performances of James D. Davidson's civic and political career.

III.

Governor Letcher was discouraged by the slow plodding of the Peace Conference and worried about what a Lincoln administration would bring to the national political scene, and what effects and repercussions such an administration might have upon Virginia's future. Letcher wanted desperately to defend the Union, but in order to do so effectively he felt it necessary to know something about Lincoln's plans. Yet Lincoln remained silent as to the policy he would pursue, particularly in regards to the coercion issue.⁵⁷

Letcher asked Davidson to go to Washington to sound out the President-elect and the new national leadership. Davidson was accompanied by Gen. William Skeen of Alleghany County and J.S. McNutt, then editor of the Lexington Gazette.⁵⁸ Davidson was doubtful about what to expect from the Republican leadership. James B. Dorman, Davidson's aforementioned cousin and Rockbridge delegate to the secession convention, had been to Washington a week and a half previously, and had told Davidson that the Republicans had agreed to submit the Crittenden compromise to the people for a vote. This was more than Davidson expected

of the Republicans, and he was more than a little skeptical about the prospects for the action Dorman mentioned. He felt that the Republicans were representing only the mood of the country that prevailed on Election Day, and that now as the nation approached the precipice of division and war, the mood of the people had actually changed, even though the Republicans remained obstinate in their determinations. Davidson was pessimistic about such men, and expected little positive action from them.⁵⁸

Davidson, with this outlook, set out for Washington late on Saturday night, February 24, 1861, and arrived in the capital early Sunday morning. Lexington's representative in Congress, John T. Harris, introduced Davidson and his companions to many of the " 'mighty men' of the country."⁵⁹ Everywhere they met, they were received with much interest because of the crucial position which Virginia at that time occupied. "Indeed," Davidson wrote in another place, "all seemed glad to see & talk with a Virginian."⁶⁰

On Sunday evening, the Virginians went to call on Sen. John J. Crittenden, a man whom Davidson greatly admired. Crittenden had attended Washington College when it was still Liberty Hall Academy, and had there known James D.'s father and mother,

thus giving Davidson some common ground with which to build a conversation with the Senator from Kentucky. Several weeks before, Davidson had written Crittenden, with the hopeful observation that secession was bowing to conservatism. He viewed Crittenden as "the instrument of restoring peace to our distracted country."⁶² Davidson now hoped while in Washington to ascertain from Crittenden and others the prospect of such a peace.

While in Crittenden's rooms, Gen. Winfield Scott came to the call on the Senator. Davidson's uncle, James Dorman, had been a favorite of Scott's while in the Army. Having learnt of Davidson's kinship, Scott spent much of the rest of his visit in conversation with Davidson. Scott described to Davidson the fortifications along the Atlantic Coast to the harbor at Charleston. Scott then expressed to Davidson an encouraging opinion which he was very pleased to hear. Scott said:

"I saw Mr. Lincoln on yesterday. I am called to see him tomorrow. I cannot speak from authority; but I will say; there will be no blood shed."⁶³

The crux of the crisis, in Davidson's mind, was the issue of coercion. Like President Buchanan and certain Virginia unionists, Davidson believed that secession was wrong, but at the same time believed that the federal government constitutionally had no right to use force against a state that had seceded. It was about this matter that Davidson worried most, and about

this matter that he came to Washington to find out answers. Such force changed the nature of the Union in the minds of Virginians like Davidson, and as such could destroy that Union.⁶⁴

In other conversations with Democratic and Republican Congressional leaders and a prospective Cabinet officer, Davidson and his delegation pressed and probed for a key to understanding Lincoln's attitude toward coercion. They soon came under the impression that Lincoln's policy would be to let time, not force, sooth Southern nerves and end talk or acts of secession.⁶⁵

Davidson and his party were soon able to get their information from the most credible source of all. On Monday night, Davidson was introduced to Abraham Lincoln, just one week before Inauguration Day. The occasion was a reception for the President-elect at Willard's Hotel in Washington. The reception was crowded, but the way was cleared for the Virginia delegation to move directly to meet the President.

With his characteristic honesty and plain-spoken straightforwardness, Davidson tried to pry from Lincoln his position on coercion. Davidson's directness caused some remarks and amazement to some Northern politicians nearby. Nonetheless, Davidson never meant to shock, offend, or be discourteous to anyone. He only spoke what was on his mind, and spoke it directly, cogently and to the point.⁶⁶

After first paying their respects to Mrs. Lincoln, the

country lawyer from Lexington, Virginia and his friends were introduced to the country lawyer from Springfield, Illinois. The introduction was made by the man who arranged the meeting, Senator John Sherman of Ohio.

After a kind reception with some cordial handshaking and exchange of the usual pleasantries, Davidson went right to the heart of the reason for their visit to Washington. Addressing the President-elect, Davidson declared:

We are from the mountains of Virginia. We are Conservative Union Men. You know the stand Virginia has taken in this crisis. She will never bear coercion."⁶⁷

"There will be no necessity for coercion. That word is misunderstood and misinterpreted. No ⁶⁸armies ever will be marched through the Southern States.

Davidson then pursued a line of questioning aimed at further drawing Lincoln out, bringing up the subject of revenue collection, the embroiled Southern forts, and the actions of South Carolina.⁶⁹

Lincoln quickly responded to Davidson's question with a question of his own. "If I am struck at, may I not strike back?"⁷⁰

Davidson observed in reply, "aggression might change the case."⁷¹

Lincoln then observed:

If we have a government let us know it. If we can't keep the family together, might it not be as well to break up housekeeping.⁷²

The entire conversation was friendly and, Davidson felt, constructive. He was satisfied that Lincoln did not intend

to use coercion against the Southern states, and later took such a message back to the Governor Letcher and the Virginia Convention.⁷³

Finally, their time having elapsed, Davidson again shook Lincoln's hand, and took leave to return to Virginia before the Inaugural, leaving many of his hopes in Washington. In parting Davidson stated:

Mr. President, we now return to our mountains.
Farewell! The question of Peace or War is in your hands. ⁷⁴

Bending over towards Davidson, Lincoln said,

Farewell! There will be no war. ⁷⁵

Davidson came back to Virginia satisfied, and more at ease than when he journeyed to Washington. On the basis of what he had read in the Southern papers, he had braced himself for the worse, and expressed pleasure in the knowledge that his apprehensions had apparently been misplaced. In a letter to Letcher reporting on his trip, Davidson wrote:

I got home on Tuesday night from Washington. I had 2 pleasant & profitable days in Washington. I saw more of the prominent men of the Land than ever before.

...My hopes were much encouraged whilst there;...
From what I could see & hear, I was satisfied that Lincoln's policy would be agst (sic) Coercion. And even if his Inaugural does not come out decidedly against it, I think his policy will be to let the Seceding States alone, until the question will wear itself out.

...I was agreeably disappointed as I had been most unfavorably impressed against him. ⁷⁶

Upon his return, Davidson then set himself to working and

lobbying in person and by mail, reassuring the Convention delegates that coercion would not necessarily be a part of the Lincoln administration and anxiously awaiting the Inaugural message which the new President would deliver, and for which the Virginia Convention delegates were likewise awaiting with nervous expectation.

Despite Davidson's optimism, Inauguration Day still found him apprehensive. In a letter to Dorman on March 4, Davidson included in the heading of the letter, just below the date, the words "Dies Irae - Dies illa", the traditional Latin incantation of a funeral hymn ("Day of Wrath, Day of Mourning.")⁷⁷

Davidson, after receiving a text of the Inaugural Address was not filled with anger toward it, and he did not place upon the words as ominous an interpretation as many of his fellow Virginians did. He thought that its ambiguities would not be received well in the more sophisticated South. Nonetheless, he did not see the address as sounding the clarion calling the North to a policy of Coercion, and thus for all practical purposes forcing the South into a policy of Secession. Even though a Unionist, Davidson's strong sectional bias and anti-Republican sentiments show forth in the following excerpts of his March 6 letter to Dorman. The letter contains some lucid insights into political reality in terms of what the South could realistically, with a tinge of hope, look for from a Northern Republican.

