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Walking the Line:

The Legacy of the Lost Cause in Redefining Femininity at the Normal, 1909-1942

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERISTY

In

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Abstract

The students who attended the State Normal and Industrial School at Harrisonburg during the early period (1909 – 1942) used social organizations to echo, amplify, and rehearse Lost Cause hierarchies of class, gender, and race. The Lee and Lanier Literary Societies were the two elite groups on campus which provided spaces for the women to practice these societal norms. These groups created a system of gatekeeping that ensured exclusivity and elevated the social standing of those who were members. These organizations were spaces to rehearse refinement and to practice the white women's own roles in society. Their understanding of their own social place in the order of the New South was critical to perpetuating the imagined gender ideals of the Old South. The women who attended the college were a part of a new generation in the South with an unprecedented potential outside of the private sphere. Yet they were raised in the shadow of the romanticized Old South. The women who attended the college were tasked with navigating this delicate balance between Old and New South. Lastly, the college was also a space that amplified white supremacy and perhaps this is still one of the most visible legacies of the early years. Reverence for Confederate leaders, iconography, and minstrel shows echoed white supremacy outside of the institution and played a foundational role as the women sought to understand their own identities as Southerners and Americans. The women crafted these identities through the practice and rehearsal of hierarchies of class, race, and gender. When they left the college there was no doubt what each of the women's roles in society was as they had spent their years on campus rehearsing. The young women carried with them the weight of a false heritage of the Civil War as they walked the line between the Old and the New South.

Introduction

In a 1956 letter Pearl Haldeman recalled being repeatedly warned in 1909, “Girls, remember you are making history.”¹ Haldeman was among the first students to ever attend the State Normal and Industrial School at Harrisonburg. The white women who were the first to become students at there were making history in more ways than one. They were part of a new era in the South where they had access to resources and education that their mothers had not been able to enjoy. They held an unprecedented amount of freedom as the roles of women in the public sphere were fundamentally changing. They played a major role in establishing a legacy of the Lost Cause on the campus though its evolution from the State Normal and Industrial School at Harrisonburg to Harrisonburg Teachers College to Madison College to James Madison University (hereafter ‘the college’) that is still visible today. But most importantly, they walked the line between the Old and New South. The women who attended the institution during the early years used their time on campus and the social organizations they participated in to echo, amplify, and rehearse Lost Cause hierarchies of race, class, and gender while they crafted their own identities as white women of the New South.

The State Normal and Industrial School for Women at Harrisonburg, (now James Madison University) followed national and regional trends during the post-bellum years that catered to middle- and lower-class women who were looking for vocational, liberal

¹ Mrs. Claude B. Stickley (Pearl Haldeman Stickley) to Raymond Dingleline Jr, Correspondence Re: "Madison College, the First Fifty Years", 1956-1958, UA 0037. Series 1, Box: 1, Folder: 2. Department of History: Raymond C. Dingleline, Jr. Papers, UA 0037. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

arts, and teacher training. It was in this educational space that young white women were able to rehearse the societal norms and hierarchies of race, class, and gender. While state normal and industrial schools created opportunities for lower- and middle-class women, the literary societies ensured that the social hierarchy of the Old South continued. At the State Normal and Industrial School for Women at Harrisonburg, the Lee Literary Society and the Lanier Literary Society became spaces that not only adhered to this hierarchy but perpetuated the Lost Cause narrative and pushed the southern aesthetic created by a romanticized version of the Old South.² On a larger scale, institutions were spaces that echoed societal norms of race and circulated them throughout society by their graduates.³ This work will examine the question of how the students at the State Normal and Industrial School at Harrisonburg were products of the Lost Cause and how they used the institution to construct their identities as white women of the New South.

Founded in 1908, the State Normal and Industrial School for Women at Harrisonburg (now James Madison University) served to provide practical educational training to fulfill the increasing need for trained professionals in Virginia.⁴ In addition to the practical training that the students received, extracurricular activities and organizations were vital to the academic and social lives of the women who attended southern public women's institutions. Literary societies became common clubs on public women's institutions campuses and were settings where pupils could focus on their

² Margaret L. Freeman, *Women of Discriminating Taste: White Sororities and the Making of American Ladyhood* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2020), 3.

³ Stephen Poulson, *Racism on Campus: A Visual History of Prominent Virginia Colleges and Howard University* (New York: Routledge Press, 2021), 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

intellectual and rhetorical development. However, the campus of the college and these literary societies were also spaces that adhered to strict racial, social, and gender hierarchies.

The Lee Literary Society and the Lanier Literary Society operated on the college's campus from 1909 to 1942 and were symbolically named for Confederate icons. The Lee was named in honor of Confederate General Robert E. Lee and the Lanier for Confederate poet Sidney Lanier. While the clubs did offer a more liberal arts education, they were not in fact groups where women simply read and discussed literature. Programs for the groups were typically talks, debates, short readings, discussions, plays, songs, and parties. The groups repeatedly used minstrel shows as an initiation process and routine form of entertainment through the early years of the college and these racist rituals continued into the 1960s, over twenty years after the literary societies had ended.⁵

The women who attended the college from 1909 to 1942 ushered in a new generation in South. The women were raised in the shadow of the Civil War and instilled with the ideals and hierarchies of the Old South. Yet, the women who attended the college also held an unrepresented amount of freedom. They had opportunities available to them that their ancestors did not have and they tested the boundaries of socially acceptable behavior. The women crafted their own identities through the practice and rehearsal of hierarchies of class, race, and gender on the campus of the college through social organizations and campus community events.

⁵ Poulson, *Racism on Campus*, 149.

To understand the lives and identities of the students who attended the college, it is vital to examine the history of the narrative of the Lost Cause and the role that gender played in. The Lost Cause is a term used to refer to the mythology that the Confederate states fought in the Civil War for a cause that was just, revolutionary, and even heroic. Post-war literature and academic materials equally contributed to building a narrative of benevolence for the antebellum generation. There are three major components to the narrative of the Lost Cause. The first is the belief that the Civil War was about states' rights, not slavery; this interpretation portrays the Confederacy's cause as noble and just. The second part of the narrative claims that the Civil War and subsequent Reconstruction upended a natural racial hierarchy and claims that in the antebellum period enslaved individuals were content with their status of bondage. Slavery, as depicted by the Lost Cause, was a benevolent institution.⁶ The third component of the narrative claims that the Confederacy had the greatest soldiers in the world and that they were only defeated because of the Union's superior resources.⁷ While regionally the narrative may differ, these three foundational aspects tended to be accepted by most white southerners in the years following the Civil War. This thesis will look at the literary societies in relation to all three aspects of the Lost Cause and will strive to answer the question of how women at the college, looked to the imagery, hierarchy, and aesthetics of the Old South while constructing their identities in a post-bellum society.

⁶ Reiko Hillyer, "Relics of Reconciliation: The Confederate Museum and Civil War Memory in the New South," *The Public Historian* 33 no 4, (November 2011) 37.

⁷ Adam H. Dombay, *The False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory* (University of Virginia Press: Charlottesville, VA, 2020), 4.

Historians have refuted the central tenets of the Lost Cause narrative as it circulates an incorrect depiction of the Civil War and the Confederacy's cause. Claim after claim can be refuted with primary source documents; for example, the Lost Cause assertion that the war was fought for states' rights is refuted by the Confederacy's own secession documents in which they outright claim that the infringement on the institution of slavery is at the heart of their argument for seceding.⁸ As historian Ty Seidule writes, "The Lost Cause created a flawed memory of the Civil War, a lie that formed the ideological foundation for white supremacy and Jim Crow laws, which used violent terror and de jure segregation to enforce racial control."⁹ This mythology neglects to acknowledge that through the Civil War, "our own forefathers once explicitly rejected the republic to which they'd pledged themselves and dreamed up another country, with slavery not merely a bug, but it's very premise."¹⁰ The Lost Cause created a false sense of historical reality and created a space where the American commemorative landscapes also reflected these lies.¹¹ However, it is increasingly important to note that beyond the Lost Cause narrative, the history of Civil War is often written about and told in a way that it is a white centric narrative and is a "story for white people – acted out by white people, on white people's terms."¹²

⁸ Ty Seidule, *Robert E. Lee And Me: A Southerner's Reckoning with the Myth of the Lost Cause* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2021), 31.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁰ Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Why do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War?," *The Atlantic*, (December 11, 2011).

¹¹ Karen L. Cox, *No Common Ground: Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight for Racial Justice* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2021).

¹² Coates, "Why do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War?,"

In her work *Women of Discriminating Taste: White Sororities and the Making of American Ladyhood*, author Margaret L. Freeman coins the terms “southern aesthetic” when referring to those who “sought to connect themselves to the seemingly noble and unadulterated heritage of the South and the supposed unrivaled natural beauty of the region’s women.”¹³ While Freeman’s book focuses on white sororities, the public women’s college literary groups adhered to the same southern aesthetic she describes and operated in a similar fashion. This thesis will examine how the literary societies at the college adhered to the same hierarchies of race, gender, and class that Freeman describes as part of the southern aesthetic. The women chosen to participate in the literary groups at the college were selected through an application process and often used similar language to white sororities such as “bids.”¹⁴ A bid was the formal invitation that the potential members receive should they be selected to join the organization. Sororities, much like the literary societies at the Harrisonburg college, became spaces where the Lost Cause thrived. Freeman writes, “Originally a means of honoring Confederate dead, the Lost Cause and its associated beliefs, as celebrated from 1865 to the 1920s, broadened to include the veneration of a reimagined South – the Old South – where all whites lived on slave-owning plantations, all enslaved African Americans were happy, and racial harmony reigned.”¹⁵ The idealized imagery of the Old South dominated many aspects of the literary groups. While Freeman’s work reiterates the common tropes of the Lost

¹³ Freeman, *Women of Discriminating Taste*, 3.

¹⁴ *The Virginia Teacher* 7. Issue 8. (October 1926).

¹⁵ Freeman, *Women of Discriminating Taste*, 6.

Cause, she takes it further to apply that trope to the spaces that were created by the women's organizations.

One aspect of this southern aesthetic is the minstrelsy that was used as the initiation process and entertainment for the literary societies. This thesis will look at the overall use of the minstrels in white social settings throughout the early twentieth century. Grace E. Hale argues that these show, and other blackface and minstrelsy imagery contributed to the individuals' crafting identities that centered on being white.¹⁶ On the campus of the college, minstrels were a form of entertainment and initiation put on by students with institutional support and encouragement. Through these activities the women were practicing the racial hierarchies and structures of the society outside of the institution. In one journal article from 1920 a faculty member describes in detail a minstrel entitled "A Dark Night at Normal" held at Harrison Hall.¹⁷ The faculty member describes the audience as "appreciative" and "in a continuous roar" while using racist language to describe the actions of the students depicting Black individuals.¹⁸ This description is one example of the minstrelsy that was a common aspect and ritual of white student academic and social life that was preserved through multiple mediums including alumnae scrapbooks and yearbooks. This research will examine how membership in the literary societies at the State Normal and Industrial School was a

¹⁶ Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998).

¹⁷ "Dark Night at the Normal," *The Virginia Teacher* 1, Issue 1, (February-December 1920) 26.

¹⁸ "Dark Night at the Normal," *The Virginia Teacher* 1, Issue 1, (February-December 1920) 26-27.

process that ensured exclusivity and once in, minstrelsy provided a means for these women to cultivate their identities as white individuals.

In addition to the official society materials of each group, personal alumnae materials and reminiscences will be used to give insight into the experience of the women who became members of the elite societies and how they used the institution as a space to rehearse societal norms of race, gender, and class. This research project will look at multiple alumnae collections across the thirty-three years that the groups operated on campus. The alumnae scrapbooks contain photographs, handwritten notes, flyers, initiation invitations, and other memorabilia collected and created by the women who were members of these groups. In her work *The Mass Production of Memory: Travel and Personal Archiving in the Age of the Kodak*, Tammy S. Gordon argues that scrapbooks are “a method for processing and reordering information in ways that made sense to the individual.”¹⁹ The scrapbooks and photographs created by the women who attended the college in the early years, are foundational in understanding the ritualistic elements and exclusivity of these groups, but they also give insight into how the women thought about and tried to reflect their own identities in the process of memory making. The scrapbooks are deliberate attempts at preserving aspects of their college experience that they were proud of and wanted to display. Additionally, the scrapbooks give insight into what each woman wanted preserved of their time at the college as they are individually curated by the author.²⁰ While as women of the New South the students had more freedom in the

¹⁹ Tammy S. Gordon, *The Mass Production of Memory: Travel and Personal Archiving in the Age of the Kodak* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020), 9.

²⁰ Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 23.

way they expressed themselves, the scrapbooks are also clear evidence that they were acutely aware that the way they presented themselves to society mattered. The women carefully chose each piece that went into the scrapbooks and what they chose to omit also gives insight into their experiences. For examples while Elsie Warren details many of her dates with “Jimmie,” there is nothing scandalous about what she includes.²¹ The physical scrapbooks were also a way for the women to “rebel.”²² Many of the books that the women purchased had templates inserted by the companies for the women to follow. However, the women frequently ignored those templates or scratched out the pre-printed headings and wrote in their own. This rebellion against the template made each scrapbook unique to the woman that created it. The scrapbooks, alumnae papers, and club memorabilia that will make up a large portion of the primary source materials for this project are located at the James Madison University Special Collections. The records specifically from the collections of the Lee Literary Society and Lanier Literary Society provide information that the clubs created and disseminated across campus. These collections include record books, meeting minutes, posters, and descriptions of the various programs that the groups hosted. These materials help to construct the general workings and structure of the groups as well as how they projected themselves through their advertising materials, including the incorporation of common themes of the Old South and Freeman’s “southern aesthetic,” on campus.

The college fit into the national narrative of the Lost Cause was disseminated regionally and locally and when looking at how the generation raised by Lost Cause

²¹ Elsie Warren Love Scrapbook, 1924, SC0281, Box 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

²² Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

mothers defined themselves in the New South. Institutions of higher education were centers for feeding individuals information and then disseminating the information back into society. The State Normal and Industrial School, in particular, was training teachers who would help to solve the national teacher shortage in Virginia. The Lost Cause rhetoric that became a part of the women's identities was then passed on to their own students. Additionally, the women at the Harrisonburg college are an excellent example of what Amy McCandless, David Gold, and Catherine Hobbs examine the fine line between Old and New South women. The young students at the college were navigating a large issue that women across the south were faced with following the end of Reconstruction.

Early historiography of the Lost Cause either downplayed the role of women or left them out entirely. The narrative begins with Edward Pollard's 1866 work, *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates*. Pollard's work is foundational in portraying the South as fighting for a noble cause. His work is one of the first places where the phrase "lost cause" is used to describe the Confederacy; however, Pollard's book was published just a year after the war ended and while there are similarities, his narrative differs in many ways from the typical Lost Cause paradigm that historians know today. In 1988 Gaines M. Foster was one of the first historians to attempt to explain the origins of the Lost Cause in his book *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 – 1913*. Foster's work argued that the Lost Cause emerged as a way for Southerners to deal with the everchanging society of the New South that came with the end of the Civil War.²³ What is most

²³ Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 – 1913* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 1988).

important about Foster's work is that he placed the power of controlling the narrative of the Lost Cause, in relation to the commemorative landscape, into the hands of the Confederate veteran organizations and largely downplayed the role of women. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* was published in 2001 by historian David Blight in direct response to Foster's *Ghosts of the Confederacy*. Foster's work devalues the role of race in the push for reunion between the North and South, while Blight's puts race directly at the center of sectional reconciliation. Blight focuses on how the narrative of reunion between the North and South trumped a narrative of emancipation. However, both Blight and Foster downplayed or left out entirely the role that Southern women played in perpetuating the narrative of the Lost Cause.

There have been numerous works on the role of female authors in perpetuating white nostalgia for the Old South in literature. David Anderson's "Down Memory Lane: Nostalgia for the Old South in Post-Civil War Plantation Reminiscences" and Glen Robins' "Lost Cause Motherhood: Southern Women Writers" both discuss women's roles in crafting the Lost Cause narrative in the years immediately following the Civil War. However, these articles don't discuss the physical role of planning, fundraising, and building commemorative landscapes and curriculum that women took the lead on in creating a perpetuating legacy of the Lost Cause.

Karen L. Cox's 1997 dissertation entitled "Women, the Lost Cause, and the New South: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Transmission of Confederate Culture, 1894-1919" and her subsequent book, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* published in 2003, became some of the first pieces to argue that it was elite, white, Southern women -not

men- who were the driving force behind creating a commemorative landscape and narrative that fit the Lost Cause. Cox's work centers on what she coins 'Confederate' or 'Lost Cause' motherhood.²⁴ This term refers to a variation of republican motherhood that is specific to post Civil War, elite, southern women. Republican motherhood is a term that describes the duty of women, as citizens of a politic, to create and raise males that will be soldiers for that politic. Additionally, republican mothers are encouraged to raise daughters that will follow in their civic footsteps and take on the role of republican mothers themselves. The women who became Lost Cause mothers went on to form groups like the Ladies Memorial Association and the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Part of what made these groups so effective in spreading the narrative and ideology of the Lost Cause was their methods and systems of perpetuation. By targeting other young women and children, 'Lost Cause mothers' were able to create a system that ensured replication. In this larger historical narrative, the women who participated in the literary groups on the campus of the State Normal and Industrial School would not have been those of the initial Lost Cause motherhood generation, but rather the young women were the individuals who were products of their work. They were part of the New South generation, raised with more freedom than their predecessors yet the women were also firmly educated in the ways of the Old South.

Public history, including museums and historic sites have also played a significant role in the formation of the Lost Cause. More recent historical scholarship has looked at the ways in which public memory is shaped and how interpretation at museums and historic sites often conforms to public memory. Reiko Hillyer's article "Relics of

²⁴ Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (University Press of Florida: Gainesville, FL, 2003), 186.

Reconciliation: The Confederate Museum and Civil War Memory in the New South,” examines the ways that material objects are used to narrate and perpetuate specific versions of history.²⁵ Hillyer looks at the ways the Confederate Museum plays an equally vital role in shaping the Lost Cause as “an epistemology as well as an ideology.”²⁶ Preserving Confederate “relics” became an equally important aspect of the Lost Cause mourning ritual that supplemented the building of a vast commemorative landscape.²⁷ Similarly, Hillyer’s work *Designing Dixie: Tourism Memory, and Urban Space in the New South*, looks at the ways that tourism was used as a way to “lure capital” and ultimately reconciliation from the North.²⁸ Northern capitalists were eager to make money and the southern tourism industry provided a vehicle for the Lost Cause. Hillyer specifically looks at the relationship between the myth of the Old South and the development of the New South, moving the Lost Cause beyond the conversations of built landscapes and identity.²⁹

The historiography of the campus history of James Madison University is more complex to articulate. Raymond C. Dingleline’s *Madison College: The First Fifty Years, 1908-1958* was one of the first works of campus history published and it was a celebratory product for the college’s fiftieth anniversary. Fifty years later in 2008, another commemorative work was published, *The Madison Century, 1908-2008*. This

²⁵ Hillyer, “Relics of Reconciliation,” 38.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

²⁸ Reiko Hillyer, *Designing Dixie: Tourism Memory, and Urban Space in the New South* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2015), 2.

²⁹ Hillyer, *Designing Dixie*, 4.

special addition book heavily featured the shift that JMU underwent from being an all-female technical institution to a coeducational university and recounts the major aspects of the community, arts, academics, sports, and student life during each president's tenure. However, like *Madison College: The First Fifty Years*, it was celebratory and far from comprehensive. There are two scholars who are looking at the history of the campus in a more comprehensive way. Dr. Margaret Mulrooney, who chairs the Campus History Committee, has research and written multiple pieces on significant Black individuals on the campus of the college and on the Lost Cause and student organizations. Her work looks at the experiences of the often-overlooked Black employees and students on campus and she examines the history of the commemorative practices of the college. Dr. Stephen Poulson's book, *Racism on Campus*, analyzes yearbooks from multiple universities across Virginia, including James Madison University. He uses analysis of yearbooks to look at the ways that universities were key in the perpetuation and dissemination of racial norms in the South.

The State Normal and Industrial School became Madison College in 1938 and switched to a liberal arts curriculum. Moving away from a technical school, the function of the literary societies was no longer needed. While the literary societies disappeared from the university by 1942, the remnants of the Lost Cause were deeply engrained in the campus. The Lee Literary Society choose gold and gray as their representative colors and the Lanier choose violet and white. When the university chose the school's official colors in 1909, they choose one from each society.³⁰ The iconic violet and gold colors that play

³⁰ Lanier Literary Society Records, (1911-1931) UA 0026, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.

a major role in the identity of James Madison University are rooted in these Lost Cause organizations. Additionally, until 2020, three buildings named during President Burruss' time in office, Jackson, Maury, and Ashby Hall, were all honoring Confederates who fought to preserve the institution of slavery.

Although the three building names were changed in 2021 to Gabbin, Darcus Johnson, and Harper-Allen Lee Hall, the legacy of the Lost Cause has not been entirely erased from the James Madison University campus. Most notably, JMU is still home to a fraternity that is founded on a Lost Cause image and symbol, Robert E. Lee. The Kappa Alpha Order is a fraternity that is directly linked to Confederate General Robert E. Lee and his time at Virginia's Washington College (now Washington and Lee University). Formed in 1865, the organization boasts that its members or "brothers" embrace the model of a moral modern Southern gentleman and their description of what that means is directly based on Lee and the image of him that was created by the Lost Cause narrative.³¹ In their own materials that are available for the public to access with a simple internet search, the Kappa Alpha Order promotes a narrative of Robert E. Lee that depicts him as a martyred, Christian, gentleman of the South. What sets this organization, sympathetic to the Lost Cause, apart from its earlier campus counterparts is that it is not a product of early twentieth century racial, gender, and class norms. The fraternity arrived on the James Madison University campus in 1995. Their connection to the Confederate leader is not hidden. On the official JMU webpage for the fraternity, their mission reads, "Kappa Alpha Order seeks to create a lifetime experience that centers on reverence to

³¹ Jesse S. Lyons & Brent W. Fellows, *The Varlet of the Kappa Alpha Order*, (Bridgewater, VA: Good Printers Inc, 2015) Kappa Alpha Order National Administrative Office, Lexington, Va.

God, duty, honor, character, and gentlemanly conduct as inspired by Robert E. Lee, our spiritual leader.”³²

As campus climates around the United States begin to recognize and reckon with their Lost Cause organizations, some chapters of the Kappa Alpha Order have called upon the national organization to sever its ties with Lee and the Old South’s harmful and racist history. Most notably, Southwestern University’s chapter was suspended in 2020 for issuing a statement about the fraternity’s problematic past.³³ The reverence for Lee and the romanization of the Old South that the fraternity promotes is not far removed from the Lee and Lanier Literary societies. Both are organizations that indoctrinated a Lost Cause ideology into its members and then disseminated those gender, racial, and class hierarchies into society through its members. The literary societies that allowed for the women to construct their identities as white women of the New South, also created the space and culture of the JMU campus where groups like the Kappa Alpha Order feel they can openly express their Lost Cause rhetoric. The Lost Cause is still ingrained in the campus identity of James Madison University and while changing the names of buildings named for Confederates is vital, equally important is reckoning and acknowledging the organizations both past and present that contributed and continue to contribute the perpetuation of the Lost Cause ideology.

³² “Kappa Alpha Order,” James Madison University, Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, accessed July 20, 2021, <https://info.jmu.edu/fsl/fraternities/kappa-alpha-order/>.

³³ Greta Anderson, “Principles and Punishment,” *Inside Higher Education*, July 23, 2020.

Chapter 1: Class and Social Hierarchy

The Purpose of a Normal School

State normal and industrial schools served a deliberate and strategic purpose in the South. Following the Civil War, the region was still physically and economically devastated from the fighting and lacked able-bodied men to work. Normal and industrial schools for young women were key parts in a response to aiding the region.³⁴ The southern region faced a clear labor problem with the lack of able-bodied workers, and this labor problem began to pull women from the private sphere into the public. The Virginia Constitution of 1869 established a statewide system of public education. This new responsibility of the state meant an increased need for professionally trained educators. This predicament added to the incentive for state funding of new schools in Virginia. Southern liberal arts colleges served the white elite and were intended to prepare men for careers in government, religion, medicine, and law.³⁵ For elite women specifically, the liberal arts colleges of the South that were marketed towards them focused on producing appropriately refined wives and mothers. The normal and industrial schools were intentionally designed to serve the region's lower and middle classes, those who would traditionally participate in wage work.³⁶ The white women that attended these new institutions were given practical training and were expected to work for several

³⁴ David Gold & Catherine L. Hobbs, *Educating the New Southern Woman* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014), 6.

³⁵ Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past and Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), 85.

³⁶Ibid., 11.; In the years following the Civil War, industrial colleges were also established for Black individuals. For example, in Virginia Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute (now Hampton University) founded in 1870.; L.P. Jackson, "The Origins of Hampton Institute," *The Journal of Negro History* 10, no 2, (April 1925).

years before marriage, usually in an educational role. However, because the workforce was not the end goal, the women still aspired to achieve the training of ideal femininity associated with liberal arts institutions. The normal schools not only were focused on producing competent teachers, but they also wanted to produce “competent home-makers.”³⁷ In this way the normal and industrial schools were situated in the same middle position as the women who attended them. They were not providing the same social education as the traditional, elite, liberal arts schools, but they also were not exclusively vocational institutions.

A Normal School at Harrisonburg

Plans for the State Normal and Industrial School for Women at Harrisonburg began in March 1908 when the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia allocated the funds for two new normal and industrial schools, one in Fredericksburg and one in Harrisonburg.³⁸ Legislators considered Harrisonburg the ideal location as the surrounding community, a largely agricultural area, offered space and potential students. As Raymond J. Dingledine Jr. articulates in one of the only comprehensive histories of the early years of JMU, *Madison College: The First Fifty Years, 1908-1958*, the assembly wanted normal and industrial schools to produce teachers trained in “manual arts instruction” that could go and disseminate that instruction throughout the South.³⁹

³⁷ “Who Should Attend the School,” *The Normal Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (Harrisonburg, Virginia: State Normal and Industrial School for Women, February 1909) 14.

³⁸ *The Normal Bulletin* 1, no. 4, (Harrisonburg, Virginia: State Normal and Industrial School for Women, November 1909)

³⁹ Raymond J. Dingledine Jr., *Madison College: The First Fifty Years, 1908-1958*, (Madison College: Harrisonburg, VA, 1959), 27.

Harrisonburg administrators established admission requirements for the college and outlined the type of young women targeted and the teachers that the school hoped to graduate. In 1908 those who applied had to be at least fifteen years old, “have good moral character and have educational preparation satisfactory to the faculty.”⁴⁰ In order to receive a state scholarship, the young women agreed to teach in the public schools of Virginia. By March 1920, 13% of schools in Virginia had teachers on staff that had been trained at the Harrisonburg college.⁴¹ The 1909 inaugural class reflected the exact population that normal and industrial schools traditionally targeted. One hundred and fifty students enrolled the first quarter at the college, and all except two students were from Virginia.⁴² 44% of the students came from households where male heads’ occupation was listed as farmers, the agrarian demographic that these normal schools were intended to serve.⁴³

“The Virginia Normal School Board” was established to govern the system of normal schools and ensure its success; yet the composition of the board and the backgrounds of its members did not reflect the community it was intended to serve. 57% of the members of the 1917-1918 board were lawyers and only 14% of the board members were farmers.⁴⁴ There were rarely years when multiple members of the board

⁴⁰ “Admission and Classification of Students,” *The Normal Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (Harrisonburg, Virginia: State Normal and Industrial School for Women, February 1909) 47.

⁴¹Some Facts about Our Schools,” *The Virginia Teacher* Vol 1 No 2, (March 1920) 54.

⁴² “Statistics of Students, First Quarter,” *The Normal Bulletin* 1, no. 4, (Harrisonburg, Virginia: State Normal and Industrial School for Women, November 1909) 7.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Julian A. Burruss, “Normal School Organization and Administration: Some Recommendations Relative Thereto with Special Reference to The State Normal School for Women, Harrisonburg, Virginia,” Reports and Speeches, 1910-1931, UA 0023, Box 1, Folder 2. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

were from Harrisonburg, and during many of the years there were no members on the board from the city. Most of the members who sat on the board hailed from wealthier areas of the state such as Richmond. While much of this can be attributed to the ways in which members were chosen to serve, through appointment by the governor, it also gives merit to the idea that the normal school, which was intended to serve the lower-and-middle classes, was still in many ways controlled by the upper class.

As the public education system became more popular, the socioeconomic differences between vocational schools and liberal arts colleges “meant that legislative battles for appropriations often degenerated into class conflicts.”⁴⁵ The class conflict arose as the state government sought locations for the new normal schools. The influx of individuals to the community where the schools would be located meant that the citizens of that town stood to profit from the institution. This profit came from both the staffing jobs that the school created (laundry, cooking, janitorial, construction, maintenance etc.) and from the revenue generated by businesses that catered to student's lives (restaurants, clothing shops, entertainment, etc.). As a result, there was an increase in “cities and counties, with socio-economic and political forces combining in a campaign to secure a normal school for their respective communities.”⁴⁶ The Normal and Industrial School at Harrisonburg did not operate free of class conflict, but rather was a product of existing social and political hierarchies combining to influence educational policy in Virginia.

⁴⁵ McCandless, *The Past and Present*, 11.

⁴⁶ Bruce Emerson, “A History of the Relationships Between the State of Virginia and its Public Normal Schools, 1869-1930,” (diss, The College of William and Mary, 1973), <https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.25774/w4-g7yc-zj12>, (1539618304).

Winning the bid to host the institution meant that the surrounding community and its citizens stood perfectly positioned to benefit from the influx of people. While the school provided the students' basic needs such as food and housing, the greater Harrisonburg community profited on the limited disposable income that the women had. For many of the women at the college, their time on campus was the first time that they were away from their family homes. Social life was critical to learning and practicing the norms of middle-class Virginian society, and the businesses in Harrisonburg took advantage of this market by providing annual goods and services. The businesses placed advertisements in the local and school newspapers directly targeted the women. Headlines often opened with "College Students!" "College Girls!" or "Say Girls! Listen!" and advertised items that would help build one's social status such as new clothes or calling cards.⁴⁷ Store owners posted their ads in the school journal, *The Virginia Teacher*, and when the school newspaper, *The Breeze* began printing regular issues in 1922, advertisements targeting faculty and students appeared in the back pages of each issue. It was also common for the stores to offer a small discount to the students and teachers to entice them to shop there.

Financing an Education

While many of the women had a small amount of disposable income to spend commercially in Harrisonburg, financing an education at the college was not always an easy task. The Harrisonburg Normal was an affordable option for women from more rural backgrounds, but it was not without expense. During the first seven years that the school

⁴⁷ Alice Virginia Kellam Scrapbook, 1923-1925, SC0182, Box: 1, Folder: 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

was open, tuition cost the students \$2.00 per quarter (three months) until 1915 when it jumped to \$10.00 per quarter.⁴⁸ In addition to tuition, the young women had the expense of renting any required textbooks and the cost of their board. Board, which would include a furnished room, towels, bedding, light, heat, food, and laundry, cost \$14.00 a month during the 1909-1910 school year.⁴⁹ As mentioned earlier, the normal schools served a wage worker demographic and at the college, 44% of students came from families who were farmers.⁵⁰ The cost to attend the college was too high for many of the families to outright fund their daughter's education, and thus the need arose for students to earn their funding through other methods.

The first quarter that the school was open, roughly 25% of students during this period were either partially or fully supporting themselves.⁵¹ Any student who received a state scholarship or agreed to teach in the state of Virginia for at least four years was given free tuition but still incurred other expenses. This pledge to teach within the state was taken seriously, and records indicate that women who did not keep their promise of teaching four years within the state were held accountable for paying back their education. In the papers of President Samuel P. Duke, there is a list of at least seven students who between 1927 and 1935 had to pay the school back for not upholding this

⁴⁸ "Students," *The Normal Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (Harrisonburg, Virginia: State Normal and Industrial School for Women, February 1909) 25.; Raymond J. Dingleline, *Madison College: The First Fifty Years, 1908-1958*, (Madison College: Harrisonburg, VA, 1959) 65.

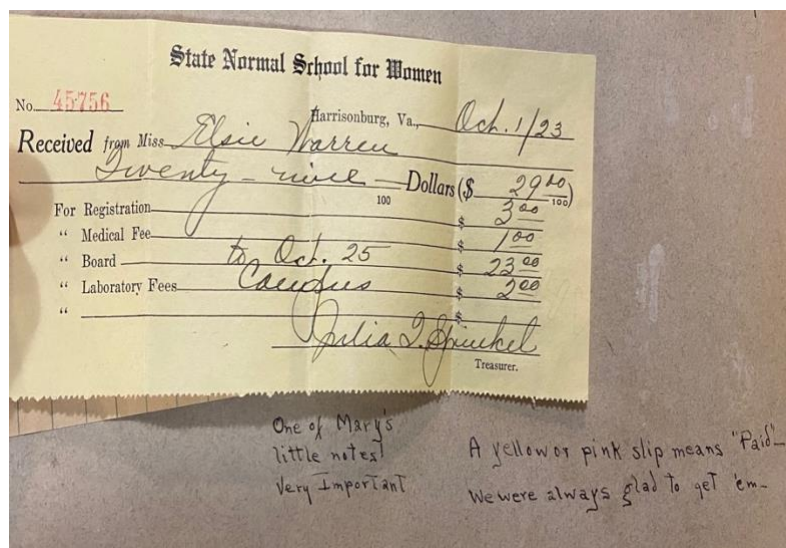
⁴⁹ "Summary of Expenses of Students," *The Normal Bulletin* 1, no. 3 (Harrisonburg, Virginia: State Normal and Industrial School for Women, August 1909) 16.

⁵⁰ "Statistics of Students, First Quarter," *The Normal Bulletin* 1, no. 4, (Harrisonburg, Virginia: State Normal and Industrial School for Women, November 1909) 7.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

agreement.⁵² The new students also needed to budget for the cost of transportation to and from Harrisonburg, typically in the form of a train ticket. This is all to say, although reasonable, there was still a significant cost to attend the school. Those, among the first class, who could not afford the price of tuition were urged to write to President Burruss to inquire about any job opportunities on campus that could help offset the cost.⁵³ In 1909, the year the school opened, 11% of students earned their education through this early form of work-study financial aid.⁵⁴ By 1910 the Virginia legislature established a loan fund that allowed students to borrow up to \$100.00 a year at a four percent interest rate.⁵⁵ This loan program came as one of the first of many ways that the college began to offer alternative ways for women to afford their education. By 1938 there were fifteen different sources of financial aid.⁵⁶

The women who attended the college were fixated on the cost of their tuition. Many of them kept receipts of their bills in



[Figure 1] Tuition receipt from scrapbook created by Elsie Warren Love.

⁵² Samuel P. Duke, Student Body Information, January 16, 1936, UA0014, Box: 1, Folder: 3. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

⁵³ Dingleline Jr., *Madison College*, 23.

⁵⁴ Normal Bulletin, November 1909, Vol I, No 4, (Harrisonburg, Virginia: State Normal and Industrial School for Women) 8.

⁵⁵ Dingleline Jr., *Madison College*, 66.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

scrapbooks. Elsie Warren Love summarized this practice on one page, writing, “A yellow or pink slip means ‘paid’ – we were always glad to get ‘em-.”⁵⁷ As Tammy Gordon argues in her work *The Mass Production of Memory*, scrapbooks are very deliberate pieces of memory in which the creators choose each item to represent themselves during a certain period in their lives. Harrisonburg students often purchased scrapbooks that had certain pages dedicated to suggested items. Anne Christiansen Chapman and Katherine Winfrey bought books with specific pages labeled “receipts.”⁵⁸ Elizabeth Arrena Carroll, who composed her scrapbook mostly of photographs, included a yellow “paid” tuition receipt from 1925 among her pictures.⁵⁹ Evidence indicates that many women took advantage of the opportunity to finance their education through loans and financial scholarship. Agnes Mason Price, a student at the college from 1930 to 1935, created one of the most extensive collections of loan receipts saved.⁶⁰ Price financed her education through the state student loan fund. She received the loans at the typical four percent interest rate, and she kept meticulous records of her loan and tuition receipts. Price’s circumstance was not unique; one state student loan ledger, housed in Special Collections at JMU, lists hundreds of women that between 1928 and 1936 used this method to pay for their education.⁶¹ Many of the students who took advantage of these financing options

⁵⁷ Elsie Warren Love Scrapbook, 1924, SC0281, Box 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

⁵⁸ Anne Christiansen Chapman Scrapbook, 1920-1922, SC0031, Box: 1, Folder: 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.; Katherine Winfrey Scrapbook, 1911-1912, SC0041, Box: 1, Folder: 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Arrena Carroll Scrapbook, 1921-1925, SC0190, Box: 1, Folder: 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

⁶⁰ Agnes Mason Price Scrapbook, Receipts, Envelopes, and Pamphlets, 1930-1935, SC0034, Box: 1, Folder: 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

⁶¹ State Student Loan Ledger, 1928-1936, Box: 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

kept evidence of it in their scrapbooks. Women used scrapbooks to preserve records of the money that they had to spend and what they spent it on. Gordon also notes that scrapbooks were “an analog antecedent to current personal digital information practices.”⁶² The women used them in a comparable way to social media, to cultivate and display a certain image of the individual creating them. The tuition receipts are evidence of the women’s ability to pay for an education and thus, their class structure.

Many of the women who attended the college came from lower to middle class families and grew up with the narrative or remembrance of the Old South in which the elite were portrayed as the only ones able to obtain an education. The receipts are representative of social mobility and of the lower classes now having access to what was once elite – regardless of whether that actual education and curriculum was the same. All these efforts to finance education indicate that the college helped open education to an even wider class audience. Once inside the school, however, students found that traditional social and class hierarchies were reinforced in other ways.

The Literary Societies and Social Hierarchies

While the institution itself served a working-class demographic, the women formed groups within the campus that allowed them to define social capital and create a structure that mimicked the outside societal environment. Dingleline estimated that by 1919 not including the \$30.00 tuition, the college could cost a student anywhere between \$198.00 to \$218.00 per year.⁶³ In addition to the cost of tuition, room and board, and transportation, participation in extracurricular activities also required money. To join a

⁶² Gordon, *The Mass Production of Memory*, 10.

⁶³ Dingleline Jr., *Madison College*, 66.

club, students would pay yearly dues in addition to an initiation fee and a fee for any meetings that they missed. Dues for all literary societies in 1926 were seventy-five cents per year with an additional twenty-five cents for each meeting the individual missed.⁶⁴ The initiation fee could range anywhere from an extra fifty cents to five dollars.⁶⁵ In an undated letter, Frances Graybeal, a student at the college in the early 1930s, was instructed to bring one dollar for her initiation to the basketball team.⁶⁶ Often in the letters that the women received to join the groups they were told to bring the initiation fee with them to the secret rituals that would take place either the same day or shortly after the letter was received. This meant that the women had to have access to some sort of spending money to be able to pay the fees. Social organizations and extracurricular groups were foundational to a women's experience at the college. The basic education at the college was primarily practical training, the extracurricular groups supplemented that education with liberal arts curriculum. Additionally, the clubs and societies were the main form of socialization for women and membership defined a woman's social group on campus. The extracurricular groups were structures within the space of the campus, where the women could practice the social hierarchies that occurred outside of the institution. The extra fees and costs were a method of ensuring exclusivity within the groups and as one article in *The Breeze*, the school newspaper, noted "The girls who suffered the humiliation of initiation are amply repaid by the honor which has been

⁶⁴ *The Virginia Teacher* 7. Issue 8. (October 1926) 232.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Frances Graybeal Scrapbook, Correspondence, 1932-1935, SC0183, Series 3, Box: 4, Folder: 10. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

bestowed on them.”⁶⁷ The college found ways to make the technical education it offered more widely available, while the societies found ways to distinguish social capital within the institution.

At the college, there were two original literary societies, the Lee and Lanier, that were established in 1909 when school opened. The literary societies were social organizations that provided its members with weekly meetings that featured songs, plays, poems, and presentations, as well as social gatherings and parties. As the exclusivity and prestige of these two social organizations grew, two more literary societies were

established, the Alpha and the Page. Neither the Alpha or the Page literary society grew to the prestige of the Lee or the Lanier.

The Lee and Lanier literary societies were exclusive, for “membership was by invitation only and a coveted honor.”⁶⁸ Prior to the creation of the Alpha Literary Society, it is not entirely clear how a woman might go about joining the Lee or Lanier. There may have been waiting lists for groups, as one note in the 1919 *Schoolma'am* indicates. That year the Lee Literary Society published a waiting



[Figure 2] 1919 *Schoolma'am*, a waiting list for the Lee Literary Society can be seen at the bottom.

⁶⁷ “Literary Societies Pledge New Members,” *The Breeze*, January 24, 1925.

⁶⁸ Dingedline Jr., *Madison College*, 99.

current members.⁶⁹ This note is the only evidence found of waiting lists for the societies; however, the public nature of the waiting list gives insight into the status that could be achieved by being a part of the societies. The women listed on the waiting list had met the standards of the society and publishing their names alongside the women who had achieved members was a social endorsement from the exclusive and prestigious group.

By 1926 any woman who wanted to join the Lee or Lanier Literary Society needed to join the Alpha Literary Society. The Alpha was created in 1924 and its purpose was twofold. First, the Alpha was a “training” space for women who were interested in the Lee or Lanier.⁷⁰ Second, the Alpha sought to “give every girl in the college a chance to be a part of some organization.”⁷¹ This second rationale indicates that the students at the institution not only defined themselves by the academic experiences they had but also by the social experiences. Any women who wished to join the Lee or the Lanier Literary Societies were required to take part in the Alpha for at least one quarter before they were eligible to apply for the more exclusive clubs.⁷² The Alpha was a product of a project created by Lila Lee Riddell, a student in Pi Kappa Omega (PKO), the college’s honor society. Every student who was a member of the PKO was required to work on a project that promoted “the best interest of the school and society.”⁷³ Riddell

⁶⁹ State Normal School for Women, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1919.

⁷⁰ The Alpha also serves to prepare members for the Page Literary Society; however, the Page Literary Society was not created at the conception of the State Normal and Industrial School and never reached the prestige of the Lee or Lanier and thus this group is not a major focus of this thesis.; “Alpha Literary Society,” *The Breeze*, October 17, 1925, 1.

⁷¹ State Teachers College, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1932.

⁷² “College Literary Societies in Virginia,” *The Virginia Teacher* 7, No 8, (October 1926) 230.

⁷³ “Clubs and Societies Begin Session’s Work,” *The Breeze*, October 11, 1924.

was not a member of either the Lee or Lanier yet her project altered the entire operating system of the societies.⁷⁴ The October 11, 1924, issue of *The Breeze*, which details the beginnings of the Alpha Literary Society, noted “Every girl has an opportunity to become a member of the PKO as membership does not depend merely upon a bid.”⁷⁵ The openness of the Alpha reflected the organization that created it, the PKO.