I have read the Inaugural over very carefully. It is about what I expected. Indeed I think it would be unreasonable to expect a Black Republican President, to come out against coercion in any form. Nor do I think any reasonable Southern man, can draw any inference from it, that Lincoln entertains any decided-determined purpose, under any circumstances, to collect revenue, or seize the forts, at the Southern Ports.

...His avowed determinations, are so much qualified by his buts and his ifs and his unlesses etc, that his inaugural amounts in fact to a message against coercion. Consistency on his part required something from him to satisfy his party, otherwise, he would have lost his prestige with it, and would have subjected himself to the imputation that he was frightened by, & sold to the South. Mark it. He knows it will fail if attempted - & could serve no good purpose. 78

He continued:

In a word, it is somewhat Jesuitical striving to please both sides attempting to cover up his tracks & intending to be conciliatory etc. Its plan and manner will not please, high toned Southern Men, who like boldness & frankness, even when against them. But what else could you expect from a Northwestern man like Lincoln, who has not been polished by intercourse with the high toned & generous society of a Southern Sun. 79

Davidson seems to have been somewhat unrealistic in his appraisal of the meaning of the Inaugural for Southern state futures. Though some of his insights are good and valid, he also seems guilty at times of seeing and hearing what he wants to hear and see, or to exclude and eliminate cognitive dissonance, Davidson ignored (or chose not to pursue) the implications and intimations of a far sterner policy contained in parts of Lincoln's Inaugural speech.

At any rate, other Virginians did not share Davidson's optimism. Son Charles wrote to his father from the University

of Virginia concerning the effect of the speech and reactions to it there.

The Inaugural changed many Unionists into immediate secessionists, and it is looked upon by a great many as a declaration of war against the seceding (sic) States. ⁸⁰

Also, Lexington, because of the strong Unionists sentiments known to be held by many there, was coming to be referred to by the Secessionists as an "abolitionist hole". ⁸¹

The address also provoked great excitement in Richmond.

Letcher wrote to Davidson that:

Lincoln's inaugural created quite a sensation here. The disunionists were wild with joy, and declared, if the Convention did not pass an Ordinance of secession at once the State would be disgraced. ⁸²

Davidson persisted though, in his belief. He pragmatically pointed out that Lincoln, even if he had the will, did not have the means to enforce a policy of coercion. He communicated this opinion to the Governor in a letter of March 9.

There is no money in the Treasury - No credit to borrow - & no prospect of bettering the credit of the Government, by using borrowed money to break it to pieces. Nearly all the ships are on the other side of the earth - many of the Army officers & soldiers, Southern men, & the probable unwillingness of even Northern men to enlist in a fraternal war, are facts alone sufficient to forbid the idea that he will attempt a policy, which would require all the snares & powers of the Government to carry it through. ⁸³

In the face of stepped-up secessionist activities, Davidson increased his efforts as leader of the local pro-Union forces. When J..S. McNutt, editor of the Lexington Gazette , published an editorial which well could have been interpreted as pro-secessionist, he received a visit from Davidson chastising him and seeking a more conservative course in the future. Davidson, always a respecter and believer in the persuasive powers of the press, assured Letcher that:

McNutt has been called to an account. I have talked with him. I am satisfied he does not mean to be understood as he speaks in that editorial and I think his future course will show, that he has made an impression he did not intend. 84

Davidson likewise pursued a similar course of personal visits and pressure with other influential local leaders rumored from time to time to be wavering in their support of the Unionist cause, including at one time the professors at Washington College. In these visits, Davidson was uniformly successful. 85

With the Inaugural over the Secessionists in Rockbridge County and the Valley became more active and adamant than ever. Davidson wrote Dorman of the increase in the Secessionist attack and commented:

The Secessionists are much troubled here. They say we are sold - dishonored & subjugated by Lincoln. One of them said to me, today, that there would be a rebellion in Virginia, if the Convention does not act speedily - & that another convention will be called, in less than six months. And such is becoming talk. Godd Lord! What talk. 86

Secessionist strategy now took on a more grass roots approach and endeavored to instruct the Convention delegates to vote immediate Secession. The triffling delays of the Convention, and the hysteria of the press and the Secessionist forces over Lincoln's inauguration continued to gnaw at Unionist supporters. Samuel McDowell Moore, the other Rockbridge County Delegate to the convention in addition to Dorman, wrote to Davidson on March 10, the Sunday after the Inaugural, of the pressure being brought to bear.

It is impossible for me to tell what we are going to do; great efforts are being made, by the Secessionists, to get up excitement and alarm among the people, to induce them to instruct their delegates in the Convention, to vote for immediate secession. We have no newspaper in the City favoring our views, whilst the other side have the Enquirer, Examiner, Dispatch & S. Lit. Messenger, and the Whig about half the time. All sorts of sensation (sic) lies and letters are published to create alarm, and drive the people to madness. ... The City is controlled by a Mob, who parole (sic) the streets insulting the Delegates to the Convention.

The Virginia secessionists, bearing in mind the stunning vote of February 4 on the referendum and in the election of delegates to the convention, perceived that they would lose a vote of secession if put to the people in a regular election. Their strategy, then, would be to fan the flames of public opinion (or of secessionist opinion) to put pressure upon the Delegates with the real or facade appearance of mass support, and attempt to stampede the Convention in such a politically and emotionally charged atmosphere to vote for immediate

secession without submitting the results to a popular referendum. It did not take long for the Valley secessionist leadership to put the strategy into operation. Nor did it take long for the politically incisive Davidson to perceive the changed strategy of the secessionists and to see its potential danger to the Unionist forces. In a letter to Letcher on March 14, Davidson advised the Governor of the changed strategy of the secessionists.

I find here today that certain persons are endeavoring, or intend to get up instructions to our Convention Delegates. They know well that unless they can take the people, as it were unawares, they are lost. Their policy is to inflame public sentiment, & appeal to a heated session. Unwilling are they to submit to the sober second thoughts of the people: especially, after the terrible lesson taught them on the 4th of Feby. in the midst of their vain boastings & c. Whether they will operate through public meetings or private subscriptions, I know not. It is therefore the duty of every conservative, to be on the eternal guard & never sleep upon his port. If they are allowed to make some headway they may set in a current, which might be hard to stem.

Public meetings were the course the secessionists chose. Meetings were held at Natural Bridge and right outside of Davidson's law office in the yard of the County Courthouse in Lexington. An even bigger meeting was being planned for the 12th of April, when the Circuit Court was in session and both the courthouse and the town would be filled with litigants and spectators come in from the county. The public was dissatisfied with the piddling of the Convention, and the Secessionists endeavored to make this dissatisfaction appear to be a change in public opinion to a position favoring secession.⁸⁹

Davidson's task of trying to hold public opinion for the

Union was not easy, as the Secessionists, though a minority, were well organized. He wrote to Dorman, "They are untiringly active here, and will leave no stone unturned."⁹⁰ Their personal campaign required much of Davidson's efforts to combat it. In a letter to Governor Letcher, Davidson reported that there was wavering among Valley Conservatives in the face of the incessant Secessionist barrage.

I find some little wavering here since the Inaugural. The Secessionists ... are saying that we are sold - that Virginia is now crawling on her belly - eating dirt & c. But they are persistently trying to influence the public mind. In a time like this - & on so exciteable a question, there is danger that they may make some headway. We at least, should be ever on the watch. I have met with several conservative men, who had begun to waver. But in every instance, I left them, firm in their former faith.⁹¹

With the Valley Secessionists, Davidson was helping to lead the fight against a foe both determined in principle and pragmatically resourceful in the wide arsenal of propaganda weapons they were willing to employ as means toward their end goals.

The Secessionists in Rockbridge County, for instance, literally tried to bribe Josiah McNutt, editor of the Lexington Gazette, with a promise of four hundred new subscribers if the paper would come out for secession. McNutt, under Davidson's continued surveillance and pressure, resisted.⁹²

As the conflict between the sides grew more and more intense, Davidson's feelings are illustrative of the deep ideological conflict across Virginia and across all the South, especially across the Border States. With each day, Davidson's letters become more and more emotionally-charged, and the flavor of the

language becomes increasingly spiced and at times bitter. On April 2, he wrote to Dorman of the Secessionist drive, and used in describing the course of action words paraphrasing those which Christ used at the Last Supper in speaking to Judas of his traitorous action.