The Alpha Literary Society ensured the exclusivity of the Lee and the Lanier and raised the basic standard of those who were eligible.⁷⁶ It was through this system that the members of the Lee and Lanier were able to filter out any women who did not fit their standards. The Lee, Lanier, and Page selected their members from the Alpha through invitations. To be selected, eligible members had to be recommended by one of the officers of the Alpha.⁷⁷ Through this method the Lee, Lanier, and Page were always in control of who was allowed membership.

Evidence shows that the officers of the Alpha had also achieved status within the Lee or Lanier. In the April 11, 1925, issue of *The Breeze*, an announcement is made that the Lee Literary Society had elected a new president because their sitting president, Frances Clark, had accepted the position as president of the Alpha.⁷⁸ Clark was an established member of the Lee Literary Society and is listed as a member in the 1923 and 1924 yearbooks. Sarah Elizabeth Thompson, a member of the class of 1927, served as

⁷⁴ State Normal School for Women, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1923.

⁷⁵ “Clubs and Societies Begin Session’s Work,” *The Breeze*, October 11, 1924.

⁷⁶ “New Literary Society,” *The Breeze*, May 17, 1924.

⁷⁷ “Clubs and Societies Begin Session’s Work,” *The Breeze*, October 11, 1924.

⁷⁸ “Lees Elect New President,” *The Breeze*, April 4, 1925.

both the president of the Lee Literary Society and as the vice president of the Alpha Literary Society.⁷⁹ In the 1930 *Schoolma'am* Elizabeth Cowling is listed as serving as both the president of the Alpha and the treasurer of the Lanier during her time on campus. Frances Ann Matthews, a senior in 1931, during her literary society career served as both the vice president of the Alpha and as the secretary of the Lanier. Having an officer of the most exclusive societies be the officers of the Alpha reproduced social hierarchies on campus. The women who joined the Lee and Lanier were required to be recommended by an officer from the Alpha. Those who served as officers were also members of the more exclusive club, thus their recommendation carried more weight with the group since they were in the best position to know and determine who best fit the standards set by the groups.

This method ensured that Lee and Lanier could gatekeep who was allowed within their groups and proved quite effective. In 1909 when the college opened, the Lee and Lanier included 25% of the student body. This percentage stayed consistent. In 1919 just five years before the Alpha was created, only 26% of students were members of the groups despite the number of students attending almost doubling in those ten years. By 1929, five years after the Alpha was created, the Lee and Lanier consisted of only 10% of the student body, and this number seems to hold through 1938, even as the number of students at the college grew exponentially. If the goal of the Alpha was to bring exclusivity to the groups as the number of students attending the college grew, then it was successful in its mission.

⁷⁹ State Teachers College, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1927.

The Alpha also served as a consolation prize for those who never made it into other societies. When the Alpha was formed in May 1924, the founder said that she had been inspired by the fact that “such a large number of girls came into the College and left without ever becoming a part of any literary organizations.”⁸⁰ Almost 75% of students who were attending the college prior to the founding of the Alpha did not have the chance to participate in any literary group, adding to the exclusivity of the organizations. If a girl was not chosen to participate in one of the selective literary societies prior to 1924, then she had no society to belong to at all. While there were many clubs on the campus of the college that the women could belong to, such as Le Circle François and Glee Club, there were only two exclusive literary societies, and the other clubs did not carry the prestige of the societies. The clubs did not have as strict membership guidelines as the literary societies. While the experience in the Alpha was distinctly different from that in the Lee or Lanier, with the creation of the group, the women who were not chosen for the Lee or Lanier were still able to belong to a group. However, it was clear that they belonged to one that did not carry the same social status as the other two.

After 1924 all students who were new members of the Lee or Lanier had completed time in the Alpha before moving up. Thelma Dunn, a student at the college from 1923 to 1927, was a member of both the Lee and Alpha throughout different points of her time at the school. Dunn spent a limited amount of time in the Alpha; however, there is still memorabilia saved in her scrapbook from this rite of passage. Dunn’s scrapbook, which contains ephemera from her time as a student, heavily focuses on her time spent in the Lee Literary Society. During their senior year at the college, each

⁸⁰ “New Literary Society,” *The Breeze*, May 17, 1924.

woman would typically get a longer paragraph written about them in the school's yearbook, *The Schoolma'am*. Typically, these sections were lengthy lists that displayed the women's academic and social achievements during their time on campus. Dunn's senior photo in the 1927 *Schoolma'am*, which lists the highlights of her time at the college, only features her involvement with the Lee Literary Society.⁸¹ This is common among most of the women who achieved the ultimate social goal of becoming a member of the Lee or Lanier. Being a member of the more selective groups indicated a woman's social status on campus. The Alpha was open to any student, whereas the Lee and Lanier were exclusive. Those who were members of the Lee or Lanier would often highlight as an achievement their move up to these societies in their scrapbooks and in the school yearbook, while omitting their work in the Alpha, for they had achieved a higher social status. There is one exception to this pattern and that is the women who served as officers in the Alpha in addition to holding higher up positions in the Lee or Lanier. Many of the women mentioned earlier in this chapter who served as officers in the Alpha have their involvement with both organizations listed in the yearbooks. Being an officer in the Alpha would have meant that the women had achieved a status in the Lee or Lanier where they were trusted with the task of choosing the new members that best fit the standards of the higher organizations.

There were also members who participated in the Alpha but either were not accepted or never attempted to move on to the Lee or Lanier. A 1925 *Breeze* article mentions that some girls were satisfied with their social status in the Alpha Literary

⁸¹ State Teachers College, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1927.

Society and never joined the Lee, Lanier, or Page.⁸² Alice Virginia “Ginnie” Kellam, originally from Cheriton, Virginia, arrived at the college in 1923 at the age of eighteen. She graduated with a two-year certificate in 1923 to 1925, and her senior class photo lists her as a member of the Alpha Literary Society. Records indicate that Kellam never moved up from the Alpha to the Lee or Lanier. It is unclear whether Kellam attempted to move on to the Lee or Lanier and was not accepted or whether she never tried to move up and was content with her status in the Alpha. By preserving ephemera from Alpha in her memory book, however, she documented its importance as a social organization.

If a woman had completed her time in the Alpha, met the academic requirements, and was selected to join the Lee or Lanier, she was then tested on whether she was worthy of being in the group through an initiation process. Once chosen by these exclusive organizations at the beginning of the winter term, new members went through an initiation process that consisted of both public and private rituals. The initiation process was foundational to the social status of the organizations as it symbolized the movement between statuses for the new members. Once a woman had passed through the ritual, she was no longer a regular student, but rather a member of an elite social organization. Gary Schwartz and Don Merten argue in “Social Identity and Expressive Symbols: The Meaning of an Initiation Ritual,” that the solidarity of a group that uses initiations is not necessarily found in social cohesion but rather “in the felt validity of the perception of oneself and similar others as sharing the same social identity.”⁸³ Though the Lee and Lanier were not completely secret organizations, they kept aspects of their

⁸² “Alpha Literary Society,” *The Breeze*, October 17, 1925, 1.

⁸³ Gary Schwartz & Don Merten, “Social Identity and Expressive Symbols: The Meaning of an Initiation Ritual,” *American Anthropologist* 70, No 6, (December 1968) 1130.

groups hidden to heighten the exclusivity of them. The information on the about initiation rituals is intentionally scarce. When *The Breeze* reported on the 1925 initiation process, the article read, “Last week was the time appointed for the would-be literary society members to be tested, and tested they were to the utmost, both publicly, as the student body can testify, and secretly, as only the now ‘new members’ will ever know.”⁸⁴

New inductees to the Lee or Lanier received two invitations. The first was a formal invitation, typed or handwritten, from the secretary asking them to respond within a certain period.⁸⁵ The second invitation, sent after the response, gave them a time and place to meet for the secret initiation process. While most of the women included their initial letter of acceptance in their scrapbooks, only three preserved evidences of the private initiation rituals. Frances Graybeal, a graduate of the class of 1936 and the Lee Literary Society, saved a note instructing her to be in the ‘Day Students’ room at 6:30pm for her “presentation to the Lee Society.”⁸⁶ Graybeal pasted her initiation invitation alongside her formal invitation to join the group. So did Marian Colton Smith, a student at the college from 1932 to 1935. Smith’s invitation instructs her to “please dress as a negro” and to “have about a pound of flour with you” when she arrived at the ritual on Friday night.⁸⁷ Lastly, Inez Graybeal, Frances’ sister, was instructed to put on blackface

⁸⁴ “Literary Societies Pledge New Members,” *The Breeze*, January 24, 1925.

⁸⁵ Anne Christiansen Chapman Scrapbook, 1920-1922, SC0031, Box 1, Folder 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.; Frances Graybeal Scrapbook, Correspondence, 1932-1935, SC0183, Box 4, Folder 10. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.; Virginia Elizabeth Tisdale Fenlon Scrapbook, 1925-1934, SC0179, Box 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.; Delphine Hurst Parsons Papers, 1923-1976, SC 0012, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.

⁸⁶ Frances Graybeal Scrapbook, Correspondence, 1932-1935, SC0183, Box 4, Folder 10. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

⁸⁷ Marian Colton Smith Harris Papers, 1932-1938, SC0186, Box 1, Folder 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

and dress as a “streetwalker, flapper, and jazz singer” as part of her initiation into the Lee Literary Society.⁸⁸ The racist characterization of Black women during the initiation ritual will be examined in chapter three and gives insight into the content of the private initiation process. All three invitations indicated that the private initiation rituals took place at night, and Smith’s tells her directly, “do not talk to anybody.”⁸⁹ This secrecy was in direct contrast to the official initiations which typically happened directly on the Quad during daytime hours. The nature of the private, nighttime initiation process added to the allure of the literary societies and heightened their elite social status on campus.

Practicing Class

As students at the college and participants in the literary societies, white middle class women were presented with opportunities to explore the class dynamics that they saw in society. One method through which they explored these class interactions was through staged performances. In plays and minstrel shows, the women practiced the stereotypical characteristics of class in a controlled environment. Roleplaying afforded the opportunity to explore, understand, and affirm where they stood in the established class and social hierarchies of the outside world. The women of the Lee and Lanier sought sophistication, so they featured characters in situations of extreme wealth or extreme poverty. The women would use these situations to both ridicule and distance themselves from the poor and celebrate the wealthy.

⁸⁸ Inez Graybeal Scrapbook, 1931-1936, 1980, SC 0183. Series 3, Box: OV 1. V. Inez Graybeal Roop Papers, James Madison University Libraries Special Collection

⁸⁹ Marian Colton Smith Harris Papers, 1932-1938, SC0186, Box 1, Folder 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

The characterization of Southern, poor white individuals as ignorant hillbillies, rednecks, or white trash was not new to the twentieth century; in 1728 Virginian planter William Byrd II wrote of what he described as “lubbers” during an expedition to North Carolina.⁹⁰ The “white-trash” character was a common trope throughout American literature. Typically, there were two different rationales for these characters, who refuted the idea that anyone in America could be successful and prosperous. The first rationale was dubbed the “blood-line theory” and argues that poor white individuals are predisposed to be “white trash.”⁹¹ The second rationale blames environmental conditions such as climate, diet, and disease.⁹² In the plays that the women at the college performed, they were practicing both rationales.

Literary society meetings almost always included such performances. For example, the program for “An Evening on the Old Plantation,” features a skit time when the play *Po’ White Trash*, which members performed during the meeting.⁹³ The meetings were not mandatory for members to attend; however, if a student were to miss a meeting, they would be fined twenty-five cents per meeting missed.⁹⁴ The fine suggests it is highly likely they attended regular meetings and participated in the activities described here. This play, nestled into a typical Lee meeting agenda, is representative of the race and

⁹⁰ Kathlene McDonald, “Talking Trash, Talking Back: Resistance to Stereotypes in Dorothy Allison’s ‘Bastards Out of Carolina,’” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 26, No 1/2, (Spring-Summer 1998) 16.

⁹¹ David Reynold, “White Trash in Your Face: The Literary Descendent of Dorothy Allison,” *Appalachian Journal* 20, No 4, (Summer 1993) 360.

⁹² McDonald, “Talking Trash, Talking Back,” 16.

⁹³ “An Evening on the Old Plantation,” Lee Literary Society Posters, 1909-1912, Box: OV 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

⁹⁴ “College Literary Societies in Virginia,” *The Virginia Teacher* 2, no. 8, (October 1926) 231.

class values that the women are using the space to rehearse. *Po' White Trash*, written in 1900 by Evelyn Greenleaf Sutherland, a Bostonian, examines the racial status of poor whites.⁹⁵ The play also examines the “powerlessness of poor white women against the crude intentions of wealthy men.”⁹⁶ Suke Dury seeks to avenge her sister, who became pregnant after being seduced by Judge Marston Page under the promise of marriage.⁹⁷ While in the end the play exposes the wickedness of Judge Marsten Page, the wealthy, elite character in the play, the plot hinges on traditional stereotypes of immoral “white trash” women. One of the characters, Sal, implies that “daddyless young ‘uns’ are a predictable part of a poor woman’s life.”⁹⁸ The Lee members performed this play during their celebration of the Old South. In many ways, *Po' White Trash* is also a commentary on the cultural tensions of the New South. Its nostalgia for antebellum south fits into the Lost Cause narrative, which condemn Reconstruction for upsetting gender and class hierarchies as well as racial order.

Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch, another play performed at the college, contained a similar negative characterization of poor white families.⁹⁹ A comedy, adapted from a novel written in 1901 by Alice Hegan Rice, it centers on a widow struggling to support her children in Louisville, Kentucky. Throughout the play Mrs. Wiggs is met

⁹⁵ Jessica Hester, “Progressivism, Suffragists, and Constructions of Race: Evelyn Greenleaf Sutherland’s *Po' White Trash*,” *Woman’s Writing* 15, No 1, (May 2008) 55.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁹⁹ Ella Heatwole Jacobson papers, 1910-1916, SC0252, Series 3, Box 4, Folder 7; Special Collections, JMU Libraries.; Pearl Haldeman Stickley Scrapbook, 1910-1912, SC0295, Box 1, Folder 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

with hardship after hardship, such as the constant threat of eviction, that she continuously meets with optimism. Simply put, the Wiggs family is depicted as living in a state of cheerful ignorance. The poverty of the family is the comedic center of the play as the individuals are used as humor while they navigate highbrow society.¹⁰⁰

The language used in the plays mirrors a dialect that supposes the inferiority of those who use it. White trash characters are often singularly defined by their lack of refinement and the language they use in plays and songs often reflects this assumed lack of sophistication. Likewise, refinement is often the goal for those depicted as living in extreme poverty. For example, in *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*, some of the children are named after continents such as Asia, Australia, and Europa. It is implied that these names were chosen to make the family appear more distinguished. This small detail implies that the family is trying to associate itself with geographical locations, both the knowledge of them and the ability to travel to them, with a level of sophistication that they obviously lack. This use of a classist dialect went beyond the language used in the plays that the women performed. The dialect can also be seen in the songs that the women performed at the literary society meetings and at major university events.¹⁰¹ “Shendo Land,” one of the college’s official songs, was sung to the tune of “Dixie” and featured a dialect common with poor southern individuals and consistent with racist stereotypes of Black individuals.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Earl F. Bargainnier, “Southern Humor and Sentimentality: Circa 1900,” *The Southern Literary Journal* 12, No 2, (Spring 1980) 153.

¹⁰¹ Lanier Literary Society Posters, 1911-1912, UA0026, Box: OV1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

¹⁰² Margaret M. Mulrooney, “Confederate Heritage at JMU,” *JMU Campus History* (blog), May 25, 2017, <https://mmulrooney.net/2017/05/25/confederate-heritage-at-jmu/>; Katherine Winfrey Scrapbook, 1911-1912, SC 0041, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.

The women at the college, in their search of their own refinement and upward mobility, practiced and rehearsed elements of class and characterized those in lower socioeconomic positions as lacking sophistication and status. When looking at the portrayal of white trash in plays and literature, it is important to note that often “the upper-lower class and the lower-middle class may feel the need to define themselves by what they are not.”¹⁰³ The women who were coming into the college were from largely agrarian and lower to middle class families, and characterizing and stereotyping those who were viewed as part of a class that was below them, meant that the women could define themselves as the “lower other.”¹⁰⁴ In direct response to both rationales for white trash, the women were using the exercises to show that they were distinctly different than other lower and middle class communities. Their very presence at the college meant that they were not part of the community or environment commonly associated with poor white trash. The women used the groups to rehearse aspects of class through plays, songs, and programs, and they characterized stereotypical aspects of poverty. The State Normal and Industrial School at Harrisonburg was a space that echoed societal norms of class and social capital and allowed for women to rehearse their own roles within these hierarchies.

Chapter 1 Conclusion

The State Normal and Industrial School at Harrisonburg served a space of potential social mobility for middle- and lower-class white women during the early part of the twentieth century. The opportunity for higher education offered more than just practical teacher training. Normal schools were spaces that inherently facilitated

¹⁰³ Reynold, “White Trash in Your Face,” 357.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 357.

movement between social strata not only for the students that attended them but also for the communities in which they were placed. While the State Normal and Industrial School at Harrisonburg provided a space where women from traditionally lower to middle class families could gain an education, social hierarchies within the institution ensured that the women upheld societal norms. The Lee and Lanier Literary Societies created systems of membership which ensured exclusivity and distinguished social capital. The members of the Lee and Lanier practiced class and rehearsed refinement as they sought and explored their own identities. Membership in the elite clubs ensured members a higher social status through barriers designed to keep those deemed unsuitable for the exclusive groups out.

Chapter 2: Gender

In May 1927, Elizabeth Bloxom and Margaret Coleman were both issued a sentence of a three quarters suspension from the institution by the college administrative council.¹⁰⁵ Their punishment came after two days earlier they had signed for a field trip to McGaheysville but instead of going to the approved destination, the women took the bus to Staunton to meet a group of boys to go riding in a car and to have dinner at the Stonewall Jackson Hotel.¹⁰⁶ This trip was not Bloxom or Coleman's first regulations violation as they had both been on probation the previous year as well.¹⁰⁷ The new found freedom of the young women who attended the college could not be ignored by the institution and they placed regulations upon the women to try and control the new normal of the New South. As women of a new generation, however, they continued to push the boundaries to craft their identities and see just how far they could go. As evident in the story of Bloxom and Coleman, multiple attempts at pushing the boundaries were made. Records indicate the attempts that resulted in consequences; however, most likely there were other instances when the women were never caught. All of this was a part of the task that the women had of delicately navigating both the Old and the New South while carefully crafting their own identities. Thus, white women of the New South had to create identities that fit their changing environment but were firmly rooted in the gender ideals

¹⁰⁵ "Meeting of Administrative Council, May 31, 1927," Administrative Council Papers, 1927, UA 0040, Box: 1, Folder: 1, Office of the President: Committee Records, UA 0040. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

of an unobtainable and imagined past. Like Buxom and Coleman, countless women who attended the college were tasked with walking the line between Old and New South.

The Southern Lady and the Lost Cause

In *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South*, Tara McPherson writes “Lost Cause ideology of southern nationalism conveniently fused the figure of the southern lady onto a celebration of the rebirth of a ‘nation’ defeated.¹⁰⁸ This close tie between the Lost Cause and the ideal southern woman meant the defining image of womanhood was reflective of the romanticized Old South that is central to the narrative. McPherson writes further, “the patriarchal culture of the postwar South deployed the figure of the southern lady to discipline...white women who were enjoying the new freedoms born of wartime.”¹⁰⁹ These new freedoms fundamentally changed the image of the plantation lady as the New South offered women more opportunities outside of the home. A refined southern woman had to embrace the Old South traditions of mother, wife, and hostess, while also navigating the public sphere.

Post-Civil War institutions served as vehicles for these values to be passed on to the next generation of southern women. For example, liberal arts institutions, “leaned heavily on the imagery of the southern lady as the emblem of the aesthetic and as a stealthily crafted, nonthreatening image of conservative American womanhood.”¹¹⁰ Freeman goes on to argue that this training “molded white college women across the

¹⁰⁸ Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹⁰ Freeman, *Women of Discriminating Taste: White Sororities and the Making of American Ladyhood*, 3.

United States in the image of an imagined southern belle.”¹¹¹ The “imagined southern belle” that Freeman is describing is a product of the Lost Cause narrative, and the women who played a vital role in constructing that narrative, often referred to as Confederate or Lost Cause mothers, “clung tenaciously to the gender ideals and racial order of the slaveholding culture.”¹¹² Their image of the ideal southern woman was modeled after the romanticized imagery of white plantation ladies. The antebellum plantation mother’s role was entirely domestic and their sense of duty, in the Old South, was entirely tied to the family and plantation home. The white elite class, those who after the war made up the majority of the Lost Cause motherhood, systematically prepared their daughters to become “wives, mothers, and slave mistresses.”¹¹³ It is important to note that “belief in biologically determined or attributed roles” was not confined to the Antebellum South; however, there was a “more rigid definition of the role of women” and more prominent image of women who “accept without question the doctrine of male supremacy” in the Antebellum South than in the North.¹¹⁴

Although those involved with Confederate motherhood promoted a traditional image of the southern lady, one in which the woman’s domain was the plantation home, they also took leading roles in organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Ladies Memorial Association, which allotted them an

¹¹¹ Freeman, *Women of Discriminating Taste: White Sororities and the Making of American Ladyhood*, 3.

¹¹² Victoria E. Otto, *Confederate Daughters: Coming of Age During the Civil War* (Southern Illinois University Press: Carbondale, IL, 2008), 5.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹⁴ McCandless, *The Past and Present*, 122; Ann Firor Scott, *Making the Invisible Woman Visible* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 223.

unprecedented visibility in southern society.¹¹⁵ After the Civil War there is a clear change in the gender norms of southern men and women. Men of the New South are very different from their forebears. The end of the institution of slavery also brings an end to the plantation economy and New South men no longer make money in the same manner as their fathers. This new form of masculinity was more focused on regaining or saving the generational wealth that was at risk with the fall of the Confederacy. As Karen L. Cox argues, “These younger men were less interested in preserving their Confederate heritage than in creating a concrete foundation for their own power based on their business interests.”¹¹⁶ This lack of interest in the actions of their ancestors was incongruous with values that the women of the same generation had been raised to cherish but also made way for Lost Cause mothers to move into the public sphere.

These new visible roles defined white upper-class women as the custodians of Confederate memory. Women were thought to be best suited to undertake the work of commemoration and celebration so that “their actions could not be construed as treasonous to the U.S. government.”¹¹⁷ Confederate motherhood pushed the boundaries of what was considered socially acceptable for women and allowed them to enter the public sphere in a way that was nonthreatening to their male counterparts. Their work was considered respectable by southern societal standards. In the case of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, “the fact that its members behaved like ‘southern ladies’

¹¹⁵ Gold & Hobbs, *Educating the New South Woman*, 17.

¹¹⁶ Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 45.

¹¹⁷ Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (University of North Carolina: Chapel Hill, NC, 2008), 40.

gave the organization respectability while also serving as the source of its power.”¹¹⁸

While these women may have held each other and other women in southern society to traditional antebellum standards, the ideals were far from the reality and the elite women who participated in the commemoration movement, whether consciously or not, contributed to redefining the role of women in the New South. After the Civil War, with so many men either dead or disabled, white women faced the new reality that they were unlikely to remarry, and their daughters might not ever get married.¹¹⁹ This meant that many women, regardless of class, had the opportunity to move into the public sphere and education became one method by which they made this transition. Despite their numerous efforts, “the plantation household could not be remade” and white women would never be able to exactly go back to the idealized ways of the Old South.¹²⁰

A Delicate Balance

The image of the plantation lady went beyond just Confederate motherhood. These women’s groups were one manifestation of the feminine ideal, those who participated were still ultimately women of the Confederate generation. The students who attended the college were women of the New South, brought up to idolize and embrace the ideals of the Old South. This meant that they needed to embrace the image of the plantation lady, who was defined by more than just motherhood and marriage, she was the ultimate picture of refinement and gentility. Yet, as Kentucky suffragist Josephine K. Henry argues, the ‘new women’ of the New South “have the courage to demand a field of

¹¹⁸ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 32-33.

¹¹⁹ Gold & Hobbs, *Educating the New South Woman*, 19.

¹²⁰ Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 92.

thought and action commensurate with their aspirations.”¹²¹ Henry contrasts this with the women in the South, who she argues are satisfied with her condition of submission.¹²² While Henry is arguing for equal suffrage, her writing brings to the surface the distinct differences between the women of the Old South and the New South woman. The New South woman that she describes was a refined individual that valued their potential. She was not content with her condition but rather was striving to achieve higher intellectual knowledge. The New South women were distinctly different from the Old South women in the opportunities and freedoms which they were afforded. New South women not only were able to enter the public sphere but many of them held the responsibility of earning money to support their families. Due to this increased responsibility and opportunity education, mainly practical and technical, in the New South was open to a wider class range including women in lower- and middle-class families. The women of the New South were also afforded more sexual freedom as dating and courtship practices changed. The women at the college would go on to live drastically different lives than those of the Confederate generation and most likely very different lives than their own mothers. This meant that that they needed to look towards the women who worked at the college as they navigated the delicate balance between Old and New South. This also meant that the administration at the college inserted their own regulations to attempt to guide the women as they crafter their own identities and explored the freedoms of the New South.

The women who attended the college ushered in a new era of female freedom. They, unlike the generation before them, held the possibility of transforming the image of

¹²¹ Josephine K. Henry, “The New Woman of the New South,” (*Arena 11*: 1895).

¹²² Henry, “The New Woman of the New South.”

the plantation lady beyond the private sphere. All this power came with the southern societal responsibility of upholding the traditions of the Old South. While the female faculty and staff on campus offered examples of the modern women, social organizations served as vehicles for the idolization of the women of the Old South. The Lee and Lanier Literary Societies were groups that mimicked Lost Cause motherhood and they directly perpetuated the Lost Cause narrative, which as described earlier, pushed an idealized image of the refined plantation mistresses as an aspirational form of womanhood. Through these social organizations the women learned how to be mother, wives, hostesses who exuded gentility. This image was constantly morphing and changing with the freedom and modernity of the New South.

Regulating the Southern Lady

Public women's colleges and normal and industrial schools sat at the intersection of Old and New South conceptions of southern femininity. Women's educational institutions in the south became spaces that allowed for women to enter the public sphere, yet they did so in a controlled manner that perpetuated and instilled the gender ideals of the Old South in its students who were largely New South women. While normal and industrial schools gave young southern women practical training, they also outlined standards which "made it difficult for Southern women to question tradition and to assert their individuality."¹²³ Everything from a women's dress to who she was allowed to ride in an automobile with was carefully regulated to fit the sexual purity and societal standards that were efforts to emulate an idealized version of the Old South. Normal and industrial schools provided an opportunity for women to gain practical training and

¹²³ McCandless, *The Past and Present*, 121.

allowed them the potential of social mobility. However, these institutions had to also navigate southern societal standards as “college leaders explicitly strive[ed] to find a balance between old South traditions and new South needs.”¹²⁴ The schools “had to honor traditional ideals regarding their state’s young white daughters” through continued emphasis on domestic training in addition to the regular curriculum.¹²⁵ The women’s campus social life also provided a space where gender standards could be rehearsed and refined.

The student’s behavior on and off campus was closely regulated and monitored by the administration. The men and women who served in the administration at the college set the standard day to day regulations that the female students had to follow to maintain their good standing. Each academic year the administration published various lists which set the social standards for each level of students. Women who were considered “seniors” on campus were given more privileges than the younger students. These privileges changed each year and were decided on and voted on by the administration and faculty. They could be changed or revoked at any time.¹²⁶ Many of the restrictions stayed consistent from 1909 to well into the 1940s. Regulations such as the ones implemented at the college were a common and distinctive aspect of the southern woman’s college experience. While chaperonage almost entirely disappeared from Northern women’s colleges in the 1920s, this practice continued at most Southern women’s colleges well

¹²⁴ Gold & Hobbs, *Educating the New South Woman*, 27.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹²⁶ Julian A. Burruss, “Privileges Granted to the Members of The Senior Class by the Faculty,” November 13, 1913, Correspondences, 1910-1939, 2005, UA 0023, Box: 1, Folder: 3. Julian A. Burruss Papers, UA 0023. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

into the 1940s.¹²⁷ At the college, the enforcement of the restrictions and chaperonage of the female students was overseen by the “matron.”

Matrons, Social Directors, and Dean of Women at the Normal

The woman who oversaw and often enforced the restrictions placed upon the students evolved from the “matron” to the “social director” and later “Dean of Women.” Between 1909 and 1942 multiple women occupied this position. The first was Mrs. Roderich B. Brooke. Brooke was a fifty-seven-year-old widow when she began at the college in 1909.¹²⁸ Her marriage status would have been especially important as Brooke oversaw the dormitory as the matron, housekeeper, dietician, and nurse.¹²⁹ The matron was expected to operate in a social setting that was free of “corrupt” male influence and promoted purity and chastity in accordance with the idealized image of the heterosexual southern lady of the Old South. Thus, those who served as matrons were typically expected to either be unmarried or widowed. It was reported that Brooke was successful in her position and ruled with an iron fist. For example, students who wanted to leave campus were required to request the permission of the matron. Brooke, “granted permission to leave the campus and go to town, considering once in two weeks a sufficient number of trips.”¹³⁰ Men were only allowed to call the female students on

¹²⁷ McCandless, *The Past and Present*, 124.

¹²⁸ 1910; Census Place: Central, Rockingham, Virginia; Roll: T624_1647, Page: 27A, Enumeration District: 0072, microfilm: 1375660

¹²⁹ Dingleline Jr., *Madison College*, 40.

¹³⁰ “Regulations for Boarding Students,” Administrative Council Papers, 1927, UA 0040, Box: 1, Folder: 1, Office of the President: Committee Records, UA 0040. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.; Raymond J. Dingleline Jr., *Madison College: The First Fifty Years, 1908-1958*, (Madison College: Harrisonburg, VA, 1959) 40.

Friday and Saturday nights after the women had obtained the permission of the matron and their parents.¹³¹ This was closely monitored by Mrs. Brooke as the phone the women were allowed to use was located directly outside of her room and connected to her own phone so that she may be able to monitor the conversation.¹³²

The position of matron changed significantly when Brooke resigned in 1916. The duties of housekeeping, dietician, and nurse were divided between formally trained women and the position of matron became “social director.” The first woman to occupy this position was the mathematics instructor, Natalie Lancaster. Lancaster was a single woman who, even prior to her appointment as social director, had been involved in regulating student social behavior at the institution.¹³³ Lancaster joined the institution in 1908 and was an active member of the faculty. In conjunction with Dr. Julian Burruss, Dr. John Wayland, and Elizabeth Cleveland, Lancaster helped set the behavior standard at the college which lasted well past her time on campus. As a member of the faculty, Lancaster voted each year on which privileges would be granted to the women and as social director she took a leading role in enforcing those regulations. In 1923, Lancaster resigned both her positions at the college and the position of social director was renamed “Dean of Women” and taken over by Mrs. Beatrice R. Varner.

The position of matron and social director were intended to be role model figures to the women. They embraced the duality of the feminine ideal as mature, refined women

¹³¹ “Regulations for Boarding Students,” Administrative Council Papers, 1927, UA 0040, Box: 1, Folder: 1, Office of the President: Committee Records, UA 0040. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

¹³² Dingleline Jr., *Madison College*, 41.

¹³³ *1920 United States Federal Census, Harrisonburg Ward 1, Harrisonburg (Independent City), Virginia*; Roll: T625_1893, Page: 16B, Enumeration District: 104

of the New South. All the women who served in these positions were either unmarried or widowed while they held the position. Their marital status was key in the work that they did as matrons, social directors, and Dean of Women. They served as examples of the plantation lady beyond the plantation home, as at the time of their service at the college they were not raising families, yet they still embodied the Old South feminine ideal. The women who served as matrons, social directors, and Dean of Women were modern working professional women who acted as guides for the students as they navigated their own social obligations in the ideals of both the New and Old South.

Social Regulations at the Normal

The women who attended the college in the early years enjoyed an unprecedented amount of social freedom that came with the society of the New South, and the twentieth century ushered in “the most dramatic transformation involved undergraduate sexuality.”¹³⁴ The administration at the college created social regulations that attempted to regulate the new freedom and power that the women received with the new era of sexual practices. The regulations were intended to continue the tradition of southern gender ideals while simultaneously properly socializing her with the opposite sex so that she may one day marry and take on the ultimate role of mother, wife, and hostess. After all a life of work was never the end goal for most of the women. Rules governed everything from the way a woman dressed, to who she could go driving with and date, to when and where she could dance, all closely monitored by the dean of women. The women were quizzed on their knowledge of the regulations with freshman training

¹³⁴ Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1987), 123.

examinations.¹³⁵ If the women failed to conform to the proper dress or broke the socialization regulations, their enrollment at the institution was put in jeopardy.

The twentieth century brought about “changes in attitudes about sex and in sexual practices...” that “reshapes the form and content of college life for both men and women.”¹³⁶ Regulating the women’s interactions with their male counterparts was one of the highest priorities of the administration officials that set the social rules. First and foremost, to enjoy any privileges given to them, the women must have written permission from their parents on file with the Dean of Women’s office. Each student was required to have permission on file for the following privileges: having callers, riding in automobiles, riding horseback, and leaving Harrisonburg.¹³⁷ Many of the women saved the notes that their parents wrote alongside mementos that indicate they took full advantage of these privileges. A note was sent from Alice Virginia Kellam’s mother to Mrs. Varner in 1923 requesting that Kellam be given “all the privileges granted by the school.”¹³⁸ Marian Colton Smith sent a postcard to her mother in 1932 requesting that her mother write to the Dean of Women at the time and grant Smith permission to have a visitor from Port

¹³⁵ “Freshman Training Examination,” Alice Virginia Kellam Scrapbook, 1923-1925, SC 0182, Box: 1, Folder: 1, SC 0182. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

¹³⁶ Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, 123.

¹³⁷ Student Government Association and Young Women’s Christian Association, “Student Handbook,” Thelma Dunn Gregory Scrapbook, 1923-1927, SC 0254, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.

¹³⁸ “Letter from Mrs. Clyde S. Kellam to Social Director Mrs. Varner,” November 1, 1923, Alice Virginia Kellam Scrapbook, 1923-1925, SC 0182, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Va.

Republic.¹³⁹ In 1921 Anne Christiansen's father requested that his daughter be allowed "to have company provided it does not otherwise infringe on the school rules and regulations."¹⁴⁰ Christiansen appears to have taken full advantage of her father's permission. At different points during her time at the college, Christiansen had male visitors such as "George" and "Herbert."¹⁴¹ While neither Herbert nor George were the man that Christiansen would eventually marry, she does seem to have been concerned "to think that I [Christiansen] shall be the only old maid."¹⁴² Regulating the women's social behavior was a way of regulating the women's sexuality; however, there was a delicate balance that the administration strove to find.

The women's interactions with men were some of the most regulated behaviors at the college. These regulations showed that the administration was concerned that "as white women became more integrated into public life, they also became more 'vulnerable' to the designs of strange men."¹⁴³ The institution was a space where many of the women were away from homes and watchful parents' eyes for the first time. This heightened the supposed vulnerability of the women and directly led to the administration

¹³⁹ Marian Colton Smith, "Letter from Marian Colton Smith to Mrs. L. De G. Smith," January 21, 1932, Marian Colton Smith Harris Papers, 1932-1938, SC 0186, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.

¹⁴⁰ N. Christiansen, "Letter from N. Christiansen to Social Director," March 18, 1921, Anne Christiansen Chapman scrapbook, 1920-1922, SC 0031, Box: 1, Folder: 1, SC 0031. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

¹⁴¹ Anne Christiansen Chapman scrapbook, 1920-1922, SC 0031, Box: 1, Folder: 1, SC 0031. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

¹⁴² Anne Christiansen Chapman scrapbook, 1920-1922, SC 0031, Box: 1, Folder: 1, SC 0031. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

¹⁴³ Leann Whites, *Gender Matters: Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Making of the New South* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 186.

implementing regulations that targeted the women's interactions with men. A woman attending the college "may have engagements with young from a distance..." Further, the young men who interacted with the women on a regular basis were required to "submit recommendations and be approved by the Dean of Women or President of the college before being permitted to call on students."¹⁴⁴ Dates and social engagements with men were permitted only on Friday and Saturdays and on Sundays but only to attend church.¹⁴⁵ As the women moved up at the institutions, the regulations gave them more freedom in their dating lives. For example, during the 1926 to 1927 school year, second year students could receive "callers" on one weeknight in addition to the weekend allowance but third years were allowed up to three nights a week, providing they received permission from the Dean of Women for all engagements.¹⁴⁶ Additionally, as the years went on the administration changed these rules sparingly. In 1913, seniors were allowed social engagements only Saturdays and Fridays, provided they were registered with the matron and on Sundays, men could accompany them to church. By 1926 these rules had changed little although the privilege has been extended to the second and third years as well.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Student Government Association and Young Women's Christian Association, "Student Handbook," Thelma Dunn Gregory Scrapbook, 1923-1927, SC 0254, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA, 16.

¹⁴⁵ Student Government Association and Young Women's Christian Association, "Student Handbook," Thelma Dunn Gregory Scrapbook, 1923-1927, SC 0254, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA, 18-19.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 22-25.

¹⁴⁷ Julian A. Burruss, "Privileges Granted to the Members of The Senior Class by the Faculty," November 13, 1913, Correspondences, 1910-1939, 2005, UA 0023, Box: 1, Folder: 3. Julian A. Burruss Papers, UA 0023. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

Riding in cars with men also became a heavily regulated activity for the women. In the 1920s and 1930s cars quickly became symbols of young women's new freedom. Automobiles offered a secluded space where women could have sexual encounters with men away from the watchful eye of the matron, social director, or Dean of Women. Students who attended the college were not allowed to ride in cars with anyone without the expressed permission of the matron.¹⁴⁸ Riding in motor vehicles was permitted within the limits of Harrisonburg if the student was with her parents, a member of the faculty, "or on Main Street before 6pm between the College and East Market Street with ladies only."¹⁴⁹ Additionally, it was made clear by the administration that "nothing in the statement of senior privileges shall be construed as allowing any Senior or Seniors to go driving with men at night."¹⁵⁰ The automobile was, in many ways, extensions of the bedroom. It was a place where women and men could have sex or "enjoy the pleasures of 'petting'" away from the watchful eyes of chaperons.¹⁵¹ Unchaperoned activities left the possibility that women's perceived traditional Old South morals and virtues could be questioned. If a student was caught in an unsupervised situation the consequence was often suspension or expulsion. In August 1927 Willada Rickman, was suspended after it was reported that she was "riding without permission or chaperon..." and was "dancing

¹⁴⁸ Student Government Association and Young Women's Christian Association, "Student Handbook," Thelma Dunn Gregory Scrapbook, 1923-1927, SC 0254, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA, 19.

¹⁴⁹ Student Government Association and Young Women's Christian Association, "Student Handbook," Thelma Dunn Gregory Scrapbook, 1923-1927, SC 0254, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA, 19.

¹⁵⁰ John Wayland, "From the Faculty Minutes of March 30, 1914," Correspondences, 1910-1939, 2005, UA 0023, Box: 1, Folder: 3. Julian A. Burruss Papers, UA 0023. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

¹⁵¹ Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, 208.

with a boy in a private home the same night.”¹⁵² Like Bloxom and Coleman mentioned earlier, Rickman was pushing the boundaries of what was considered acceptable behavior of a young, white, southern woman. Rickman, like countless other students at the college, was experiencing freedom for the first time away from home. This new freedom coupled with the new societal standard of acceptable behavior meant that the students at the college needed to navigate the institutions social regulations while exploring their own identities. The rules and regulations that were in place at the college were an attempt to allow women enough exposure to men so that they would not end up with the old maid status that Ann Christiansen feared, while still regulating their sexuality. There was a distinct belief in southern gender ideology that Black individuals and lower-class whites were “oversexed and lacked sexual restraint” thus, any institution that was trying to produce refined women had to regulate sexuality.¹⁵³

Sexuality at the Normal

In the Lost Cause narrative, the women of the Old South were “pure white Southern belle[s] with no sexual desires or agency.”¹⁵⁴ The ideal southern woman, as described by the Lost Cause, was “virginal, domestic, submissive, and pious.”¹⁵⁵ The

¹⁵² “Meeting of Administrative Council,” August 6, 1927, Administrative Council Papers, 1927, UA 0040, Box: 1, Folder: 1, Office of the President: Committee Records, UA 0040. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

¹⁵³ Pippa Holloway, *Sexuality, Politics, and Social Control in Virginia, 1920-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1.

¹⁵⁴ Matthew Teutsch, “‘Our Women...are Ladies’: Frank Yerby’s Deconstruction of White Southern Womanhood in *Speak Now*,” *College Language Association Journal* 60 no, 3, (March 2017) 343.

¹⁵⁵ Teutsch, “‘Our Women...are Ladies’: Frank Yerby’s Deconstruction of White Southern Womanhood in *Speak Now*,” 337.; While women were portrayed in the Lost Cost narrative as pure, Black men were often hypersexualized. This hyper sexualization of Black men was used to instill fear in white individuals that the Black men were capable of “defiling” the supposed purity of the white women. This constructed white fear created a close tie between gender and racial violence and was used as a white supremacist rationale for the large-scale lynching of Black men throughout the Jim Crow era.

southern lady was more of an “ideal than reality” and as products of the generation that came before them, the women at the college were expected to embody these gender ideals while navigating their newfound freedom.¹⁵⁶ The college encouraged women to embrace a heightened sense of femininity while divorcing that femininity from sexuality. The ideal women of the Old South, those who the students at the college looked to as beacons of womanhood, embraced a southern femininity that “[substituted] manners and rituals for overt sexuality.”¹⁵⁷ The twentieth century changed what was considered socially acceptable in terms of sexual expression for young white women. This newfound freedom, however, lived in the shadow of the Old South gender ideals and the women who attended the college had to navigate this line carefully.

Dating on college campuses in the early twentieth century was a carefully crafted ritual that “created and confirmed the system of prestige.”¹⁵⁸ The dating ritual fundamentally changed a women’s social status on campus and “college women gained their positions indirectly by being asked out by the right man.”¹⁵⁹ Dating an attractive young man could elevate a young women’s social status. The number of dates a woman had, and the prestige of her date often translated into her own social status.¹⁶⁰ Social pages in *The Breeze* were one way that the campus community was made aware of who was calling on certain people. As discussed in an earlier chapter, the scrapbooks that the

¹⁵⁶ McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie*, 152.

¹⁵⁷ McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie*, 153.

¹⁵⁸ Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, 128.

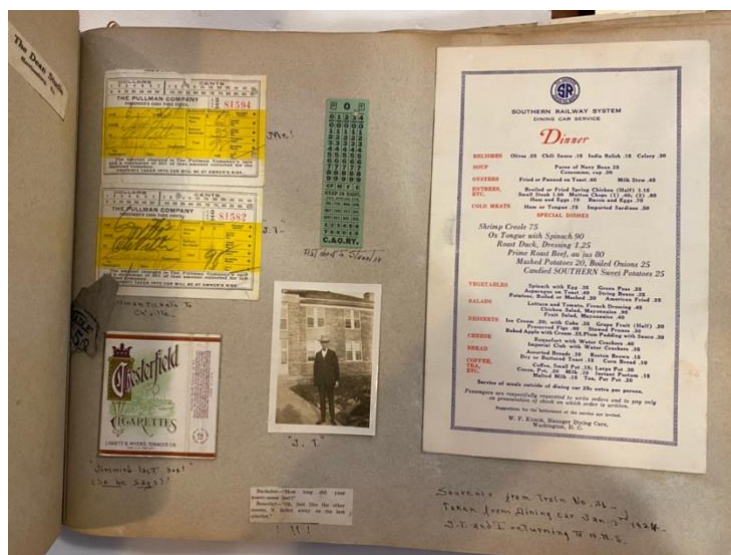
¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 211.