("That which thou doest, do quickly." John 13:27.)

The Secession party here are straining every nerve to its utmost tension, to disorganize the conservative party. That party knows that what it does must be done quickly, and it is pressed to the utmost point of endurance. It can't stand such extreme tension long, & unless it is relieved from it, by an early success in their machinations, a terrible reaction will befall them: and well they know it.

Therefore let Conservatism stand fast, & hold designing men & their sensation measures at bay. And time will do its work, of peace to the country, & vengeance to her foes. ⁹³

While paying heed to events at home in his own backyard, Davidson also continued personally and through his prolific pen to play a key role in leading the anti-secession movement state-wide. Davidson and the Unionists recognized the enormous power and influence of the press where there was no television or radio yet, and accordingly the lack of a strong anti-Secessionist voice among the major newspapers of Virginia deeply disturbed them. The Secessionists, though a popular and political minority, totally dominated the news and opinion communication medium of the day, placing the Unionists at a severe persuasive and propagandistic disadvantage in the dissemination of Unionist beliefs and positions to the public large.

Accordingly, Davidson, in conjunction with several other pro-Union activists all across the Commonwealth, was a leader

in an effort to establish a strongly pro-Union newspaper in Richmond with state-wide circulation and advertising. Davidson himself pledged to obtain both subscribers and advertisers from the Valley for such a paper. A strong paper, in Davidson's mind, would be not only a source of information, but a strong political weapon in vying for control of public opinion.⁹⁴

These are times, when we must bring home to the people not only plain every day matters of fact, but push them home in stirring words, rousing them into thought and action so that they will feel if they do not understand them.⁹⁵

Davidson also used his aforementioned literary abilities for the advancement of the Unionist cause. Under the pseudonym of "Robert of Rockbridge", Davidson wrote a series of letters depicting as if he were a Rockbridge County bumpkin to a more sophisticated relative concerning the events of the day. Humorously written with extreme dialect, phoenetic spellings, and poor grammar, the letters nonetheless endeavored to portray the complex issues and arguments of the secession debate in an incisively simple manner with a strong pro-Union theme. The letters were published in the Richmond Whig and, judging from comments Davidson received, were quite effective. However, publication of more articles in the planned continuing series was halted when the pro-Unionist editor of the Whig was forced out of his post by the pro-Secessionist owners.⁹⁶

Davidson, Dorman, and the other Unionists opposed secession

because of what in principle they foresaw it would do to the Union, and also what they foresaw it doing to Virginia and even to Rockbridge County, which at the time appeared to be something of a microcosm of Virginia. They prophetically feared a rendering of Virginia, and feared that the line of demarcation might even cross through Rockbridge County itself.⁹⁷

Dorman wrote from Richmond to Davidson of the stark possibilities Virginia secession could bring.

My view, derived from a perfect knowledge of the tone & feelings of extreme members, East & West, is that East Va. will not submit to remain in the Union nor can be kept quiet without a chance to vote on secession - & Trans Alleghany Va. will not go with the State until they have a chance at least for consultation with Kentucky. Whilst we in the Valley & in Rockbridge can't separate safely from either. If a division ensued I shd (sic) look for a possible division of the County of Rockbridge even. That part South of Buffalo cd. and wd. never separate from East Virginia - that part bordering on Augusta wd have more of a Maryland & Pennsylvania interest, ... But the fact is, on this point, Rockingham & c. on one side & Botetourt & c as far as Lee & Scott, wd go overwhelmingly for union with East Va. & I have no doubt in truth that Rockbridge wd. too.⁹⁸

He continues, writing of the possibilities of an east Virginia-west Virginia split, and assessed its possible effect on Rockbridge County and Lexington.

"If this ever comes we are worse off in Lexington than any spot in the State. Our arsenal will never be quietly given up by either side. Think of these things, for I tell you, I regard them as if present, practical importance."⁹⁹

Davidson had fought, together with Dorman and many others, for the preservation of the Union, for many and various reasons and goals. Nonetheless, though Davidson was a very definite

policy influencer on the local and state level, his fellow Unionists were dependent like the farmer upon the rain, upon the actions of the actual policy makers on the national level whose de facto co-operation they needed but upon whom they exerted no control.

Lincoln's public indecisiveness of approach to the secession dilemma made the course of the Virginia Unionists harder to traverse, but nonetheless they continued, and even continued with some degree of optimism, until the Lincoln administration finally took definitive action on the issue of secession and on the issue of coercion. And when this action was taken, the goals, the hopes, and the dreams of these Virginia Unionists were dashed, destroyed, and foreclosed, because Lincoln's action clearly showed that the Union perceived by the Northern Republicans was not the nature of the Union perceived by the Southern Unionists, the Union of militant anti-Secessionism was not the same as the Union of respectful and co-operative, non-coercive, anti-secessionism. The fuel of coercion may have enkindled and enflamed the Unionist torch to burn more brightly among the Lincoln's and the Seward's and the Stanton's of the North, but it smothered and extinguished that same torch among the Davidson's and the Dorman's and the Letcher's of the Border and the South.

IV.

Forebodings of the worst filtered heavily into Davidson's correspondence beginning around the first week of April, 1861. As Lincoln moved closer toward armed confrontation, Davidson began receiving omens of coming horrors. On April 9, Dorman wrote to Davidson from the Hall of Convention in Richmond:

It is worse and worse today. A telegram was received here this morning stating that Lincoln had given formal notice Fort Sumter (sic) will be reinforced ... If it actually turns out to be so, & civil war is at this moment going on, God knows what will come next, I have seen this thing coming for several days...¹⁰⁰

Dorman was in a quandry as to which course of action to pursue, in view of his previous pledges to his constituents to insist on Virginia's pursuing a Unionist course.

In this state of things my only desire is to know as accurately as possible the sentiment of my constituents. Although every hope may have fled from my own bosom, I shall not change the course I have pursued unless I have some reason to believe that they wish it. Write to me every day, or get some one else¹⁰¹ to do so, & let me know precisely what is going on.

The reinforcements at Fort Sumter did not in themselves put an end to Southern Unionism. A solid case could be made from the Unionist standpoint for such action, based upon the right of the Federal government to protect Federal property. However, in the minds of the Lexington conservatives and Union-

ists, Lincoln's call of April 15, 1861 for volunteers from Virginia for the purpose of coercing the seceded Southern states back into the Union was irreconcilable with cherished Virginia conservative beliefs of states rights and perceptions of the essential restrictions on the use of Federal force against the states. In the minds of many, Lincoln had forced Virginia's hand, and had forced her into secession. Unionism in the heart and mind of James D. Davidson and within the whole of Rockbridge County residents had died a regrettable but perhaps inevitable death.¹⁰²

Following the news of Sumter and of Lincoln's call for troops, Davidson gathered in his law office a group of community leaders, including many former Unionists, to discuss the situation and take a position to be communicated to Dorman and Moore, Rockbridge's delegates to the Secession Convention in Richmond. Secessionists and Unionists had at last fused into one accord, or, as Davidson put it, "We are now, we all know, in the midst of Revolution. There seems indeed to be one feeling and now that we should '...march all one way.'" ¹⁰³ The instructions drawn up by the group were that Rockbridge delegates should themselves vote for secession and then submit their decision to a popular referendum and, finally, should vote to send commissioners to the other Border States to arrange a mutual secession.

Davidson communicated the instructions to Dorman:

I have sent you a Dispatch which will reach you tomorrow. As it may not reach you it is as follows. "Take both steps. submit (sic) the question of Revolution & appoint Commissioners to a Border Conference - the conference if possible to meet before the people vote - ..."¹⁰⁴

Davidson, in another letter two weeks later, described the scene in his office that fateful day of April 16, and described the transition his own thinking had undergone.