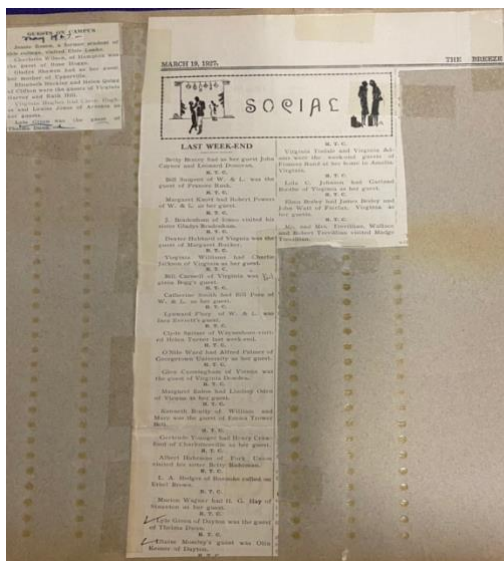
women created portrayed the images of themselves that they wanted their peers to see. If dating men elevated their status, naturally they would create multiple pages in their scrapbooks showcasing their dating lives.

Under the watchful eye of the college administration, students at the Normal were presented with ample opportunities to practice and rehearse heterosexual norms. The scrapbooks examined for this research are filled with ephemera of the women's social encounters with men. Although the scrapbooks span many years, many of the women saved similar items relating to the men they dated, indicating that there were most likely common social experiences among the women that fit with the confines of the social regulations. The women saved chocolate wrappers, flowers, ribbons, cards, telegrams, and other scraps that indicate to anyone that read their scrapbooks they participated in the ritualistic aspects of college dating.

One of the most comprehensive collections of ephemera from social interactions is in the scrapbook of Elsie Warren. The men that are mentioned in Warren's book are mostly mentioned only by their first name and many of them their relationships are not explicitly defined. Warren regularly mentions a man named "Jimmie," and her social log indicates she often went on dates and much of her ephemera is signed from



[Figure 3] Page dedicated to Jimmie and Elsie's trip to Charlottesville from the scrapbook of Elsie Warren Love, JMU.



[Figure 4] *The Breeze* social pages from the Thelma Dunn Gregory scrapbook, JMU. Lyle Green is noted on the top left and bottom center.

Bob, Edgar, and Hollace.¹⁶¹ Jimmie is regularly mentioned in the scrapbook. Although it is unclear if this was a man that Warren dated there are telegrams, cards, photographs of Jimmie in front of Normal buildings and even an entire page dedicated to a trip to Charlottesville that Jimmie and Warren took together.¹⁶² Regardless of the relationship between Jimmie and Warren, the scrapbook is consistent with the ephemera that other women saved from their own social interactions with men. Anne Christiansen has

notes saved from a man only identified as “Herbert.” Thelma Dunn frequently had a visitor named Lyle “Ikey” Greene and like Warren, she saved the golden seal from a box of chocolates he sent her.¹⁶³ Dunn also saved excerpts from *The Breeze* public notices and underlined the announcements that Greene had visited her. Dunn’s classmates saw the names of the men that were taking her on dates in the public notices and this information had the potential to elevate Dunn’s social status. France Graybeal saved a dance card from the cotillion club’s dances that show her frequently dancing with Lindsey DeFrees and invitations to another dance addressed to Preston Lincoln.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Elsie Warren Love scrapbook, 1924, SC 0281, Box: OV 1, SC 0281. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.; Elsie Warren went on to marry Harry Morgan Love in 1929.

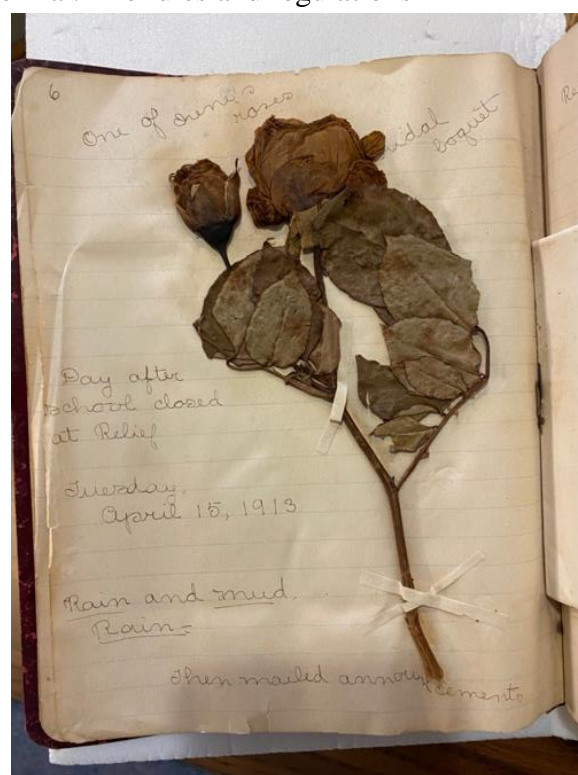
¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Thelma Dunn Gregory Scrapbook, 1923-1927, SC 0254, Box: OV 1, SC 0254. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

¹⁶⁴ Frances Graybeal Scrapbook, Ephemera, 1932-1935, undated, SC 0183. Series 3, Box: 4, Folder: 11. V. Inez Graybeal Roop Papers, SC 0183. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

Virginia Tisdale Felon has an entire page in her scrapbook decorated with ribbons and notes saved from the flower she was sent by men.¹⁶⁵ Like Warren, Tisdale also mentions one man, named Skeeter Thompson, consistently in her scrapbook. The scrapbooks were a curated selection of a women's social life and the ephemera from their dates and social interactions with men were a display of the rehearsal of heterosexuality that was foundational to a women's experience at the institution.

Heterosexuality was the expectation at the Normal. The rules and regulations written by the administration at the college only address the idea that the female students would be dating men. Only one explicit reference to homosexuality was found in this research. Nancy Chappellear Baird, the daughter of former biology professor and advisor to the student council, wrote that a female student at the college could be dismissed from the institution for "drinking, stealing, being a [kleptomaniac], a lesbian, and...cheating."¹⁶⁶ While this is the only explicit reference to homosexuality found during this research, the fact that this was even a topic of the



[Figure 5] Irene's" bridal bouquet from the scrapbook of Pearl Haldeman Stickley, JMU

¹⁶⁵ Virginia Elizabeth Tisdale Felon Scrapbook, 1925-1934, SC 0179, Box: 1, SC 0179. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

¹⁶⁶ Nancy Chappellear, "Letter from Nancy Chappellear Baird to R. Dingleline Jr," Correspondence Re: "Madison College, the First Fifty Years", 1956-1958, UA 0037. Series 1, Box: 1, Folder: 2. Department of History: Raymond C. Dingleline, Jr. Papers, UA 0037. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

student council may indicate that there may have incidents that gave rise to this policy. The social standard and understanding at the college was that women would date men and either marry them or stay unmarried and become old maids. The women were presented with examples of heterosexual relationships as the institution provided examples of idealized families in the form of the Burrusses, the Dinglelines, and the Chappellears. The nuclear families often lived on campus and the head of the household, always the man, taught on campus while the woman raised the children, who were often the “mascots” for the various student classes. The families that lived on campus became examples of the types of families and heterosexual relationships that the women were encouraged to seek.

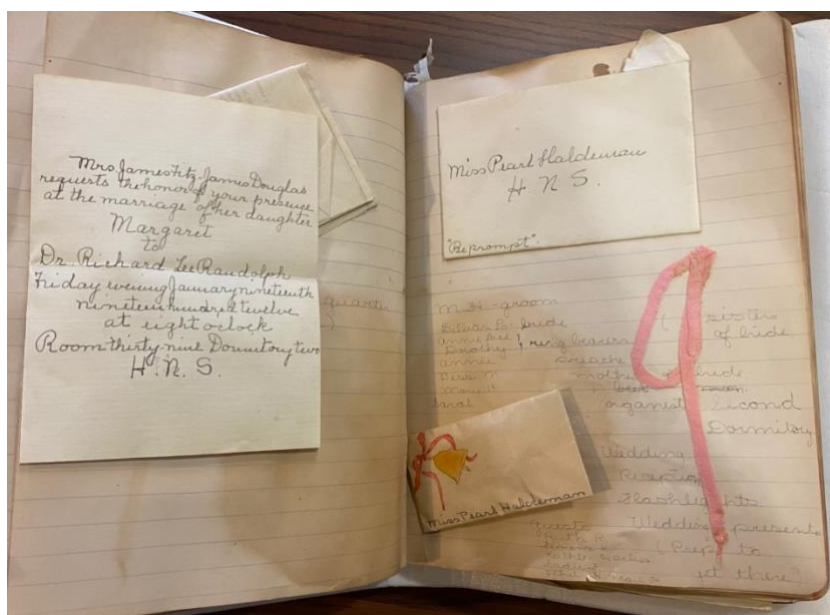
During the early twentieth century it was expected that the heterosexual relationships that the women were engaging in were socialization that would eventually lead to marriage. Women who attended Southern colleges in the from the 1800s; a 1895 survey revealed that only around 24.5% of women who attended Southern colleges married.¹⁶⁷ Compared to their predecessors, the women who attended the college in the early years were part of a generation of college educated women who married at a much higher rate.¹⁶⁸ Marriage and weddings became a central part of the student’s experiences at the college and many of the women saved aspirational ephemera from women who had achieved the ultimate social goal of marriage. The scrapbooks feature wedding invitations and newspaper clippings announcing the marriages of former friends and

¹⁶⁷ Rebecca S. Montgomery, *The Politics of Education in the New South: Women and Reform in Georgia, 1890-1930* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 38.

¹⁶⁸ Joan Marie Johnson, *Southern Women at the Seven Sister Colleges: Feminist Values and Social Activism, 1875-1915*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008) 111-113.

classmates. Elsie Warren saved an invitation from the marriage of Marguerite Motley to Frank Marse and wrote next to it “Some more news! What next???”¹⁶⁹ Pearl Haldeman saved roses from “Irene’s bridal bouquet and Virginia Elizabeth Tisdale saved an engagement announcement card for another couple. .”¹⁷⁰ Tisdale also saved a note which read that if she wasn’t married by August 4, 1936, then a male friend agreed to marry her.¹⁷¹ The note was signed by both Tisdale and the willing man and included signatures of “witnesses.” In addition to the ephemera found in the scrapbooks, the women also routinely preformed their own staged weddings.

The wedding and marriage ephemera found in the women’s scrapbooks and the performance of weddings are reminder of their own “quest for domesticity,” and are examples of their peers that achieved this ultimate heterosexual status.¹⁷² The rehearsal and use of symbolic weddings at the college



[Figure 6] Mock Wedding Invitation and bridal party list from Pearl Haldeman Stickley’s scrapbook, JMU.

¹⁶⁹ Elsie Warren Love scrapbook, 1924, SC 0281, Box: OV 1, SC 0281. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

¹⁷⁰ Pearl Haldeman Stickley Scrapbook, 1912-1915, SC 0295, Box: 1, Folder: 2, Pearl Haldeman Stickley Papers, SC 0295. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.; Virginia Elizabeth Tisdale Fenlon Scrapbook, 1925-1934, SC 0179, Box: 1, SC 0179. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

¹⁷¹ Virginia Elizabeth Tisdale Fenlon Scrapbook, 1925-1934, SC 0179, Box: 1, SC 0179. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

¹⁷² McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie*, 153.

was a common practice among the women. In 1912 Pearl Haldeman received an invitation to the mock wedding of “Margaret Douglas to Dr. Richard Lee Randolph” which occurred in room thirty-nine of dormitory two.¹⁷³ Haldeman detailed each role in the wedding and recorded who played them. Interestingly in this mock wedding while the fake bride’s name is somewhat ordinary, much like the women who attended the college, the groom’s name features two prominent historical Virginian families. Lee, referring to the Lee family commonly connected with Robert E. Lee, has familial ties to both President George Washington and to the distinguished Carter family of Virginia. The Randolph family of Virginia is a widely known powerful, political family with ties to Colonial Virginia as well as the Revolutionary War. The Randolphs were also connected to the Carters through marriage. The choice to name the fake groom in the mock wedding after prominent Virginia families is a deliberate signal that the women look at marriage not only as a societal ritual but also as an opportunity to achieve a higher, distinguished social status.

The “old girl new girl” wedding was also an event that the women annually performed at the college. The old and new girl weddings, a reoccurring event at the college, were performed by the students and supported by the



[Figure 7] Richmond Times Dispatch Article, December 26, 1935, from the Etta Evans Scrapbook, JMU

¹⁷³ Pearl Haldeman Stickley Papers, SC 0295. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

administration. The staged wedding was meant to represent the “union of the two portions of the student body” and featured a bride, groom, bridesmaids, groomsmen and often a reception.¹⁷⁴ Similar to the way that universities use convocation ceremonies today as a means of welcoming and joining new students to the institution, these fake weddings performed at the college were the official ceremony that inducted new students.¹⁷⁵ The ceremonies were elaborate affairs that featured floral bouquets, white dresses, and tuxedos. For the southern lady, the wedding day was often the culmination of years of practiced gender norms as “all life leads to the wedding day.”¹⁷⁶ By habitually performing weddings year after year at the college, the women were rehearsing for the roles that they would one day take in society and for the public display of femininity that they would one day be expected to perform.

Perhaps the best example of the life that the female students at the college hoped to achieve was that of Agness “Mama Ding” Stribling Dingedine. On the campus of the college, Agness Dingedine was revered as the model of a modern New South woman. She was distinctly different from the role models that came before her such as the Cleveland Sisters or Natalie Lancaster as Dingedine was both a professionally trained woman, a wife, and a mother. Born in 1894, Agness Stribling hailed from Berryville, Virginia and began her education at the college in 1913, the same year Raymond C. Dingedine Sr. began teaching mathematics during summer sessions.¹⁷⁷ Stribling

¹⁷⁴ “Richmond Times Dispatch Article,” December 26, 1935, Etta Evans Scrapbook, 1935-1936, Box: 1, Folder: 1, SC 0070. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

¹⁷⁵ Dingedine Jr., *Madison College*, 183.

¹⁷⁶ McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie*, 153.

¹⁷⁷ Dingedine Jr., *Madison College*, 116.

graduated from the college in 1915 and returned in 1917 as a faculty member in the English and education department.¹⁷⁸ Dingedine Sr. has been appointed as a full-time winter faculty member in the mathematics department one year prior in 1916.¹⁷⁹ On February 21, 1918 Agness Stribling and Raymond C. Dingedine Sr. were married and began their reign as one of the most revered couples on the Normal campus.¹⁸⁰ The Dingedines, their family, and their home, became a central part of the college. They established an essay writing contest, their children, Raymond Dingedine Jr., Agness Dingedine, and Jane Ellen Dingedine became the “mascots” to different classes.¹⁸¹ Agness Stribling Dingedine was also given the nickname “Mama Ding,” by the students at the college. She became a mother-like figure on the campus and an example of the ideal form of womanhood. She had begun her time at the college as a student, enjoyed a short-lived career using her degree teaching and then achieved the goal of marrying and starting a family. Agness Stribling Dingedine’s journey through the societal steps of womanhood were on display at the college and served as the example of what the women hoped to achieve one day. She was entirely a woman of the New South, with an education and career, while still firmly rooted in the ideals of motherhood of the Old South.

¹⁷⁸ “The State Normal School for Women,” *The Schoolma’am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1915.; “The State Normal School for Women,” *The Schoolma’am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1917.

¹⁷⁹ Dingedine Jr., *Madison College*, 62.

¹⁸⁰ “The State Normal School for Women,” *The Schoolma’am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1918.

¹⁸¹ Dingedine Jr., *Madison College*, 53.; “The State Normal School for Women,” *The Schoolma’am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1921.; “State Teachers College,” *The Schoolma’am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1935.

Chapter 2 Conclusion

The women who attended the State Normal and Industrial School for Women at Harrisonburg pushed boundaries as women of the New South. Growing up in the shadow of the Lost Cause narrative the women were raised with and expected to uphold the ideals of the imagined plantation mistress of the Old South while navigating the changing social and political world around them. Traditional Confederate motherhood idolized the plantation lady and used this image to push the Lost Cause. The women at the college were surrounded and taught the gender norms of the South by those who were deeply connected with Confederate motherhood. The work of the early lost cause generation paved the way for the women at the college to make an entrance into the public sphere.

While the practical teacher training they received at the college gave them the opportunity and skill to enter the public sphere, they were still socially expected to fulfill the higher goal of wife and mother. The administration's regulation of heterosexuality attempted to socialize the women with men enough to increase their chances of marrying while still maintaining an appearance of southern purity. Many of the women practiced these standards of gender by rehearsing weddings and saving aspirational materials from the women who had achieved the societal standard of womanhood. Lastly, the women at the college looked to an idolized individuals in their own lives who had successfully worked and became wives and mothers. Agness Dingleline became the best example of a refined, modern woman on the campus of the college and her story best exemplifies the standard arc that many of the women hoped to follow one day.

Chapter 3: Race

In the first issue of the “Normal Bulletin,” published in February 1909, the opening section, which outlines the special features of the upcoming State Normal and Industrial School for Women at Harrisonburg read, “It is at present one of two State Normal Schools for young white women.”¹⁸² This reference to the race sets the stage from the onset that the institution was echoing the racial hierarchy in society. The women who attended the college regularly rehearsed and reproduced racial hierarchies through minstrel shows and the use of iconography. The State Normal and Industrial School at Harrisonburg was a space where the students that attended the institution could practice white supremacist societal norms of race and craft their identities as white women of the New South.

Constructing a White Southern Identity

In *The Past and Present: Women’s Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century*, Amy McCandless Thompson argues that understanding Southern women’s educational experiences also necessitates understanding the “dual identity of white Southerners.”¹⁸³ This “twoness” refers to the idea that these individuals thought of themselves both as “Americans” and as “Southerners.”¹⁸⁴ While the southern identity existed before the Civil War, the event fundamentally changed the way individuals in the region defined themselves. Through the war, whiteness became “a more important category, a way to

¹⁸² “Some Special Features of This School,” *The Normal Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (Harrisonburg, Virginia: State Normal and Industrial School for Women, February 1909) 93.

¹⁸³ McCandless, *The Past and Present*, 2, 17.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

assert a new collectivity, the Confederacy.”¹⁸⁵ As the narrative of the Lost Cause, a mythology of “a counterfeit version of antebellum Southern history filled with unblemished white belles and benevolent anti-Black racism,” began to take hold, the southern identity closely aligned itself with a false image of the Old South.¹⁸⁶ For Tanehsis Coates, the false narrative of the nobility of the Confederacy was born because “honor is less salvageable from a military defeat; much less so from an ideological defeat, especially one so duly earned in defense of slavery in a country premised on liberty.”¹⁸⁷ The Lost Cause presented slavery as the natural condition of Black Americans, thus as the Lost Cause became entangled with the idea of a white Southern identity, a new construction of race became central to that identity.

One group that embraced this racialized identity as white Southerners was the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), founded in 1894. The UDC is one of the best examples of “Lost Cause motherhood.”¹⁸⁸ In the immediate post-bellum period many elite white Southern women took on the role of “Lost Cause” mothers and began shaping what Southern identity and whiteness looked like in the new social order. One defining

¹⁸⁵ Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 5.; Dobby, *The False Cause*, 8.

¹⁸⁶ Kali Holloway, “The History of America’s Most Racist Frat was No Secret – Except to Joe Kennedy,” *Daily Beast*, (July 27, 2020).

¹⁸⁷ Coates, “Why Do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War?,”

¹⁸⁸ Another organization that embraced Confederate motherhood in the immediate years following the Civil War was the Ladies Memorial Association. The LMA predated the UDC however, their focus was on finding final resting spots for Confederates who had died during the Civil War and were hastily buried in battlefield graves. The LMA was more of a transition organization between the war and the UDC and operated in what historian Gaines M. Foster refers to as the ‘revitalization’ period of the Lost Cause when their work was seen mostly as an extension of the wartime work done by Confederate women. The downfall of the LMA ultimately came because of the fractured system it operated under. Groups operated independently and often focused on one singular cemetery or area rather than towards a national southern agenda.

aspect of the UDC was its members focus on both the perpetuation of this Lost Cause narrative and establishing the next generation of Lost Cause mothers. As the Civil War generation began to die in the early twentieth century, it was critical that Lost Cause organizations, like the UDC, began to prepare the next generation to take on the legacy of their work. Historian Karen L. Cox argues that UDC believed “if white children were properly instructed, they would become ‘living monuments’ to the Confederacy.”¹⁸⁹ Young women were key in the perpetuation of a romanticized Confederacy. The girls were taught what it meant to be a “Confederate belle,” a woman who had sacrificed and supported the Confederacy during the duration of the war.¹⁹⁰

Further, the UDC embraced the dichotomy that Thompson describes. In her work *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South*, scholar Tara McPherson, whose work analyzes representations of the South in popular culture, writes that there is a “cultural schizophrenia about the South: the region remains once the site of the trauma of slavery and also the mythic location of a vast nostalgia industry.”¹⁹¹ This analysis is relevant in that the UDC’s work is directly linked to the nostalgia that McPherson describes. The UDC relied heavily on symbolism and iconography steeped in nostalgia to instill reverence for the Confederate generation and to vindicate their ancestors. The UDC used these symbols “not to preserve history but to glorify a heritage that did not resemble historical fact.”¹⁹² Commemoration through symbols and

¹⁸⁹ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 120.

¹⁹⁰ Otto, *Confederate Daughters*, 135.

¹⁹¹ McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie*, 3.

¹⁹² Cox, *No Common Ground*, 13.

iconography allowed these individuals to “reassert their commitment to the values of their ancestors, the very same white supremacy values that resulted in a war to defend slavery and expand the institution.”¹⁹³

Many Southerners who aligned themselves with the Confederacy closely identified their treason with the acts of those in revolutionary America; “Secessionists saw roots of their nation in the struggle for independence and compared their conflict with the Union with that against the British monarchy in 1776.”¹⁹⁴ White women who adhered to Lost Cause motherhood saw their position as guardians of a collective memory that viewed Confederates as equal to the revolutionary generation. In this way, they embraced the dual identity that Amy McCandless Thompson describes as both Americans and Southerners. Additionally, the Lost Cause narrative intentionally equated Robert E. Lee with President George Washington and drew parallels between the two men’s military careers.¹⁹⁵ Portraying Lee as a Washington figure further played into the Lost Cause idea that southern secession was a legitimate revolution against a tyrannical government rather than a rebellion. In this way, Lee and other Confederate leaders took on new roles in the Lost Cause narrative as patriots rather than traitors. The UDC sponsored portraits of Confederate leaders and flags to be placed inside elementary and

¹⁹³ Cox, *No Common Ground*, 15.

¹⁹⁴ Otto, *Confederate Daughters*, 2.

¹⁹⁵ President George Washington had no biological children; however, he adopted and raised two of his deceased stepson’s children. One of the children was named George Washington Parke Custis. Washington personally raised Custis as a son starting at a young age. After Washington’s death, Custis dedicated his life to preserving and memorializing Washington’s name and career. Custis’s home, Arlington House, became a shrine to his adoptive father. Upon Custis’s death, his home and much of his estate were left to his only daughter, Mary Anna Randolph Custis and her husband, Confederate General Robert E. Lee. The image of Robert E. Lee as the trustee of Washington’s legacy and memory furthered the idea in the traditionalist southerner’s mind that Lee was meant to lead the Confederate insurrection. During the Civil War, Arlington House fell into Union hands and eventually became Arlington National Cemetery.

secondary classrooms, emphasizing the weight that these symbols carry. They led campaigns to remove ‘unsuitable’ textbooks from schools and replace them with texts that taught a UDC approved historical curriculum.¹⁹⁶ The hope of the UDC was that if the white girls were taught young enough, they would eventually become Confederate mothers themselves or, if they did not, have children grow to appreciate and emulate the values of their ancestors. The young white women that attended the college were products of this Lost Cause motherhood. Not only raised with constant reminders of the Civil War, they graduated with the ability to teach the Lost Cause narrative formally in public schools.

The literary societies advanced Confederate motherhood from within the institution with the assistance of the Cleveland sisters. Annie and Elizabeth Cleveland were both faculty members at the college when the school opened in 1909. Elizabeth Cleveland, alongside Dr. John Wayland, took a leading role in founding the Lee and Lanier Literary Societies. She also served as the faculty advisor and honorary member of the Lanier through almost the entirety of its existence. Born and raised in Virginia, the sisters grew up in the formative years of the New South immediately following the Civil War. Annie was in her early teens during the Civil War, while Elizabeth was born just two years after Lee’s surrender at Appomattox. The women were raised in a Virginia society that was desperately trying to recover economically, socially, and physically from the fighting of the war. Both girls came of age during a critical period in the history of the Lost Cause. The sisters were also directly connected to the Confederacy through their father, Thomas Cleveland. In a history of the college during World War I, Dr. John

¹⁹⁶ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 95.

Wayland refers to the fact that during the Civil War, Annie Cleveland's father (also Elizabeth's father) "was following Marse Robert."¹⁹⁷ The term "Marse Robert" refers to serving under Confederate General Robert E. Lee in the Confederate army. The article goes on to further explain the domestic service that Annie Cleveland gave on the home front during the Civil War. Annie was a part of the Civil War generation, those who came before Lost Cause mothers. Domestic service on the home front during the Civil War, like that of Annie Cleveland, is what the Lost Cause mothers idolized and sentimentalized. Elizabeth Cleveland was part of the next generation that took over the commemoration of the Civil War. This generation put greater value on symbolism and iconography of the war and the soldiers of the Confederacy. The Cleveland sisters as faculty members became role models for the first few classes of students starting in 1909. While neither of the women served as examples of the plantation wife or mother, they did embody the ideals of the plantation woman as a hostess and refined woman. The Clevelands were modern ladies who, much like the matrons, social directors, and Deans of Women, stood as models of the gender ideals of plantation women beyond the plantation home. Annie Cleveland died in 1916 and Elizabeth stayed a consistent member of the faculty until 1943. Understanding the Clevelands' connection to the Confederacy and Lost Cause is vital when examining the literary societies and the iconography that they promoted. Symbolism is a key aspect of Lost Cause motherhood and Elizabeth Cleveland was directly involved in the naming of the societies after Confederate icons.

¹⁹⁷ John W. Wayland, "The Harrisonburg State Normal School, In Relation to the World War, 1914-1918" Papers and Speeches, 1916-1958, SC 0258, Box 1, Folder 2, Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

Naming of the Literary Societies

The process by which the names for the first two literary societies on campus were chosen is unclear. However, the justification for the societies honoring two Confederate leaders became a common narrative across multiple years at the college. The 1910 *Schoolma'am*, the yearbook at the college, states that the faculty decided that the literary societies should be established before the school opened in 1909, and that their proposal was “received with hearty co-operation” from students and administration.¹⁹⁸ The yearbook states that names were chosen that were “dear to all Southerners” (white Southerners) and were intended to serve as “great inspiration to the members.” Clearly the names chosen had deep ties with the Confederacy and specifically, the state of Virginia and directly connected the identity of “Southerners” to white supremacy. The Lee was named for Confederate General Robert E. Lee, whom the yearbook describes as the “greatest Southern soldier.” This description of Lee is consistent with the image that the UDC and Lost Cause motherhood promoted of him. While it is unclear exactly why the name Lee was chosen, it helps to understand the prominence and importance of Lee in the constructed narrative of Southern history. The Lanier was named for Sidney Lanier, a southern poet who served in the Confederate army. Prose and poetry were key in constructing the Lost Cause. Following the end of the Civil War, literature became one of the main ways that imagery of a picturesque Old South was communicated to defeated southerners. Immediately following, women of the Civil War generation published both personal and professional writings that described a picturesque life in the Old South.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ State Normal and Industrial School for Women, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1910, 40.

¹⁹⁹ Otto, *Confederate Daughters*, 135.

By denigrating Black people in literature and poetry, Southern authors portrayed slavery as a benevolent institution and pushed the racist ideology that African Americans were an inferior race undeserving of freedom.²⁰⁰ Lanier, a Southern writer and professor at Johns Hopkins University, contributed to the romanticization of the Old South and racial stereotype with his poetry. Lanier is often described in the early twentieth century as “concerned” with “Yankee” reconstruction in the South. However, much of Lanier’s popularity with followers of the Lost Cause stems from his criticism of federal activity in the South following the war. At the college, the 1910 *Schoolma’am* declared that the Lanier Literary Society was named for “the best loved Southern poet.”²⁰¹ Lanier was also connected locally through his residence at Rockingham Springs. His time spent in the Shenandoah Valley was written about in a book by John Wayland.²⁰² The names selected for the societies at the college were an extension of the UDC sanctioned education that women received before arriving. The Lost Cause was perpetuated through “media, literature, and postwar propaganda” and the literary societies consumed all of it.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 136.

²⁰¹ State Normal and Industrial School for Women, *The Schoolma’am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1910, 40.

²⁰² There is a brief mention of the Lanier Literary Society in footnote 3 of Wayland’s book.; John Walter Wayland, *Sidney Lanier at Rockingham Springs; Where and How the “Science of English Verse” Was Written; a New Chapter in American Letters*, (Dayton, VA: Ruebush-Elkins, 1912, 22.

²⁰³ Clint Smith, *How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2021), 146.

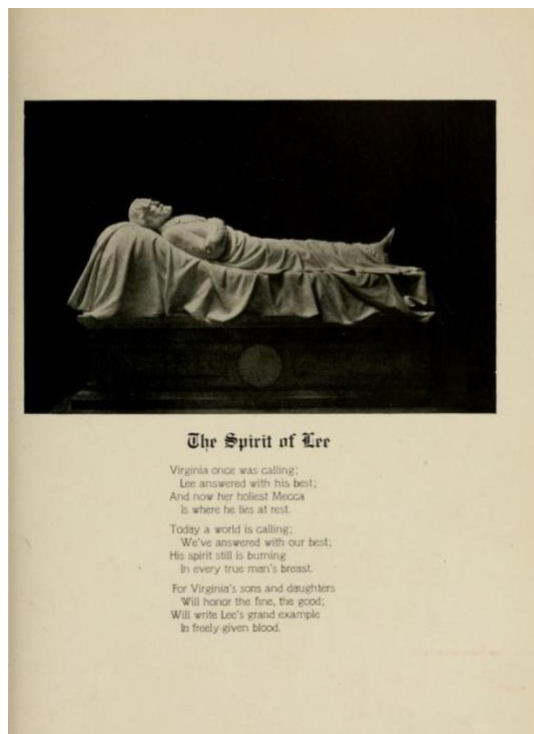
Lee Iconography and Symbolism within the Normal

Confederate General Robert E. Lee especially became a central Confederate icon at the college. In a 1919 history of the early years of the institution Dr. John W. Wayland, wrote that “Mrs. Burruss, Mrs. Cleveland, and others” claimed that the first student to

arrive at the Normal was Nannie Sword of Lee County, thus she was nicknamed the “Sword of Lee.”²⁰⁴ Thus the reverence for the Confederate leader was present on the campus of the college from the beginning of its inception. Iconography of and reverence for Lee was littered throughout the school published materials. In the 1918 issue of *The Schoolma'am* a picture of a recumbent statue of Lee that lies above his mausoleum at Washington and Lee University is found directly above a poem entitled “The Spirit of Lee.”²⁰⁵ The poem refers to Lee “answering the call from Virginia” and compares his final

resting place to Mecca. This poem holds similar sentiments to

one published in the 1917 issue of *The Schoolma'am*.²⁰⁶ This poem is simply titled “Lee” and tells a story of a valiant defeat consistent with the image of Lee crafted in the Lost Cause narrative. The Normal institution went to great lengths to associate itself with the Confederate leader.²⁰⁷ 1920 marked the fiftieth anniversary of Lee’s death, a major



[Figure 8] 1918 *Schoolma'am*, “The Spirit of Lee”

²⁰⁴ John W. Wayland, “Early Students, January 17, 1919” Papers and Speeches, 1916-1958, SC 0258, Box 1, Folder 2, Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

²⁰⁵ State Normal School for Women, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1918.

²⁰⁶ State Normal School for Women, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1917.

²⁰⁷ Poulson, *Racism on Campus*, 78.

milestone in Confederate motherhood and the Lost Cause narrative. As Stephen Poulson argues, this correlation is also “an indication of the extent to which Lost Cause mythology was being adopted within the region by all academic institutions.”²⁰⁸ As a result of the 50th anniversary of the end of the Civil War in 1915 and Lee’s death in 1920, a renewed interest in regional reconciliation led to Lost Cause mythology and iconography being pushed even further, specifically at higher educational institutions. This furthered the college’s reverence for the Lost Cause narrative and specifically, iconography of Robert E. Lee.

This type of idolatry and reverence for Lee reinforced white supremacy. The image of Lee that is promoted in the Lost Cause narrative disregards his actions to defend and his profits from the institution of slavery and instead packages his involvement with the Confederacy as allegiance to Virginia.²⁰⁹ In the Lost Cause narrative Lee is depicted as a benevolent enslaver, which disregards the fact that he was still participating in, profiting off of, and sanctioning the institution of slavery.²¹⁰ Allegiance to the state was emphasized through the use of Lee iconography at the college. This reverence and idolatry for the Confederate leader not only perpetuated a false historical narrative, but it

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Robert E. Lee was not as distanced from the institution of slavery as the Lost Cause narrative portrays him to be. Upon his mother’s death, Lee inherited thirty enslaved individuals. Lee personally held enslaved individuals until at least 1852 and when George Washington Parke Custis, Lee’s father-in-law, and the adoptive son of President George Washington, died in 1857 the execution of his will and estate were left to Lee. Custis died with roughly \$11,000 to \$12,000 in debt and left \$10,000 each of his four granddaughters. Custis also granted his enslaved individuals their freedom “most expedient and proper” and not exceeding five years after his death. Lee interpreted this to mean that the enslaved would not be free until the debt was paid however, a circuit court ruled the enslaved were entitled to their freedom in five years regardless of whether the debt was paid off. Lee oversaw the enslaved individuals that worked to pay off Custis’ debt until 1860 when the Civil War broke out. Elizabeth Brown Pryor, *Reading the Man: A Portrait of Robert E. Lee Through His Private Letters*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2008)

²¹⁰ Smith, *How the Word is Passed*, 70.

also directly affected the way that the women at the college viewed themselves as Southerners. Lee was viewed as embracing the duality that McCandless describes as both an American and a white Southerners and the white part of that identity became a central aspect of the women's own identities.

Minstrelsy at the Normal

Crafting an identity as white individuals of the New South became central as Southerners rebuilt after the Civil War. Without the institution of slavery, the Lost Cause narrative heavily relied on the supposed biological superiority of the white race to try and maintain the power held by white individuals prior to the war. At the college, school sanctioned and student-led minstrel shows were a common and frequent source of entertainment and communal bonding. Established and popularized in antebellum Virginia, blackface minstrels typically included white individuals performing “negative characterizations” of Black individuals.²¹¹ When white individuals performed as Black characters, they would often blacken their faces, typically with burnt cork, to ridicule or show violence towards African Americans.²¹² After the Civil War, these shows were used to assert white supremacy and characterize the assumed inferiority of Black individuals.

Tradition was a foundational aspect of the social life of the women at the college. Major annual events created a sense of comradery among the women and often included blackface minstrels as the main attraction. These programs were staged both by the women who attended the college and by the men from other nearby colleges, most

²¹¹ Poulson, *Racism on Campus*, 27.

²¹² The ‘Jim Crow’ era in American history takes its name from a common character in blackface minstrels. Thomas B. Rice, a white northerner, popularized the minstrel character of Jim Crow who was characterized as a poor, unintelligent African American man. Poulson, *Racism on Campus*, 25.

regularly the men of Virginia Tech.²¹³ In his analysis of JMU yearbooks Stephen Poulson concluded that, “the connection between blackface performance and Civil War iconography was quite explicit at this school.”²¹⁴ Most notably, shows occurred in January, the month of Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson and Confederate General Robert E. Lee’s birthdays, which are considered major ‘holidays’ in the Lost Cause narrative.²¹⁵ Until 2020, Lee-Jackson Day was an official state holiday in Virginia and consequently fell on the same weekend as Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the day was often referred to as Lee-Jackson-King Day.²¹⁶

It is important to note that these blackface minstrels, performed by students, were sanctioned, and encouraged by white school administrators and faculty.²¹⁷ These events were not operating in the shadows or being held solely by secret or exclusive societies. They were a fundamental part of a student’s ‘well rounded’ education at the State Normal and Industrial School. One example of the faculty’s approval of these programs came in an article written for the school’s journal *The Virginia Teacher*, the periodical journal written and produced by the institution. In 1920, the journal included a paragraph on a minstrel that had been held on January 23, 1920. The show entitled “A Dark Night at the Normal,” was described in the journal as “sixteen [n****rs]’bedecked in red swallow-

²¹³ Margaret M. Mulrooney, “Confederate Heritage at JMU,” *JMU Campus History* (blog), May 25, 2017, <https://mmulrooney.net/2017/05/25/confederate-heritage-at-jmu/>.

²¹⁴ Poulson, *Racism on Campus*, 76.

²¹⁵ Margaret M. Mulrooney, “Confederate Heritage at JMU,” *JMU Campus History* (blog), May 25, 2017, <https://mmulrooney.net/2017/05/25/confederate-heritage-at-jmu/>.

²¹⁶ Poulson, *Racism on Campus*, 76.

²¹⁷ Margaret M. Mulrooney, “Student Orgs, Lost Cause, and Belongingness,” *JMU Campus History* (blog), July 9, 2020, <https://mmulrooney.net/2020/07/09/student-orgs-the-lost-cause-and-belongingness/>.

tail coats, white trousers and straw hats sang in unison ‘Oh Dem Golden Slippers.’”²¹⁸

The description went on to boast that the entertainers kept “the audience in a continuous roar...”²¹⁹ Further, the 1920 article lists four of the characters, Pete, Repeat, Bones, and Sambo, that were in the minstrel held that evening.²²⁰ It is clear that this minstrel in particular was intended to ridicule Black individuals as the characters are reflective of common tropes in blackface minstrels that specifically target African Americans. For example, the character of “Sambo” was an established stereotype created by white individuals as a way of categorizing enslaved individuals as loyal and content. This later evolved into a stereotype in literature and minstrels that was used to describe a Black individual that was depicted as having “natural buffoonery celebrated in every conceivable way.”²²¹ Examples of the Sambo character in literature include characters such as Uncle Tom from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe and Uncle Remus in the stories written by Joel Chandler Harris.²²² It is not a coincidence that the character in the blackface minstrel performed at the college was named Sambo. The minstrel was a form of entertainment at the college, and the Sambo character provided humor for white students at the expense of Black individuals.

²¹⁸ “A Dark Night at the Normal,” *The Virginia Teacher* 1, no. 1, (February 1920) 26.

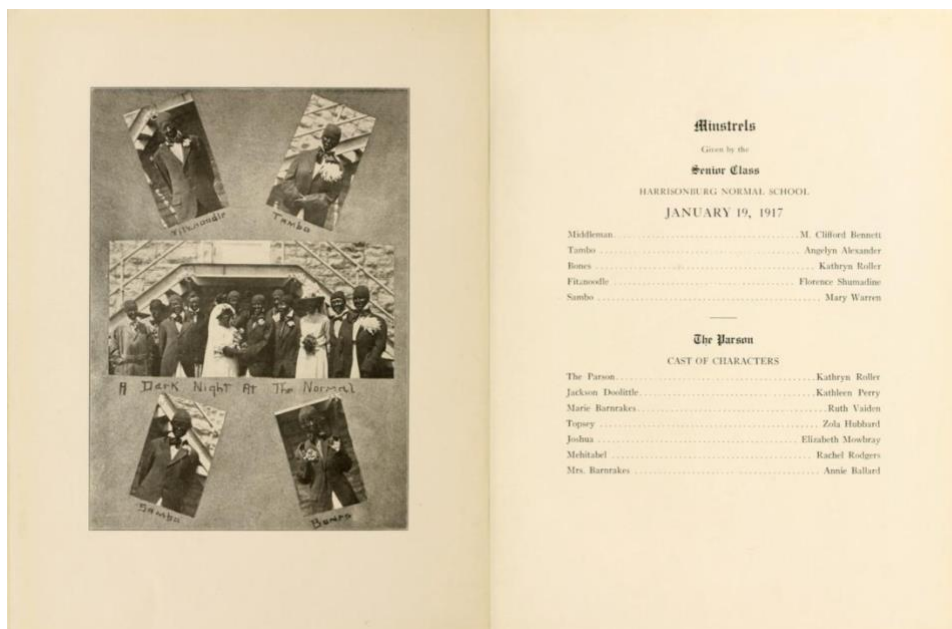
²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ “A Dark Night at the Normal,” *The Virginia Teacher* 1, no. 1, (February 1920) 26; Margaret M. Mulrooney, “Confederate Heritage at JMU,” *JMU Campus History* (blog), May 25, 2017, <https://mmulrooney.net/2017/05/25/confederate-heritage-at-jmu/>.

²²¹ Charles Reagan Wilson, “Sambo,” *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Volume 4: Myth, Manners, and Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 260.

²²² Wilson, “Sambo,” 260.

Evidence shows that minstrels like “A Dark Night at the Normal,” were common



[Figure 9] 1917 *Schoolma'am*, “Minstrels Given by the Senior Class”

at the State Normal and Industrial School, and reoccurring annually as school-supported traditions.

In 1917 *The Schoolma'am* has a section devoted to minstrels given by the senior class that year, and this page features the women dressed in blackface under the same

title used in 1920, “A Dark Night at the Normal.”²²³ The 1917 minstrel, under the same name, was held on the birthday of Robert E. Lee and featured the “Sambo” and “Bones” characters alongside, “Tambo” and “Fitznoodle.”²²⁴ Junior and senior minstrels were common traditions on the campus of the college, and they followed a similar pattern as seen above. The language used around the minstrels also shows the intended purpose of the shows. In a March 1925 article of the school newspaper, *The Breeze*, that recapped one minstrel show, the headline read “Juniors Smash Record Jolly Merry Makers.”²²⁵ A

²²³ In the 1920 production of “A Dark Night at the Normal,” the role of “Repeat” was played by Dorothy Spooner Garber, who had a residence building named after her on the campus of the present university.; “A Dark Night at the Normal,” *The Virginia Teacher* 1, no. 1, (February 1920) 26.

²²⁴ State Normal School for Women, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1917.; Margaret M. Mulrooney, “Confederate Heritage at JMU,” *JMU Campus History* (blog), May 25, 2017, <https://mmulrooney.net/2017/05/25/confederate-heritage-at-jmu/>.