... I had been a Union man myself of the strictest faith until the Proclamation. (Lincoln's proclamation calling for troops.) On the 16th ... I gathered around me, in my office 30 of our strongest Union men and prepared a Dispatch to our Delegate Dorman in which they all concurred - "Vote an ordinance of Revolution at once." Rockbridge was revolutionized at once: and now our Secession friends say, they are the Conservatives now - & that we are the fire eaters.¹⁰⁵

Symbolic of the movement and transition which had taken place in the Unionists of the Valley in less than one week was the controversy over which flag would fly over Lexington. In his April 16 letter to Dorman, Davidson described the commotion going on at that moment outside of the courthouse.

Just this moment the Union pole, raised on yesterday, with the Eagle upon it, has been cut down by those who raised the Va. Flag. But to avoid any excitement it was cut down. We had an alarming time Saturday evening, between the Cadets and the working men, when raising their Union pole. But it is quieted now I hope, and it seems that now we are all thinking alike.¹⁰⁶

The next day, April 17, 1861, Davidson wrote Dorman again. News of Virginia's secession had reached Davidson, and he had had time to ponder it. News had also come of Governor Letcher's requisitions to the counties for volunteers to defend the Commonwealth. Davidson foresaw the tragic consequences the past week's evolution of events would have.

Our men now are preparing - Greenlee says that he need not make a will, as I will be his heir at law. And so we talk - 'tis well that nature provide us some comfort in our worst distress. I mourn when I think that our happy land may fill with weeping Rachels.

What a change has this time been brought over Rockbridge in a few days by the invidious policy of Abraham Lincoln! And you would scarcely believe how we are all now found together. I turn my back upon all past political differences - & now look forward with an eye ---- (M.S. unclear) only to the union, the honor, & the safety of Virginia.¹⁰⁷

In this same letter of April 17, Davidson also mentioned the upcoming elections for the House of Delegates, which in view of Virginia's secession took on even greater importance than ever before. Davidson wrote that he was being pressured to run for a seat himself, but declined and pledged his support to Dorman and Moore.¹⁰⁸

Throughout the Secession crisis, Davidson remained in close communication with Governor Letcher. The former Unionists stuck together in their transformation into secessionists. The nation, the Commonwealth, and the grassroots of the Valley prepared for a Civil War testing the validity of their decision.¹⁰⁹

V.

One of the tragedies of the American Civil War was the fratricidal divisions it inflicted upon the nation, dividing not only states but also families and friends. Such social anguish and suffering which is an inevitable by-product of civil war is well exemplified within the Davidson family.

At the outset of the war, two of James D. Davidson's brothers were living north of the Mason-Dixon line. Both lived in Indiana, and their comments portray both the pain of separation and a view of Northern attitudes toward the South and the Border States.

Alexander H. Davidson, an 1836 graduate of Washington College, lived in Indianapolis and according to one source, eventually fought on the side of the Union army, attaining the rank of general. His son, Phillip, was a student at VMI under the eye of James D. Davidson, and enlisted in the Confederate Army at the very outset of the conflict, as soon as Virginia seceded. His other son, Dorman, sought to fight for the Union as an officer in the Indiana militia unit to which he had belonged for several years. James D.'s other brother living in the North was Charles B. Davidson. Charles was a member of the Washington College

class of 1837 and was an Episcopal minister residing in Evansville, Indiana at the time the war broke out.¹¹⁰

As early as February, Alexander was writing to James about the possibility of Secession. He expressed pride in Virginia's conservative wait-and-see stance. He favored preservation of the Union, or, if breakup of the Union proved inevitable, a Confederacy of border states (free and slave), including both Virginia and Indiana. His opinions seem to have been shared by substantial numbers of his fellow Hoosiers. Much of Indiana's interest in such a Confederacy seems to have been based primarily on economic considerations. "The mutual interests of Indiana are with the South, or as one expressed it yesterday with the Mississippi River."¹¹¹ Preferable to this, though, as a last resort, would be a national Constitutional Convention called to take whatever steps might be necessary to preserve the union so "that the Constitution will be so amended that all may live in peace and security under the aegis of the United States of America."¹¹²

Two short months can change many things and break apart many dreams. On April 18, 1861, James D.'s other brother in Indiana, Charles, wrote him lamenting the recent events. The clergyman laid much of the blame for secession not upon the South alone but also upon the North's unwillingness to compro-

mise. Writing from the Ohio River town of Evansville, in southern Indiana, Charles grieved that:

We are fallen upon evil times truly. What is to be our fate as a nation God only knows. If I may judge of the other portions of the nation by our own community here, the country is in the wildest excitement everywhere. Last night we had an immense gathering at the Market house in this city and a spirit amounting to madness prevailed. It was called a "Union meeting" but it was disunion in the highest degree. The speeches made were of the most rabid kind, and calculated to inflame the public mind and make wider the breach between the two sections. Every man seemed to be thirsting for blood, and the cry of Blood, met a healthier response from that vast assemblage than anything else. 112

Alexander's first letter (April 20, 1861) to James D. after Fort Sumter and Lincoln's request for volunteers spoke of the fear faced by a Southerner living in the North. Indianapolis was a "great seething cauldron of excitement,"¹¹⁴ and, though Alexander apprehended no immediate danger to himself, he took precautions to avoid occasions where such might arise.

As in other places all across the nation, the spectre of poverty hung over many as fighting and the expectation fighting had greatly interfered with the workings of the economy. Alexander wrote that "The war fever has brought business almost to the point of utter stagnation." Bankruptcy and panic pervaded as the Indiana banks, with only one day's notice, stopped honoring all paper money issued on Kentucky banks, even though such paper money comprised nearly one half of the city's medium of exchange. 116

If Alexander did indeed become a Union general (and only one source, Dr. Herbert Kellar of the McCormick Library, testifies to this), his attitude expressed to his brother at the outset towards Northern political and military leadership showed little inclination to join their number in pursuit of their goals.

Troops are coming in every day and every arrival adds to the confidence of the leaders in this murderous movement of the ability of the North to subjugate, to crush out the South, as an easy job.¹¹⁷

He speaks bitterly of the means and ends of the Republicans and abolitionists, especially their anticipated use of emancipation as not only a goal of the war's outcome but also a tool in its execution.

Not only do they glut their souls with internecine strife, but they must add all the horrors of a servile war. Will a Just God permit such men to succeed in their hellish designs: I can not believe it.¹¹⁸

The tortuous emotional chasm which had been occasioned in many families throughout the land by the breakup of the Union was particularly well exemplified by the Davidsons. They had always been, though geographically diffuse, a family woven very closely together. As it did to untold tens of thousands of such families, the War ripped apart this fabric, and the rending was extremely painful. When James D. Davidson read Alexander's letter of April 20, he read words written by his brother with a voice

of mournful despair and bewildered sorrow which he himself likewise felt.

I never wrote to you with a sadder heart than now. Our country - the happiest, the most wonderfully prosperous of any other under the sun, - in the incipient throes of a civil war, my aged parents and my brothers and sisters on one side of the dividing line, myself on the other, what part can I take in this dreadful drama: God knows I love my country - my whole country. I love Virginia, for she is my mother. Within her borders "my friends and kindred dwell and there the bones of my ancestors are mouldering back to dust," and how can I dare to lift the hand of violence against her: And yet, if I do not evince a willingness to do so, I am charged with a want of fealty to the government.

As the war divided the nation, so it also divided the Davidson family. The material and spiritual destruction done to the former only compounded the future personal devastation which would soon be visited upon the latter.

VI.

With Governor Letcher's requisition upon the counties for troops, the Davidson boys prepared to march off in defense of Virginia. By April 20, Charles and Albert, often previously in a small minority of defenders of the Union at the University of Virginia, left their studies at U. Va. to march off with student companies formed there. H. R. McKennie informed James D. and his wife of the departure of their two sons.

The young men of all ages seem to be wild with the most intense excitement. At dinner on Wednesday, your son Charles had determined to go, and Albert said he would wait and write home to you to get him a place with Col. Smith, but, at 6 o'clock, which was our supper, to my surprise Albert came in all ready for the march. Tell Mrs. Davidson her sons were both well, and went off with high spirits. I feel the greatest faith that the great¹²⁰ God of Heaven will be with us in this terrible struggle.