²²⁵ “Juniors Smash Record Jolly Merry Makers,” *The Breeze*, (March 21, 1925).

1927 program for the Junior minstrels found in at least two student scrapbooks features the headline “Jesting Jolly Juniors.”²²⁶ By using words such as ‘jolly’ and ‘jesting’ these programs are meant for entertainment. However, the programs also served as a rehearsal of racist hierarchical norms that the women would experience outside the campus as well. This coupled with the evidence that the minstrels at the college used characters that historically are stereotypes of Black individuals displaying exaggerated buffoonery suggests that these minstrel productions used the ridicule of African Americans for the entertainment of white students but also served to teach a white supremacist hierarchy of race. Further, there is an abundance of ephemera surrounding the minstrel programs in *The Breeze*, *The Schoolma’am*, and the scrapbooks created by the students. These events were not programs that the college hid from view, they were public displays of racism that the institution and its students were proud of.

Imagery is a foundational aspect of the Lost Cause narrative and helps in understanding attitudes towards racism in the Lost Cause narrative and social norms of racism in the early twentieth century. The paper programs for the minstrelsy held at the college are supplemented by the myriad of photographs, images, and drawings that are featured in the school’s both official and unofficial historical records. Photographs of students in blackface are featured in multiple issues of the school yearbook *The Schoolma’am*. For example, in addition to the photos mentioned earlier, blackface appears in 1921 photos entitled “Juniors at Play” that show women dressed in tuxedos

²²⁶ Virginia Elizabeth Tisdale Fenlon Scrapbook, 1925-1934, SC0179, Box 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.; Thelma Dunn Gregory Scrapbook, 1923-1927, SC 0254, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.

with top hats, and another in 1924 with the women dressed as clowns.²²⁷ Beyond the photographs, the scrapbooks created by the students who attended the institution are littered with cartoons and drawings depicting white individuals in blackface. There are common features that indicate this is what the drawings are depicting. Usually, these drawings feature individuals with jet black faces with the eyes, mouth, and hands white, which are a way of indicating that these drawings are depicting minstrel shows. The purpose of these shows cannot be understated: these performances were not purely entertainment; the humor the white students gained from them came at the mockery of Black individuals. However, they also served as a way for the individual women to rehearse white supremacist racial hierarchies. The rehearsal of these roles was one way that the university indoctrinated these hierarchies into the women who then would go and replicate the ridicule of Black individuals in society.

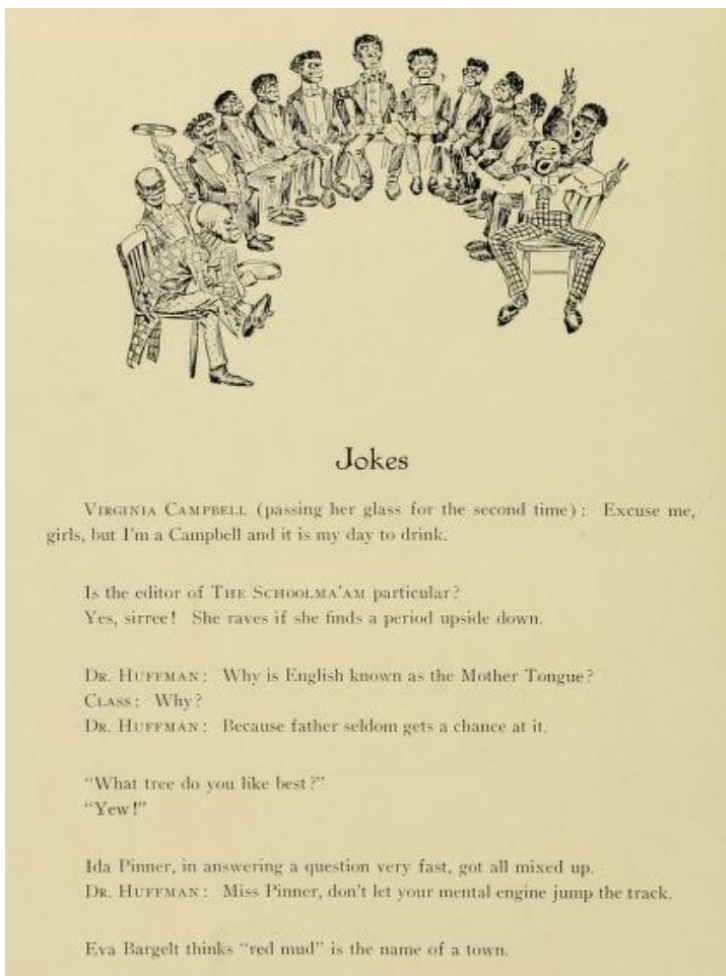
Looking at the programs and advertisements, it is abundantly clear that rehearsal of white supremacist hierarchies of race was the goal of the minstrels held at the college. At other Virginia institutions such as University of Virginia and The College of William and Mary, the cartoons within their yearbooks depict “caricatures in which violence is being directed at Black men, women, and



[Figure 10] Senior Minstrel Ticket from the scrapbook of Virginia Elizabeth Tisdale

²²⁷ State Normal School for Women, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1921.; State Normal School for Women, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1924, 132.

children.”²²⁸ These institutions for white men were depicting violent white supremacist



[Figure 11] "Jokes," 1926 *Schoolma'am*

behaviors such as lynching and depictions of the KKK in their school yearbooks.²²⁹ The cartoons and images that the college created and included in their school materials were almost entirely depicting buffoonery. This type of imagery was used in the marketing of the minstrel events, like one paper doll found in the scrapbook of Thelma Dunn Gregory, a student at the college from 1925 to 1927. The paper doll in Dunn's scrapbook features a simple black figure with white eyes and mouth with the words "Hello! See me at the Junior

Minstrel!" written across the front.²³⁰ A similar depiction is shown in the scrapbook of Virginia Elizabeth Tisdale Fenlon, where a ticket for the Senior minstrel also includes a depiction of white individuals in blackface and tuxedos laughing.²³¹ These depictions

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Poulson, *Racism on Campus*, 42.

²³⁰ Thelma Dunn Gregory Scrapbook, 1923-1927, SC 0254, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.

²³¹ Virginia Elizabeth Tisdale Fenlon Scrapbook, 1925-1934, SC0179, Box 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

using racist cartoons are not limited to the popular minstrel shows at the college; they were also included in the yearbook. In the 1926 issue of *The Schoolma'am*, there is a page with the simple heading "Jokes;" that is a cartoon showing thirteen Black men with enlarged, stereotypical facial features (See figure 11). All the depictions of Black individuals in combination with the minstrelsy that was sanctioned and encouraged by the administration and faculty at the college indicate that the institution was deliberately teaching their students to associated Black individuals with buffoonery and humor, rather than refinement.

The minstrel rehearsals of these white supremacist racial hierarchies are even further complicated by the relationships between the students, faculty, and Black employees. The day-to-day operations of the college were supported by a staff workforce that included several Black individuals. For example, Walker Lee, the janitor in Science Hall (now Gabbin Hall), was "a visible, constant presence in this building and on campus."²³² Margaret Mulrooney's research on Walker Lee indicates that he was a "beloved figure" on the campus of the college.²³³ In the 1919 *Schoolma'am* it was even written that the highest compliment that could be made was "...he knows us almost as well as Walker does!"²³⁴ Similarly, Page Mitchell worked as the kitchen manager and

²³² Margaret M. Mulrooney, "Searching for Mr. Walker Lee," *JMU Campus History* (blog), March 27, 2019, <https://mmulrooney.net/2019/03/27/searching-for-mr-walker-lee/>.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ State Normal School for Women, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1919.; Margaret M. Mulrooney, "Searching for Mr. Walker Lee," *JMU Campus History* (blog), March 27, 2019, <https://mmulrooney.net/2019/03/27/searching-for-mr-walker-lee/>.

chef.²³⁵ While little records of Mitchell still survive in the official school records, Mitchell managed the everyday operations of dining service at the college.²³⁶ Walker Lee and Page Mitchell are two examples of the Black employees that would have worked at the institution during the time that the minstrels were a foundational part of a women's experience. The white students were stereotyping and rehearsing a racial hierarchy that directly ridiculed not only those whose everyday work made their educational possible, but also Black employees who took pride in the jobs they worked at the college.

Confederate Motherhood and Imagery in the Lee and Lanier Literary Societies

From their conception the literary societies were spaces with a constant underlying theme of white supremacy. The Lee and Lanier amplified the rehearsal of racial norms that the college provided of all white students. The groups served as microcosms of the ideals of the perpetuation of Confederate motherhood within the institution. The Lee Literary Society was directly tied to the Harrisonburg local "Turner Ashby" chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy starting in 1910.²³⁷ The UDC hosted the Lee members for annual receptions beginning in 1910, and the partnership continued throughout the literary society's time on campus.²³⁸ In January, Lee-Jackson

²³⁵ Margaret M. Mulrooney, "Page Mitchell, Chef and Kitchen Manager," *JMU Campus History* (blog), July 29, 2020, <https://mmulrooney.net/2020/07/29/page-s-mitchell/>; Raymond J. Dingleline, *Madison College: The First Fifty Years, 1908-1958*, (Madison College: Harrisonburg, VA, 1959) 88.

²³⁶ Margaret M. Mulrooney, "Page Mitchell, Chef and Kitchen Manager," *JMU Campus History* (blog), July 29, 2020, <https://mmulrooney.net/2020/07/29/page-s-mitchell/>.

²³⁷ The Turner Ashby Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy was chartered in 1890 by Harrisonburg residents. The chapter is named for the Confederate cavalry General Turner Ashby who served under Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. Ashby was killed in battle in June 1862 near Chestnut Ridge in Harrisonburg, Virginia.; United Daughters of the Confederacy, Turner Ashby Chapter Records, 1896-1990, SC 0121, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Va.

²³⁸ Dingleline Jr., *Madison College*, 44.

Day was a popular event for the groups to jointly celebrate. On January 20, 1914, women in the Lee Literary Society marched down to the local Assembly Hall for a program hosted by the UDC.²³⁹ The women are noted to have worn white dresses with red sashes as they walked to the hall.²⁴⁰ Children wearing white outfits with red sashes was common during the Confederate monument dedication rituals that the UDC and Ladies Memorial Association held. Typically, the children's sashes would feature the name of a Confederate state that they represented.²⁴¹ While it is not known what the sashes that the Lee Society women wore were representative of, their involvement with the UDC was part of a larger national narrative in which the younger generation was groomed to take over the perpetuation of the Lost Cause.

²³⁹ Dingledine Jr., *Madison College*, 92.; State Normal and Industrial School for Women, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1914, 22.

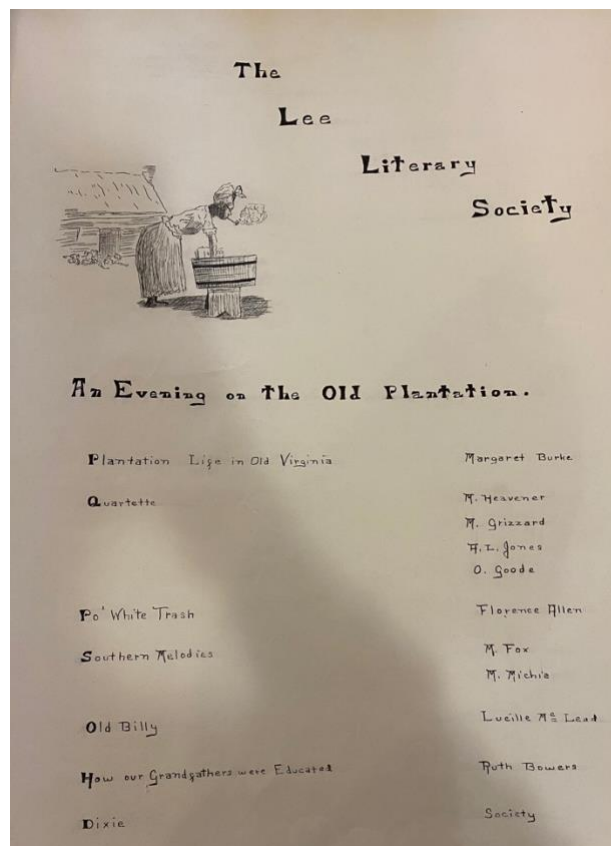
²⁴⁰ Dingledine Jr., *Madison College*, 92.

²⁴¹ Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 62.

Confederate imagery was also central to the literary societies. It was prominent in the memorabilia and products produced by the literary societies for their regular Friday night meetings. Special Collections at JMU has some of the handwritten posters for the early events. Official agendas span the years 1909 to 1912, although many of them are undated. Each meeting appears to have had a theme for the program that shaped the choice of songs, poems, plays, or lectures. Some themes were: “An English Christmas,” “Poe Program,” “Some Famous Art Galleries,” “Lincoln Day,” and “A Trip to Japan.”²⁴²

Nestled among the idyllic drawings of cherry

blossom trees, poppies, and violets, are numerous agendas with Lost Cause themes and imagery featuring detailed Confederate symbols. A Lanier poster dated January 27, 1912 and entitled “Virginians of the Valley” features a drawing of two Confederate flags flying under a musket crossed with a sword with a Confederate kepi situated on top.²⁴³ An undated Lee Society poster is titled “An Evening on the Old Plantation” and features a



[Figure 12] “An Evening on the Old Plantation,” found in the Lee Literary Society Records.

²⁴² Lee Literary Society Records, 1909-1912, UA 0027, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.; Lanier Literary Society Records, 1911-1931, UA 0026, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.

²⁴³ “Virginians of the Valley,” Lanier Literary Society Posters, 1911-1912, UA0026, Box: OV1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

Black woman (based off her clothing and the use of the term “plantation,” she is likely an enslaved individual) doing laundry by a log cabin.²⁴⁴

Many of the Lee agendas focus on the Confederate leader himself and feature the Confederate flag in varying levels of detail. The Confederate battle flag became decorative doodles and drawings that adorned the posters, agendas, and name tags created by the Lee and Lanier members. The casual use of Confederate imagery in societies’ posters shows the desensitization to the gravity of what the symbols once stood for. The placement of the Confederate themed programs in conjunction with those such as “Lincoln Day” and “An American Evening” display that the women were practicing the “dual identity” of white southerners that Amy McCandless Thompson describes in *The Past and Present*.²⁴⁵ The women of the Lee and Lanier were using the space to practice their roles as white southern citizens and women of the United States.

The Old South and Minstrelsy in the Literary Societies

The connection between the literary societies goes further than just symbolically involving themselves in the tradition of reverence for the Confederacy. The literary societies actively participated in furthering a false historical narrative on a routine basis through the programming it delivered to its members. The exclusivity of the groups, established in chapter one of this research, heightened their authority. The Lee and Lanier literary societies achieved a high social status on the campus of the college and thus their activity on the campus held significant weight.

²⁴⁴ “An Evening on the Old Plantation,” Lee Literary Society Posters, 1909-1912, Box: OV 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

²⁴⁵ McCandless, *The Past and Present*, 2, 17.

As stated earlier, the Lee and Lanier held programming on popular Lost Cause topics and the theme of white supremacy was a constant underlying presence. The theme of race was often subtle and inserted into the programs under the guise of examining great literary writers or poets. For example, in the October 1926 issue of *The Virginia Teacher*, the monthly periodical published by the college, a sample agenda for the literary societies is given. The sample agenda given for the Alpha, the preparatory literary society for the Lee and Lanier, centers the program around the life of Southern author Joel Chandler Harris.²⁴⁶ It is suggested that when studying Harris, the literary society should use the dramatization of “How Mr. Rabbit Was Too Sharp for Mr. Fox,” “Mr. Rabbit Nibbles Up the Butter,” and “Mr. Rabbit Finds His Match at Last.”²⁴⁷ All three are a part of Harris’ most famous and controversial works, *Uncle Remus* which is mostly African trickster tales “collected and refashioned” by Harris.²⁴⁸ Many of Harris’ tales come from the enslaved individuals he encountered while working as a printing apprentice at Turnwold Plantation in his home state of Georgia. It is these origins that bring about one of the major controversies surrounding the *Uncle Remus* stories. Harris appropriated the tales from the enslaved individuals, profited from his work, and gave no credit to them. Additionally, the *Uncle Remus* stories perpetuate an idealistic version of the Old South

²⁴⁶ “Typical Programs of the Literary Societies of Virginia,” *The Virginia Teacher* 7, no.8, (October 1926) 234.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ *Uncle Remus* was turned into a movie (1946) and subsequent theme park ride (1989) by the Walt Disney Company titled, *Song of the South* and Splash Mountain. In recent years the film has been met with criticism for many of the same reasons listed above and because of this Disney never released the film on home video or on any of its streaming platforms. Additionally in 2020 amid the protests surrounding the murder of George Floyd, Disney announced that they would be removing the *Song of the South / Uncle Remus* theme from the Splash Mountain flume ride at all parks.; Raymond Arsenault, “Playing with History: Walt Disney’s Historical Films, 1946-1966,” in *The Long Civil War*, ed. John David Smith and Raymond Arsenault, (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2021) 198-199.

and southern race relations in which Black individuals are subservient to whites.²⁴⁹ The trickster stories are told throughout the book through the title character, Uncle Remus, a former enslaved individual, who has “nothing but pleasant memories of the discipline of slavery” and displays the common characteristics of a benevolent participant.²⁵⁰ This type of program which features Harris’ works was not just a used in 1926. An agenda from the 1909 to 1912 Lee records indicate that Harris’ work also came up during a meeting dedicated to Southern writers.²⁵¹ The women in the literary societies were learning, practicing, and repeating a very specific, romanticized version of the South, one in which a white supremacy racial hierarchy was the social norm.

This version of the South that the women were perpetuating was consistent with the picture of the ‘Old South’ that the UDC projected in their materials. When looking at the Lost Cause narrative the history of the southern United States is often separated into two distinct sections, the ‘Old’ and ‘New’ South. In the simplest form, the ‘New South’ refers to the shift in the southern United States following the end of the Civil War, when the social and economic state of the area changed over from an enslavement-based plantation system to a more industrialized society. ‘The ‘Old South’ refers to the southern states prior to the secession and the Civil War. This term is most often used when describing the nostalgic and paternalistic narrative of how the antebellum society operated. White southern writers played a pivotal role in the Lost Cause narrative as they

²⁴⁹ Christopher Peterson, “Slavery’s Bestiary: Joel Chandler Harris’s ‘Uncle Remus Tales,’” *Paragraph* 34, no 1, (March 2011) 31.

²⁵⁰ Peterson, “Slavery’s Bestiary: Joel Chandler Harris’s ‘Uncle Remus Tales,’” 31.

²⁵¹ “Southern Writers,” Lee Literary Society Posters, 1909-1912, Box: OV 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

“took the baton from Confederate leaders and continued to paint slavery not as an institution defined by violence and exploitation but as a mutually beneficial arrangement of eager Black enslaved and kind white enslavers.”²⁵² Creating nostalgia through “pages of flowery prose revealed a lavish Old South of immense wealth, self-sufficiency, honor, hospitality, happy master-slave relations, and incredibly, the sights and sounds of innocent plantation upbringings remembered in old age.”²⁵³ These types of images of the Old South contributed to the narrative of the Lost Cause as Southerners used it as justification for what they considered their worthy war cause. The literary societies were using the topics in their meetings to push forward this version of Southern history. However, the women of the Lee and Lanier are distinctly different from the Confederate motherhood generation in that there is no evidence that their study of the Old South is an attempt at the complete rejection of the New South. Rather, the Lee and Lanier are practicing the ways in which these Old South traditions fit into their identities as white women of the New South.

A major rite of passage of the literary societies was the private initiation ceremony that took place out of the eye of the general population of students. While private, the general population of students knew that some sort of closed initiation occurred. The Lee and Lanier Literary societies were not secret organizations; however, their limited surviving records indicate that their initiation ceremonies were exclusive to members. Official records of blackface initiation ceremonies are limited to the Lee; however, the two social organizations operated almost identically and thus it is almost

²⁵² Smith, *How the Word is Passed*, 146.

²⁵³ David Anderson, “Down Memory Lane: Nostalgia for the Old South in Post-Civil War Plantation Reminiscences,” *The Journal of Southern History* 71, no. 1 (2005) 110.

certain that the Lanier also used minstrelsy for their private initiations as well. One record that gives insight into the private initiation is in the Marian Colton Smith papers. Smith, a student at the college from 1932 to 1935, was a member of the Lee Literary Society. In the spring of 1932, Smith received a letter from Lucille Keaton, the Lee secretary, inviting her to meet by the golf course at 7:30pm on Friday evening.²⁵⁴ In the letter, Smith is sworn to secrecy and instructed to “dress as a negro” and bring “about a pound of flour” with her.²⁵⁵ A similar letter was received by Frances Graybeal, a student at the college in the early 1930s and another member of the Lee. For her initiation, Graybeal received a letter instructing her to wear “any costume that will make you look like an old [n****r] mammy” and to “blacken your face and plait your hair in 13 plaits.”²⁵⁶ Frances Graybeal’s sister, Inez, was also instructed to come in blackface and dressed as a “streetwalker, flapper, and jazz singer.”²⁵⁷ In all three instances the society is asking the women to dress as “mammy” figures, this stereotype of Black women plays into the common trope of benevolent enslaved individuals that the Lost Cause perpetuates. The mammy figure is often the female counterpart to the male “Uncle Tom” or “Uncle Remus.”²⁵⁸ Like these male characters, the mammy stereotype of Black women is meant

²⁵⁴ Marian Colton Smith Harris Papers, 1932-1938, SC0186, Box 1, Folder 1. Special Collections, JMU Libraries.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Lee Literary Society initiation letter to Frances Graybeal, ca. 1932-1935, box 4, folder 10, V. Inez Graybeal Roop Papers, 1913-2005, SC 0183, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.