These companies which Charles and Albert joined soon became part of the Army of Northern Virginia, and were first sent to Winchester and then on to the mountains of Western Virginia and the Valley of the Kanawha.¹²¹

Frederick, James D.'s son at Washington College, left his studies there and enlisted with the first contingent of the Rockbridge Rifles, serving as a second corporal. He left in such a hurry that he had not even the time to say goodbye to his

grandparents. He, along with Preston Davidson (Alexander's son) who enlisted with him, was first stationed at Harper's Ferry.¹²²

Greenlee, the eldest son, was asked by Governor Letcher to come to Richmond and serve as a special aide to the Governor. He left his father's law practice, and went off to the capital in May, 1861, entering the Commonwealth's service with the rank of lieutenant colonel of cavalry. As Letcher's aide, he assisted the Governor in day to day functions, served as the Governor's emissary, and on occasion performed some of his duties in his absence.¹²³

The boys' father plunged himself into the war effort also, preparing himself for the sacrifices he would be called upon to make. Within three weeks of Virginia's secession, James D. wrote that:

I had 3 sons at Harpers Ferry & a fourth is now in Richmond, in the service of the State. I have offered them to Genl. Lee & our Governor, & tendered them also any portion of my humble means.¹²⁴

He was a member of the Home Guard and served as a commissary for the Confederate Army. Armies do not function long with empty stomachs, bare feet, and naked backs. James D. Davidson, and many others like him, rendered substantial service to the Confederacy by obtaining food, clothing, shoes, horses, and other items desperately needed by the Southern military forces.¹²⁵

Just as before he had been a bulwark in support of the Federal Union, he now maintained a similarly high profile in support of Virginia's secession from, and independence of, that Union. It was none other than James D. Davidson, the former Unionist stalwart, who delivered the principle address on the occasion of the departure of the Rockbridge Artillery on May 8, 1861. He presented a flag to the company made by the ladies of Rockbridge. The flag was accepted on behalf of the entire company by the Reverend William N. Pendleton, the Company's Captain.¹²⁶

One can imagine the bittersweet atmosphere that pervaded the scene as Davidson spoke. There were prayers and hopes for success; there was the excited exuberance of young men marching off with dreams of coming heroism; there was pride in the quantity and quality of Rockbridge's immediate response to Virginia's need; and finally there were remorse and tears as many wives and mothers correctly realized that they were perhaps gazing for the last time upon their beloved men and boys. These feelings and more Davidson tried to capture, and in his speech inspire both those who were marching off and those who were staying behind.

Rockbridge County and the Valley, like much of the South, saw itself as engaged on the throes of a great Crusade - not so

much to protect its "peculiar institution", but to protect its freedom and indeed its way of life from perceived Northern contamination. Ideology, not race, seems to have been the prime motivating factor of the men of the Valley, including the Davidsons. Indicative of this attitude is the tone and tenor of a letter received by Davidson from Thomas Michie on May 28, 1861.

..now all good men I think will be convinced that if a war had been inaugurated by the South for no other purpose but a final separation from the mass of putrid Corruption which is daily manifesting itself, over the purchase at the price of ten years war - Nothing but separation could have saved the morals of our fair South from the harm of such a bump - When we see the hords (sic) of rotten population they are sending against us & hear the war cry of "Beauty & Booty" by which those Hell hounds are set on by some of their leading papers - when we contemplate the Massacre of women & children at St. Louis - the crushing out of the Nationality of poor Maryland - the beastly maraudings of the troops at Alexandria Who would not give a thousand lives, ¹²⁷ if he had them - to send the scoundrels to destruction?

Davidson was caught up in such a spirit, and considered the canyon between North and South to be incapable of being bridged, either then or at any time in the future. In the early days of the war he worked trying to bring other former Unionists to full support of secession. He held out hope for an early end to the fighting with Northern recognition of the right of peaceful secession based upon irreconcilable differences, and for awhile worked through political channels in pursuit of

such a visionary goal. In a May 2nd letter to his friend Senator R. M. T. Hunter, a longtime leader of Virginia Conservative forces, Davidson pushed for such an approach from the Confederate leadership. Nevertheless, Davidson also evinced his willingness to give all to the war should armed force hold out hope of success for Southern independence where peaceful overtures had failed.

Preparations I understand are now being made by men of high position, looking to peace - Could they be met by a Commission of the Southern Congress looking to a peaceful separation? We can never be united again. The line is already marked between the Cold North & the warm South which cannot be wiped out, even by blood. When I think of the devastation of such a war - the stoppage of all civil pursuits - the impressions of Camp life upon our boys - when I hear, ringing in my ears, the lamentations of the Rachels of the land, I feel emboldened to appeal to you, in your wisdom, to help in our time of need.¹²⁰

These admittedly fragile hopes for a successful early peace conference, however, were soon broken, and James D. Davidson and his family prepared to contribute their all to that cause in which they so deeply believed, and which would exact so great a price from them.

VII.

Much of the course of the war, and the fortunes of the South, can be seen in the experiences of the Davidson family. Just as with a young man testing his newfound prowess, the young Confederacy went through an initial euphoric feeling of invincibility. It did not take long, however, for the Davidsons to comprehend the gargantuan task before them, and to assess their situation in a more realistic manner.

The Davidsons harbored no delusions of an early and easy victory for very long. Greenlee expressed such an outlook to his father in a letter of June 2, 1861.

From present appearances, we have a long and desperate war before us & the services of every available man in the State will be required to prevent our State from being overrun.¹²⁹

Not only did the boys have to adjust to a new lifestyle in the military, but readjustments were also required of the members of the Davidson family who remained in Lexington. Mrs. Davidson and the girls spent much of their time in making, gathering, and sending provisions to the new-born Confederate

Army. She wrote to Greenlee that "the town looks desolate since the Artillery and Grays have left. The ladies are constantly sewing for the soldier and expect to work for them all summer."¹³⁰

Later that summer, the tragedy of war was first brought home to the Davidson household. Frederick Davidson, a member of Company H of the 27th Virginia Infantry, was killed at the first battle of Manassas. Before he died, he requested that he be buried on the field upon whose soil he was struck down. His grief-stricken father managed to travel to Manassas and secured permission from the Army to make sure that his son received a proper burial.¹³¹

Throughout the autumn of 1861, James D. made numerous trips from Lexington to Lewisburg, where Albert was stationed. James D. was exceptionally worried over what he perceived to be the deteriorating military situation, and recommended that Letcher abandon Western Virginia and withdraw Confederate troops from the area to deploy them in areas where their presence would be of greater utility to the overall benefit of Confederate Virginia.¹³²

Charles Davidson in the meantime had come home from western Virginia and gone to Richmond in search of a commission. After some initial frustration, he eventually became a lieutenant in a part of A. P. Hill's division.¹³³

Greenlee continued throughout the summer and autumn of 1861 on Letcher's staff. From all accounts, he performed his duties competently and accurately. He was in a position to accomplish much and to be aware of much, but because of his position he was also badgered by those who sought to profiteer from the war.¹³⁴

In spite of some disillusionments, though, Greenlee relished the opportunities his job afforded him to be in contact and work with the leading men of Virginia and Confederate government. His letters written while in Richmond provide frank insight into the personality and character of many of these leading men, and straightforward accounts of the events their actions helped to mold and by which they were molded. Of particular interest is his letter describing Jefferson Davis's arrival in the new capital city of the Confederacy. Davidson was with the official party of the Governor which journeyed to Petersburg to meet Davis there and board his northward traveling train to usher him into Richmond. The letter's description of Davis shows something of a light side in a man often portrayed to be rather serious and aristocratic at all times.

The Governor & his aides - Catlett & I, the Council of State, the Major & a Committee of the City Council left here at 4 o'clock Wednesday morning for Petersburg, for the purpose of meeting him.

We found that he had reached the City a few minutes before we arrived.

We immediately stepped in the Car in which he was traveling & the train moved off for Richmond.

When I was introduced to the President, he shook me cordially by the hand, mistaking my name I suppose to be Davidson, remarked, "I am glad to see you sir; your name is somewhat longer than mine." To which I replied my name, sir is considerable longer than yours, but not near so distinguished. ...

The Presidents (sic) party consisted only of ex-Senator Wigfall & Ladiz, & Cols. Northrop & Davis.

When the train reached this City we found an immense crowd assembled, & as we entered the Depot, a salute was fired, the crowd gave cheer upon cheer and the Armory Band played "Dixie" in approved style. I never witnessed such enthusiasm as was exhibited by the people.

...As the Presidents (sic) carriage passed through the streets, flowers were showered down upon him from the house tops & windows.

Greenlee, after listening to some remarks by Davis to the crowd, then accompanied the party to breakfast. The whole affair exceedingly impressed him, good-naturedly enjoying such status - (sic)

The party consisted of the following persons - The President, the Governor, Lt. Gov. Montague, Judge Allen, Gen. Haymond, Col. Smith, Major Mayo, Col. Catlett, Gen. Wigfall, Col. Northrop & Col. Davidson - 12 in all. You will perceive from this, that I associate with very good Company.

I shall always look back with pleasure to this breakfast party. The Presdt. is a refined, courteous gentleman, I don't think I ever listened to a person who converses more elegantly than he does. He is a man the South may well be proud of. What a contrast between him & the vulgar monkey who now rules at Washington! ¹³⁵

Davis quickly earned the respect and admiration of the young lieutenant.

The more I see of the Presdt. the more I like him. He is every inch a soldier & a gentleman. ¹³⁶

Greenlee, however, soon grew restless in Richmond, and hankered to take his place in service to the South in the field.

He wrote that he "had determined to take the field and give benefit of my weak arm to the cause of Southern Independence."¹³⁷ Accordingly, February 14, 1862, he was commissioned captain of artillery by Gov. Letcher and busied himself with recruiting a company in Richmond and Rockbridge. For such an effort, his father had some words of advice.

In recruiting your men, some wild characters may apply, though apparently objectionable, they afterward make the best soldiers. Treat them kindly and respectfully without exception. Be kind but decided and your men will obey you. You must expect to take many rough fellows. Don't let the idea get out that your company is to be formed of prudish young men. It won't do. In a word, use kind words always and never wound men's feelings of any applicant for your company.¹³⁸

The artillery company was formed, with two other Davidson brothers - Albert and Willie - joining it, and it became known as the Letcher battery, so named by Greenlee in honor of the Governor. After Willie later became ill, both he and Albert were reassigned to a training camp in Dublin, Virginia, under the command of their aforementioned cousin, James B. Dorman, the former Unionist delegate to the Secession Convention.¹³⁹

Greenlee's company took part in numerous battles and acquired a reputation throughout the South for bravery in the many battles in which it took part. The battery always seemed to be in the thick of every battle in which it took part. Greenlee writes of many close calls with the "Grim Reaper", including one in which he was saved from being shot only by the canteen hanging on his left side, which stopped the bullet.¹⁴⁰

At the battle of Chancellorsville, however, intense tragedy struck the Davidson family for a second time, as Greenlee was

struck down, mortally wounded. One of his company wrote to Mrs. Davidson, relating his final moments.

..he dreaded his approaching end principally on your account and exclaimed Oh! My mother! What a terrible blow this will be to her: he requested me to write to you to say that he fell bravely fighting for our cause and in the hour of history.¹⁴¹

The death of his former aide and friend came as a great shock and source of grief to Governor Letcher, whose sorrow was only further compounded by the news of the following day that Stonewall Jackson had also died of wounds received at Chancellorsville.¹⁴² An officer wrote to Letcher recommending a successor for Greenlee, and in doing so expressed feelings not only in his own heart but also in Letcher's and those of the Davidson family:

Would that I had language to express my feelings towards, or my opinions of him as a gentleman, friend and Soldier - None possessed more highly all the attributes of Gentleman and Soldier than he - amiable and kind as need be - brave and generous to a fault - All who knew him loved him: and none can feel more keenly his loss than I - He will always be kindly remembered by us all. As he fell he desired one of his comrades to say to his mother: "Weep not for me - I die fighting in defense of our home" -¹⁴³

James D. Davidson and his family were again made to feel the terrible price war exacts from its participants. But even this would not be the end of the tragic sacrifices they would be called upon to make.¹⁴⁴

VIII.

During the war, James D. Davidson continued to carry on the practice of law, in addition to serving as a Confederate commissar and maintaining his role as a community leader. His law practice, though, was not nearly as lucrative as it had been before the war. Davidson did not make money on the war, on the contrary he lost a substantial amount. In sadly reprimanding son Charles for writing home too often for additional money, James D. showed the financial burden the war was imposing. "I am reduced," he wrote, "to short funds - & I will soon be without any."¹⁴⁵

He did not hoard his money or tightly keep it from being used in the war effort. On the contrary, he was always receptive to pleas for funds to aid the Southern boys in the field, giving even more than his legal obligation to various drives and collections taken up to sustain the war effort.¹⁴⁶

He was instrumental not only as a commissary for the Confederate forces, procuring food and supplies for the Confederate soldiers in the field. Moreover, he also worked incessantly to insure that the wives and families of those soldiers were provided for, and assure the soldiers that they were. He was a man whom the soldiers could turn to and depend upon.

I have received a letter from my wife in which she says that she is in need of provisions and that she has no means of obtaining them. I understand that James J. Wilson was appointed to provide for the families of the Volunteers and I will be much obliged to you, if you will ask him to furnish my family with whatever they need.¹⁴⁷

Such correspondence is filled with first hand accounts not only of battles, but also of letters from friends relating the domestic suffering brought on by the war. Supplies of foodstuffs ran low, due to the breakdown of transportation and the first priorities of the soldiers in the field. A friend of Davidson, J. Basset French, wrote from Richmond begging Davidson to buy food in Rockbridge County and ship it to him.

We are on the eve of starvation & unless the ways are opened up very shortly we will be all laid low - Corn is selling here at \$60 per bbl. I write to ask you if you can't (sic) buy for me 50 bush. wheat & have it ground...¹⁴⁷

Davidson also continued efforts to bolster Southern morale. Among other efforts, he resumed writing his "Robert of Rockbridge" articles for publication in Richmond. One of these letters written by Davidson purporting to be from an uneducated Rockbridge Countian appeared in February of 1862, and aimed directly at giving encouragement to the Confederacy.

The ideas expressed are in the vocabulary and grammar of "Robert of Rockbridge" writing to "Cousin Bob", but they are ideas and feelings from the heart of the former Unionist, James D. Davidson to the people of Virginia and the South.

Ole Abes kiked us inter this here fite - & we must fit it out - kase if we don't he'll jist sit his big fut rite on our neks & we'll never brethe the brethe of life again - now Bob i feels like rarin & kikin sumtimes when i sees them tarnal yankes a floundurin his fists at us - kase tha thinks its pluki - now we knos that & ain't scared neethur kase we gut the pluk & tha hant & we kan fit longur nor tha kan kase we kan fit without kash & tha knat - & if tha wants tu no how long it'll tak to ware us out tha ma multipli all the figurs frum a to izzard together & then tha wunt get an anser...¹⁴⁸

Davidson felt at the early point of the war that Southern determination would bring success to the South, in spite of the military and naval advantages of the North. In a letter of advice to Governor Letcher penned at about the same time the above "Robert of Rockbridge" article was written, Davidson expressed fear at the vast inferiority of the Confederate navy, but concluded with a voice of confidence in Southern tenacity.

It is high time that we should come - or be brought - to our senses, & to believe that we have a desperate foe to contend with, well equipped & trained to war - with well superior numbers, arms, & ammunition, and even now, almost in our midst...¹⁴⁹

Davidson prophetically foresaw the possible destruction of Southern cities and railroads, and went on to write:

'Tis well then to gaze at these things, as they are - & therefore prepare ourselves, even for the worst, & to put every nerve in requisition to avert the blow & repell (sic) the invader.

Without foreign intervention, of which there are some signs - upon which, however, it is very unsafe to rely - I can see no solution of the termination of this war, except that both sides, will be soon worn out by it. And I am inclined to think the North will wear out first.¹⁵⁰

Despite these premonitions and warnings, however, Davidson by no means took on a defeatist attitude throughout the remaining

three years of the war. He remained a close advisor of Governor Letcher, and served as his emissary on several occasions, representing him in confidential capacities in insuring the cooperation of Confederate military and the Virginia civil government.¹⁵¹

Letcher's term as Governor expired on January 1, 1864, and following that time Davidson's substantive input into public affairs decreased markedly, as he no longer wielded the influence over governmental policy that he once had. Nonetheless, he continued his efforts at garnering supplies for the Confederate forces, taking care of widows, wives, and dependents on the home front, and in general serving as a pillar of leadership in Lexington and the surrounding area.

IX.

Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865. The shock of defeat came to the Davidson family in Lexington the next day. However, an even greater shock was yet to befall them. Albert was stationed at Pearisburg in Giles County in western Virginia. After Lee had surrendered, but before news of surrender had reached the area, Albert was killed. He left behind his young wife and his first born child - a daughter only two weeks old.¹⁵²

The war had taken much from James D. Davidson and his family, time, much of their fortunes, and worst of all, three of their sons. Yet the Davidsons harbored no deep bitterness. They had fought the good fight and they had lost, so they now settled back to rebuilding a life and patching back together broken dreams. William and Charles, who had been at Appomattox, returned to Lexington, William to enter VMI and Charles to practice law as a member of the Lexington bar.¹⁵³

William was forced to withdraw from VMI because of poor health, and died at the age of twenty-four. Charles lived another fifteen years before dying of tuberculosis in 1879.¹⁵⁴

James D. himself lived until 1882. He accepted the outcome of the war, and devoted his efforts to continuing the contribution of his talents and leadership to the community and nation of which he was a citizen. He swore the oath of allegiance to the United States on June 14, 1865, and on June 26 was given a full pardon with full amnesty.¹⁵⁵ He continued again his interest and input into politics, journeying to Washington in July, 1867, together with John Letcher to talk with the Radical Republican leadership and find out exactly what the makers of Reconstruction policy wanted from the South. They met there with Thaddeus Stevens; Schuyler Colfax of Indiana, Speaker of the House; and several other Radical Republicans.¹⁵⁷

Davidson was a member of the Board of Trustees of Washington College, and after the war devoted substantial time to rebuilding the institution so decimated by the war. He was among that group on the Board of Trustees ~~which~~ first sought to obtain Robert E. Lee as the College's post - war President. He was also very influential in getting his life-long friend, Cyrus McCormick, the Rockbridge County native and inventor of the reaper, to give a very large endowment to the school when it desperately needed funds. As a Washington College Trustee, and as a community leader, Davidson led a full and active life until his death in 1882.

He and his family provided much to Lexington, to Virginia, to the South, and to the Nation. They had given much, but the cost was very high. He had defended the Union until his constitutional principles dictated that he support the secessionist cause he had so long opposed. Following defeat in a war in support of that cause, he worked for and looked forward to the future development of Virginia and of the South as again an integral part of that Union. His attitude was well expressed in a poem he wrote after the war as a welcoming to Northern investors who had come to Rockbridge County looking for possible places to invest their funds. It was a vision of a South, a state, and county still suffering from the ravages of war and the costs of war, but still looking forward with hopeful expectation to the future.

We have no gold; no works of art,
As you have at the North,
To feast your eyes and creature wants,
But have what is more worth:

We have God's gifts in Sunny South,
Hearts full of welcome; then
We have your gold, hid in our hills,
"We love our fellow-men."

Come, then, amongst us, with your thrift,
And with your go-a-head,
And wake our Sleeping Beauty up,
And raise her from the dead.

The past is gone -- forgotten be,
Before us is a future grand,
When solid South and solid North,
Are one united land.¹⁵⁰

FOOTNOTES

1. Clinton L. Anderson, "War Comes to the Davidson Family", Rockbridge Historical Society Proceedings, Vol. VI, (Lexington, Virginia: Rockbridge Historical Society, 1966) p. 16-17.

2. Charles W. Turner, "James D. Davidson, A ~~Bard~~ of the Shenandoah Valley (1808-1882)", (Manuscript), p. 1. (Charles Wilson Turner, Lexington, Va.).

3. Ibid., p.1.

4. Ibid., p.1.

5. Herbert A. Kellar (ed.), "A Journey Through the South in 1836: Diary of James D. Davidson", The Journal of Southern History, Vol. 1, No. 3 (August, 1935), p. 344.

6. Ibid., p.346. Also, F. N. Booney, John Letcher of Virginia (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1966), p. 108-109.

7. Bruce Greenwalt (ed.), "Unionists in Rockbridge County, the Correspondence of James Dorman Davidson Concerning the Virginia Secession Convention of 1861", The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, Vol. 73, 1965), p. 79.

8. Kellar, p.346-347.

9. Ibid., p. 346.

10. Turner, "Bard of the Shenandoah", p. 1., also Kellar, "A Journey", p. 346.

11. Ibid., p. 2. Also, Greenwalt, "Unionists in Rockbridge", p. 79; Wm. A. Anderson "Remarks upon death of James D. Davidson, The Gazette & Citizen, Oct. 19, 1882. Archives, Rockbridge County Historical Society, Lexington, Virginia.

12. Kellar, "A Journey", p.346.

13. Letter, James D. Davidson to Gov. John Letcher, Feb. 15, 1863, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Collection.

14. Tax Bill of James D. Davidson, Town of Lexington, 1862, WSHS, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.

15. Kellar, "A Journey ..." p. 359.

16. Ibid., p. 354.

17. Lexington (Va.) Gazette Citizen, Oct. 19, 1882.

18. Letter, James D. Davidson to Governor John Letcher, January 3, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.

19. Greenawalt, "Unionists in Rockbridge", p. 81.

20. Ibid., p. 79.

21. Turner "Bard of the Shenandoah", p. 2.

22. Anderson, "War Comes to the Davidsons," p. 16.

23. Boney, John Letcher, p. 140, p. 188.

24. Letter, James D. Davidson to James Dorman, March 4, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.

25. Ibid., op. cit.

26. Turner, "Bard of the Shenandoah", p. 2.

27. Kellar, "A Journey:", p. 348.

28. Anderson, "War Comes to the Davidsons", p. 15.

29. Ollinger Crenshaw, "Rockbridge County and the Secession Convention of 1861," Rockbridge County Historical Society Proceedings, Vol. III, (Lexington, Virginia, The Rockbridge County Historical Society, 1949), p. 7.

30. Ibid., p. 7.

31. Ibid., p. 8.

32. Ibid., p. 8.
33. Ibid., p. 8.
34. Letter, James D. Davidson to Gov. John Letcher, January 31, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
35. Crenshaw, "Rockbridge and the Secession Convention", p. 9.
36. Letter, J. D. Davidson to the Hon. W. C. Rives, Feb. 1, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
37. Letter, Albert Davidson to J. D. Davidson, Jan. 7, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
38. Letter, James D. Davidson to Gov. John Letcher, Jan. 31, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
39. Letter, James D. Davidson to ?, Feb. 3, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
40. Letter, James D. Davidson to "Caperton", Feb. 6, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
41. Ibid.,
42. Letter, James D. Davidson to John Letcher, Jan. 3, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
43. Ibid.
44. Paul R. Cockshutt, "Gov. John Letcher and Virginia's Secession," Proceedings of the Rockbridge Historical Society, Vol. VI (Lexington, Virginia, Rockbridge Historical Society, 1966) p. 49.
45. Davidson to Letcher, Jan. 3, 1861.
46. Cockshutt, "Letcher and Secession," p. 51.

47. Crenshaw, "Rockbridge and the Secession Convention", p. 9.
48. Letter, James D. Davidson to Gov. John Letcher, Jan. 31, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
49. Greenawalt, "Unionists in Rockbridge", p. 81.
50. Letter, James D. Davidson to Gov. John Letcher, Feb. 4, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
51. Letter, James D. Davidson to James Dorman, Feb. 13, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
52. Gov. Letcher to J. D. Davidson, quoted in Boney, p. 104.
53. Letter, J. D. Davidson to Gov. John Letcher, Feb. 7, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
54. Boney, p. 108.
55. Letter, James D. Davidson to James Dorman, Feb. 13, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
56. Boney, p. 109.
57. Ibid., op. cit.
58. Letter, James D. Davidson to James Dorman, Feb. 13, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
59. James D. Davidson, "Interview with Lincoln and Scott", Lexington News Gazette, July 10, 1872. Reprinted in A Curiosity in Chancery and Rhyme in Prose, by James D. Davidson. (Archives, Rockbridge County Historical Society, Lexington, Virginia).
60. Letter, Davidson to Dorman, Feb. 13, 1861.
61. James D. Davidson, "An Interview with Lincoln and Scott".
62. Letter, James D. Davidson to John J. Crittendon, Feb. 10, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.

63. James D. Davidson, "An Interview with Lincoln and Scott",
64. Greenawalt, "Unionists in Rockbridge", p. 81.
65. Letter, James D. Davidson to James Dorman, Mar. 6, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
66. James D. Davidson, "Interview with Lincoln and Scott."
67. Letter, James D. Davidson, to James Dorman, March 6, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
68. J. D. Davidson, "Interview with Lincoln and Scott."
69. Ibid., and Davidson to Dorman, March 6, 1861.
70. Davidson to Dorman, March 6, 1861.
71. Ibid., op. cit.
72. Ibid., op. cit.
73. Ibid., op. cit.
74. J. D. Davidson, "Interview with Lincoln and Scott."
75. Ibid., op. cit.
76. Letter, James D. Davidson to Gov. John Letcher, March 2, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
77. Letter, James D. Davidson to James Dorman, March 4, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
78. Letter, J. D. Davidson to Dorman, March 6, 1861.
79. Ibid., op. cit.
80. Charles Davidson to James D. Davidson, March 8, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Collection.
81. Crenshaw, p. 10-11.

82. Letcher to Davidson, quoted in Boney, p. 109.
83. Letter, James D. Davidson to Gov. John Letcher, March 9, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.
84. Letter, James D. Davidson to Gov. John Letcher, March 14, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.
85. Ibid.
86. Davidson to Dorman, March 4, 1861.
87. Letter, Samuel McDowell Moore to James D. Davidson, March 10, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.
88. Davidson to Letcher, March 14, 1861.
89. Letter, James A. Davidson to James Dorman, April 1, 1861. "The restlessness in the minds of the people, produced by the convention dragging its slow lengths along is often - yes always - mistaken for a secession feeling - & is certainly perverted most persistently as indicating a radical change in our public sentiment. I know many good men who are restless at the delay of the Convention - and as peevish men often do, say things they do not mean - and which they do not mean to stick up to."
90. Ibid.
91. Davidson to Letcher, March 9, 1861.
92. Letter, James D. Davidson to James Dorman, April 2, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid. Also, letter, James D. Davidson to James Dorman, March 23, 1861, and letter, James B. Dorman to James D. Davidson, March 28, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.
95. Davidson to Dorman, April 2, 1861.
96. Ibid. Also, Rockbridge Historical Society Proceedings, Crenshaw, Vol. III, p. 12. Also, Letter, Albert Davidson to James D. Davidson, March 27, 1861.
97. Rockbridge Historical Society Proceedings, Vol. III, Crenshaw, p. 12.

98. Letter, James B. Dorman to James D. Davidson, April 14, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

99. Ibid.

100. Letter, James B. Dorman to James D. Davidson, April 9, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

101. Ibid.

102. Rockbridge Historical Society Proceedings, Crenshaw, Vol. III, p. 12. Also, Elizabeth Randolph Preston Allen, A March Past (Richmond, Virginia: The Dietz Press, 1938) p. 112. Also, Oren F. Morton, A History of Rockbridge County, Virginia (Staunton, Virginia: The McClure Co., Inc., 1920) p. 122.

103. Letter, James D. Davidson to James Dorman, April 16, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

104. Ibid.

105. Letter, James D. Davidson to R. M. T. Hunter, May 2, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

106. J. D. Davidson to James Dorman, April 16, 1861. The incident to which Davidson refers between the workingmen and the VMI Cadets took place on April 13 when the Cadets raised the Confederate flag in front of the Courthouse. The working people of Lexington, solidly Unionists, then erected a higher flagpole and flew the Union flag. A scuffle then ensued between the workers and the Cadets. (Incident described in Greenawalt, p. 100).

107. Letter, James D. Davidson to James Dorman, April 17, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

108. Ibid.

109. Ibid.

110. Kellar, p. 345. Also, letter, Preston Davidson to James D. Davidson, May ? (manuscript unclear), 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

111. Letter, Albert H. Davidson to James D. Davidson, Feb. 23, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

112. Ibid.

113. Letter, Charles B. Davidson to James D. Davidson, April 18, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

114. Letter, Albert H. Davidson to James D. Davidson, April 20, 1861.

115. Ibid.

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid.

119. Ibid.

120. Quoted in Anderson, "War Comes to the Davidsons ", p.16.

121. Ibid. Also, Frederick Davidson to James D. Davidson and Family, April 26, 1861.

122. Letter, Frederick Davidson to James D. Davidson, April 26, 1861. Also, Anderson, "War Comes to the Davidsons ", p. 16.

123. Boney, John Letcher, p. 140. Also, Anderson, "War Comes to the Davidson's," p. 16.

124. James D. Davidson to R. M. T. Hunter, May 2, 1861.

125. Greenawalt, "Unionists in Rockbridge County", p. 80.

126. Turner, "Bard of the Shenandoah", p. 4. Also, Morton, History of Rockbridge County, p. 125.

127. Letter, Thomas J. Michie to James D. Davidson, May 28, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

128. James D. Davidson to R. M. T. Hunter, May 2, 1861..

129. Letter, Greenlee Davidson to James D. Davidson, June 2, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

130. Letter, Hannah Davidson to Greenlee Davidson, May 18, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

131. Anderson, "War Comes to the Davidson Family," p. 16.
132. Letter, James D. Davidson to Gov. John Letcher, December 13, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.
133. Anderson, "War Comes to the Davidsons", p. 18.
134. Letter, J. McDowell Layton (? , manuscript unclear) to Greenlee Davidson, May 11, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.
135. Letters, Greenlee Davidson to James D. Davidson, May 31, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.
136. Ibid.
137. Quoted in Anderson, "War Comes to the Davidsons", p. 17.
138. Ibid., op. cit.
139. Ibid., p. 18-19.
140. Ibid., p. 18.
141. Ibid., p.20.
142. Boney, John Letcher, p. 191-192.
143. Letter, R. L. Walker to John Letcher, May 10, 1863, Rockbridge County Historical Society, Lexington, Va., Archives, Davidson Collection.
144. Much of the story of the Davidsons during the Civil War is related in a 1961 honors thesis of Clinton L. Anderson much of which is condensed in the article "War Comes to the Davidson Family" in Volume VI of the Rockbridge Historical Society Proceedings. My treatment of the war years is thus basically topical in so far as Anderson's Rockbridge Historical Society sources are concerned, and I have endeavored to concentrate on material not available to Anderson.

145. Letter, James D. Davidson to Charles Davidson, May 25, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

146. Letter, William Frazier to James D. Davidson, November 15, 1862, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

147. Letter, S. Bassett French to James D. Davidson, March 31, 1863, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

148. James D. Davidson, "Robert of Rockbridge to Cusin Bob," February, 1862, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

149. Letter, James D. Davidson to Gov. John Letcher, February 16, 1862, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

150. Ibid.

151. Kellar, "A Journey Through the South", p. 348.

152. Anderson, "War Comes to the Davidsons", p. 21.

153. Ibid.

154. Ibid.

155. Andrew Johnson, pardon to James D. Davidson, June 26, 1861, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, Archives, Davidson Papers, McCormick Library.

156. Boney, John Letcher, p. 231.

157. Boney, John Letcher, p. 231-232.

158. Turner, "Bard of the Shenandoah", p. 15.

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