²⁵⁷ Inez Graybeal Scrapbook, 1931-1936, 1980, SC 0183. Series 3, Box: OV 1. V. Inez Graybeal Roop Papers, James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.; Roop Hall on the present-day campus of James Madison University is named for Inez Graybeal Roop.

²⁵⁸ Poulson, *Racism on Campus*, 27.; Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 105.

to evoke nostalgia for the racial hierarchy of the Old South as the “dear old mammys” were portrayed as “faithful servants.”²⁵⁹ The mammy character elevated the supposed faithfulness of the benevolent enslaved while simultaneously using exaggerated foolishness to distinguish them as inferior to the supposed refined nature of white southern women. The United Daughters of the Confederacy even capitalized on this image and even pledged \$1,000 to a monument that was set for Harpers Ferry, dedicated to the “faithful servants,” which was proposed to feature an “old plantar...the plantation ‘uncle’...and the broad-bosomed black ‘mammy.’”²⁶⁰ The literary societies were closely tied to the UDC and Lost Cause motherhood and their choices to use minstrelsy and the mammy character were not coincidental but rather calculated decisions that promoted and perpetuated a specific and false narrative of the Civil War and more importantly, a very clear racial hierarchy.

Chapter 3 Conclusion

The State Normal and Industrial School for Women was a space that echoed the Southern societal norms of race. The women who attended the college were a part of the next Southern generation that was tasked with taking on and perpetuating the legacy of the Lost Cause while understanding their own roles as Southerners and as Americans. Reverence for the Confederate generation seeped into the identity of the college campus and became a critical part of a student’s education at the institution. For thirty-three years the college and the literary societies provided a space where women of the New South

²⁵⁹ Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 105.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

could cultivate their identities as white individuals. Their legacy, however, is still ingrained in the identity of James Madison University.

In 1909 when the Lee and Lanier were established each of the two groups choose colors to represent their Confederate idols. For the Lee Literary Society, the colors gold and “Confederate gray” were chosen and for the Lanier Literary Society, violet and white were chosen.²⁶¹ From this symbolism of the Lost Cause, the institution chose their own colors, “from the violet and white of Lanier and the gray and gold of Lee, violet and gold were selected as School colors.”²⁶² Eventually these colors evolved into simply purple and gold to make obtaining pennants and other school décor easier however, the lasting legacy of the Lost Cause is directly engrained in the identity of James Madison University.²⁶³ Further, the end of the Lee and Lanier Literary Societies in 1942 did not bring about the end of Blackface entertainment or Lost Cause culture on the campus of James Madison University. The literary societies set the stage for organizations that perpetuate hierarchies of gender, class, and race that continue the JMU campus into present day.

²⁶¹ State Teachers College, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1937.

²⁶² Dingleline Jr., *Madison College*, 44.

²⁶³ Dingleline Jr., *Madison College* 44.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

In a 1956 letter to Raymond Dingleline Jr. while explaining her time at the college, Annie Cox Baywood a graduate of the class of 1936 wrote, “My poorly bound scrapbook... might give you a clearer insight that I ever could.”²⁶⁴ What the women chose and did not choose to preserve in their scrapbooks gives incredible insight into the experiences of students in the early years of the college. The women used the scrapbooks to cultivate the image of themselves during their time on campus. Programs of minstrel shows, mock wedding invitations, public notice pages, and tuition receipts are all evidence that the women used their time on campus and social organizations to practice hierarchies of class, gender, and race. However, the evidence that the scrapbooks are missing is also very telling. There is nothing outwardly scandalous in the scrapbooks the women created and nothing that would tarnish a young woman’s reputation in the early twentieth century. The scrapbooks are outward projections of the women’s identities and thus are carefully crafted evidence. The women who attended the college in the early years understood their own roles in the delicate balance between the ideals of the Old South and the unprecedented freedom of the New South. By the time they graduated the college, the women who attended were modern women of the New South, firmly rooted in the Old South.

The State Normal and Industrial School at Harrisonburg created opportunity for women from working families that their parents could not afford for themselves. Normal

²⁶⁴ Annie Cox Baywood, “Letter from Mrs. Raymond A. Ward (Annie Cox Baywood) to Raymond Dingleline Jr.,” Correspondence Re: “Madison College, the First Fifty Years”, 1956-1958, UA 0037. Series 1, Box: 1, Folder: 2. Department of History: Raymond C. Dingleline, Jr. Papers, UA 0037. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

and Industrial schools were a direct response to the physical and economic devastation of the Civil War and while these institutions inherently created the opportunity for social mobility, within the college at Harrisonburg social organizations ensured that the class was defined among students. The Lee and Lanier Literary Societies created a system of gatekeeping that ensured exclusivity and elevated the social standing of those who were members. Once in the literary societies, the women used plays, songs, and poems, to rehearse refinement and to practice what they saw as their own roles in society. The women's understanding of their own social place in the order of the New South was critical to perpetuating the imagined gender ideals of the Old South.

While the women who attended the college received practical training that prepared them for careers as teachers, they also were learning and rehearsing the role of the romanticized plantation lady. The idolized plantation lady in the Old South was the ultimate image of gentility and succeeded in role as a wife, mother, and hostess. Prior to coming to the institution, the women would have been firmly educated in the narrative of the Lost Cause and instilled with the reverence of Old South. Once on campus, the literary societies provided a space where women could continue the work of Confederate motherhood and practice benevolence. Beyond the social organizations, the administration of the college sought to regulate the new social freedom that women gained in the early twentieth century. The women who attended the college were tasked with navigating this delicate balance between Old and New South.

The college was also a space that echoed and amplified white supremacy and perhaps this is still one of the most enduring legacies of the early years. Reverence for Confederate leaders, who fought to preserve the institution of slavery, was present on

campus even before students began arriving. Iconography and minstrel shows echoed and amplified white supremacy outside of the institution and played a foundational role as the women sought to understand their own identities as Southerners and Americans. The legacy of white supremacy is still visible on the campus today from the quiet symbolism of the school colors to the complex history of class, gender, and racial hierarchies that the university has begun to confront.

A Lost Cause Legacy on Campus

The Lee and Lanier literary societies held strong on the campus of the State Normal and Industrial School for over three decades. The fall of the literary societies came when the institution began incorporating a more liberal arts education and when sororities began replacing the social exclusivity of the literary societies. In the early 1920s, President Samuel P. Duke began the lengthy process of converting the Normal school, which at the time was called the State Teachers College at Harrisonburg, into a liberal arts institution.²⁶⁵ This change not only added Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees, but it also completely transformed the curriculum from technical orientated to liberal arts.²⁶⁶ The new curriculum meant that the literary societies were no longer needed to fulfill their original purpose of providing literature, writing, and rhetoric education. While the literary societies had for many years served a social purpose in addition to an educational purpose, there had always been a firm belief from the faculty

²⁶⁵ Change from Normal School to Liberal Arts College: Publications, 1921, undated, UA 0014, Box: 1, Folder: 1. Samuel P. Duke Papers, UA 0014. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

²⁶⁶ Martha Bell Graham, "Madison 100: The Duke Years," *James Madison University: The First 100 Years*, March 7, 2008, 6.

that they should not transition into entirely social sororities.²⁶⁷ In fact, social sororities were not popular among faculty or students in the early years of the college. The 1911 *Schoolma'am* featured a page declaring the “Paradigm of the Sorority Situation,” where it is explicitly stated that in the past they had none, in the present they have none, and in the future they will have none.²⁶⁸ The sentiment against sororities continued on campus throughout the 20s and 30s and while sororities did not replace literary societies when the new liberal arts education came in, the literary societies did transform into more social organizations rather than literature based ones.

In spring 1939 the first sororities, Sigma Sigma Sigma and Alpha Sigma Alpha, came to the campus of Madison College.²⁶⁹ This signaled the beginning of the end for the literary societies. With the new liberal arts curriculum, the literary aspect of the groups was no longer needed, the sororities offered more socially for students and the membership process offered more exclusivity. Although membership in the Lee and Lanier literary societies stayed around only 8% of the student population, their exclusivity no longer held social status or power as the social organization market became flooded with sororities that offered more than just weekly meetings. In the late 1930s, the literary societies became like any other student organization on the campus of the college. 1942 was the last year that the Lee, Lanier, and Page literary societies were on campus. The Alpha literary society tried to reinvent and revert itself from a social group to a purely literary society, which proved unsuccessful and the Alpha ended in

²⁶⁷ Dingleline Jr., *Madison College*, 208.

²⁶⁸ State Normal and Industrial School for Women, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1911, 80.

²⁶⁹ Dingleline Jr., *Madison College*, 241.

1943.²⁷⁰ The 1942 *Schoolma'am* vaguely hints that the groups would not be returning by using past tense such as “This was a lively group...” and “Those who were members...” however, there was never a formal announcement on the end of the societies.²⁷¹ The school newspaper, *The Breeze*, never announced their exit, instead after thirty-three years the Lee, Lanier, and Page quietly disappeared from campus, marking the end of the early period of James Madison University’s history.

The legacy of the literary societies and the early years of the college are still deeply engrained the identity of the campus. The literary societies were replaced with sororities which also were heavily influenced by Confederate motherhood and the Lost Cause mythology. These sororities also carried on and expanded the established class, gender, and racial hierarchies at the college. In 1959 the Phi Mu sorority came to the campus of the college, by then called Madison College. Phi Mu is one of the best examples of a sorority that fully embraced what historian Margaret L. Freeman coins the “southern aesthetic.” This aesthetic included “a special shared history based on Lost Cause mythology, as well as an unspoken understanding of whiteness and the image of ladyhood, premised on *southern* ladyhood.”²⁷² Phi Mu, like the literary societies was also deeply connected to Confederate motherhood through its founders and early leadership. Louise Monning Elliott, Phi Mu’s grand president in 1911, was a lifelong southerner and practiced the Lost Cause’s central tenet of benevolence for the Confederate generation through her work with the United Confederate Veterans reunion.²⁷³ The second vice

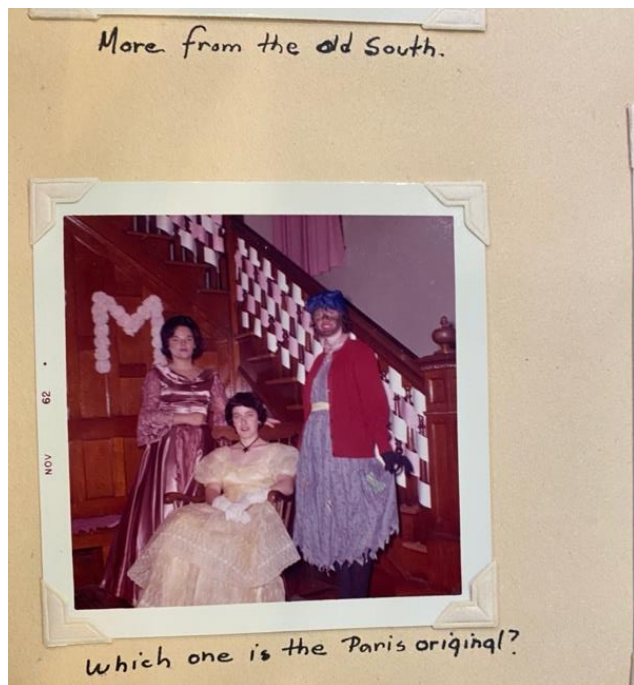
²⁷⁰ Dingleline Jr., *Madison College*, 241.

²⁷¹ Madison College, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1942, 122, 124, 126.

²⁷² Freeman, *Women of Discriminating Taste*, 54.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 57.

president of Phi Mu, Louise Frederick Hays went on to become a “high ranking officer in the Georgia Daughters of the Confederacy.”²⁷⁴ All this is to say, by the time the Phi Mu sorority came to Madison College in 1959, it had already established its roots in Confederate motherhood and Lost Cause mythology.



[Figure 13] Phi Mu members dressed as plantation women and an enslaved individual, 1962-1963

The Phi Mu chapter on the campus of Madison College echoed and amplified the Lost Cause ideals established in the early years of the college. Phi Mu chapters across the country were widely known for the elaborate plantation imagery that they used. This imagery harkened back to the Old South ideals that romanticized Southern womanhood was built upon. The Phi Mu chapter at Madison College was no different, the members created scrapbooks of the “Phi Mu Plantation” that featured a drawing of a stylized

plantation home.²⁷⁵ Next to the plantation home, the women created small paper silhouette of a plantation lady carrying a parasol.²⁷⁶ Each member within the scrapbook was given one of these silhouettes with her name written on it. Much like the literary societies that came before them, the women in the Phi Mu performed blackface minstrels

²⁷⁴ Freeman, *Women of Discriminating Taste*, 57.

²⁷⁵ Phi Mu. Gamma Theta Chapter Scrapbooks, 1960 - 1961, UA 0054, Box: 1, James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

²⁷⁶ Phi Mu. Gamma Theta Chapter Scrapbooks, 1960 - 1961, UA 0054, Box: 1. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

that used romanticized the Old South. The performed songs such as “Cottonfields,” “One Black, Two Black,” and “Nig Jig.”²⁷⁷ The women of Phi Mu also dressed up in costumes that resembled enslaved individuals and mammy figures.²⁷⁸ This rehearsal of race was very similar to the behavior that the women who participated in the



[Figure 14] Phi Mu members dressed as the Ku Klux Klan, 1965-1966

literary society exhibited. Most jarring in the Phi Mu scrapbooks are the photos from the 1965 to 1966 school year which show the sorority sisters dressed in white robes with the letters KKK on them.²⁷⁹ Sorority women impersonating members of the Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacy fraternal organization, was not something that occurred overnight at the college, but rather was the product of a continuous practice of established hierarchies of race, class, and gender that occurred over decades. The Phi Mu sorority was present on

²⁷⁷ “Ain’t Dat So,” Phi Mu. Gamma Theta Chapter Scrapbooks, 1960 - 1961, UA 0054, Box: 1. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

²⁷⁸ Phi Mu. Gamma Theta Chapter Scrapbooks, 1962 - 1963, UA 0054, Box: OV 2, James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

the campus of the college until 1987, when due to a lack of members the chapter ended.²⁸⁰

The end of the Phi Mu sorority did not however, bring about the end of the hierarchies of race, class, and gender on the campus of the college. In fact, Phi Mu was only one example of how these hierarchies and specifically, the Lost Cause mythology are deeply engrained in the identity of the campus of James Madison University. Many of the building names on campus reflect this ideology. While the three buildings named for Confederate leaders, Jackson, Ashby, and Maury were renamed in the summer of 2020 and officially replaced with names honoring significant Black individuals on the JMU campus in the spring of 2021, there are still buildings on the campus that more subtly reflect the institution's complicated historical roots. Spotswood and Harrison Hall are both named for enslavers with local connections and Cleveland Hall is named for Elizabeth Cleveland, a member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.²⁸¹ Garber Hall, a residence building on the campus of the college is named for Dorothy McKinley Spooner Garber, class of 1920 and former Dean of Women.²⁸² During her time at the college, Garber portrayed the character of "Repeat" in the 1920 production of "A Dark Night at the Normal."²⁸³ It is highly likely that to portray this role, Garber would have been performing in blackface. Roop Hall, which currently houses the College of

²⁸⁰ The Gamma Theta Chapter returned to James Madison University in 2010. The current chapter at JMU considers the 1959 to 1987 years as part of their own chapter history.

²⁸¹ The Campus History Committee, "Reclaiming, Renaming, Repairing: The Campus History Committee Report," (Harrisonburg, VA: James Madison University, December 21, 2020) 4.

²⁸² State Normal School for Women, *The Schoolma'am*, Harrisonburg, VA: 1920.

²⁸³ "A Dark Night at the Normal," *The Virginia Teacher* 1, no. 1, (February 1920) 26.

Education is named for Inez Graybeal Roop, an alumna of the college, former president of the Alumni Association and former member of the college's Board of Visitors. As part of her initiation into the Lee Literary Society, Roop was instructed to dress in blackface and dress as "a streetwalker, flapper, and jazz singer." While both Roop and Garber did make significant contributions to the university, participating in blackface during their years as students were not disqualifying factors when the college made the decisions to name buildings after them. Beyond these symbolic names on campus, James Madison University is also still home to a social organization that explicitly and deliberately perpetuates the mythology of the Lost Cause.

The Kappa Alpha Order fraternity came to the campus of James Madison University in 1995.²⁸⁴ The national fraternity is entirely based on the Lost Cause narrative of Confederate General Robert E. Lee as a "Christian gentleman" and upstanding citizen. The social organization was founded in 1865 on the campus of Washington College (now Washington and Lee University). It was at Washington College that after evading a treason conviction, former Confederate Robert E. Lee served as President. Lee is considered by the organization to be the "spiritual founder," as Kappa Alpha Order's definition of what it means to be a gentleman is entirely based off the crafted image of Lee. Kappa Alpha Order outline what they describe as the seven characteristics of Lee; those are "sincerity, moral strength, dignity, humbleness, courtesy, sympathy, and faith."²⁸⁵ This portrait of Lee that the fraternity paints is mythological and divorces

²⁸⁴ Margaret M. Mulrooney, "Student Orgs, Lost Cause, and Belongingness," *JMU Campus History* (blog), July 9, 2020, <https://mmulrooney.net/2020/07/09/student-orgs-the-lost-cause-and-belongingness/>.

²⁸⁵ Lyons & Fellows, *The Varlet of the Kappa Alpha Order*, 81.

historical fact from reality. Robert E. Lee was an enslaver who fought to uphold the institution of slavery, and to Serwer, “white supremacy was one of Lee’s most fundamental convictions.”²⁸⁶ The Lost Cause narrative of Lee often claims that he abhorred or detested the institution however there is no evidence to suggest that he went through any sort of intellectual or philosophical questioning of the topic and his political views on the topic stayed “remarkably consistent” throughout his life.²⁸⁷ Lee believed that “the painful discipline they [the enslaved] are undergoing, is necessary for their instruction as a race...” and that the enslaved should be “appreciative of the situation.”²⁸⁸ He was an active participant and supporter of the institution and frequently traded enslaved individuals “for his own convivence, regardless of the destruction it caused to the family.”²⁸⁹ There is documented evidence that Lee was both an unsympathetic and demanding enslaver, a fact that is noticeably ignored by Kappa Alpha Order’s description of the so-called Christian gentleman.²⁹⁰ Regardless of these facts, it is important to note that no matter the conditions of the enslaved, Lee is among those who participated in, profited off of, and sanctioned the institution of slavery.²⁹¹

²⁸⁶ Adam Serwer, “The Myth of the Kindly General Lee,” *The Atlantic*, (June 4, 2017).

²⁸⁷ Elizabeth Brown Pryor, *Reading the Man: A Portrait of Robert E. Lee Through His Private Letters* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 144.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 145.

²⁹⁰ Further reading on Robert E. Lee’s letters and writings on the institution of slavery can be found in Elizabeth Brown Pryor’s *Reading the Man: A Portrait of Robert E. Lee Through His Private Letters*.

²⁹¹ Smith, *How the Word is Passed*, 70.

Kappa Alpha Order, however, perpetuates more of the Lost Cause than just reverence for Robert E. Lee. While Lee is considered the fraternity's spiritual founder, the group's practical founder is Samuel Zenas Ammen.²⁹² Ammen openly praised the Ku Klux Klan and believed that the groups were similar with different methods to the same end goals.²⁹³ The national organization has never attempted to hide its white supremacist past but rather, openly celebrates it. Individual chapters around the country regularly held parties that were officially called "Old South Balls," until 2016 and the "occasional wearing of Confederate uniforms" was not banned until 2010.²⁹⁴ Often the Old South Balls would feature the fraternity brothers writing letters to politicians announcing secession for 24 hours.²⁹⁵ These activities made light of a devastating, bloody Civil War that was fought over the institution of slavery. While there is no current evidence that shows the Kappa Alpha Order chapter on the campus of James Madison University has participated in these displays of white supremacy beyond a reported portrait of Lee hanging in the fraternity home, anyone who joins the organization subscribes to the ideology that they perpetuate²⁹⁶

²⁹² Lyons & Fellows, *The Varlet of the Kappa Alpha Order*, 30.

²⁹³ William Kavanaugh Doty, *Samuel Zenas Ammen and the Kappa Alpha Order* (Charlottesville, VA: Surber-Arundale Company, 1922), 29.

²⁹⁴ Whitney Jordan Adams, "Old South Rhetoric Reckoning: The Case of Kappa Alpha's Old South Balls," in *Reconstructing Southern Rhetoric*, edited by Christina L. Moss & Brandon Inabinet, (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2021) 211.

²⁹⁵ Cox, *No Common Ground*, 104.

²⁹⁶ Mike Ingram, "How I Confronted the Truth About My Fraternity's Racist History," January 6, 2020. <https://humanparts.medium.com/howiconfrontedthetruthaboutmyfraternitysracisthistory-2202e05ec08a>.

The Varlet of Kappa Alpha Order serves as an introduction and compass to the organization. It is highly likely that any man who joins the Kappa Alpha Order chapter at James Madison University is aware of and knows the ideology outlined in Varlet. The Varlet not only openly praises but also idolizes Confederates Robert E. Lee and Samuel Zenas Ammen. When they agreed to become a member of the organization, they too subscribed to the ideology that it is based upon. On the official James Madison University website, the page for the Kappa Alpha Order explicitly states that the organization “centers on reverence to God, duty, honor, character, and gentlemanly conduct as inspired by Robert E. Lee...”²⁹⁷ In June 2020 the members of the JMU chapter of Kappa Alpha Order released a statement following the murder of George Floyd. One ‘brother’ commented on this statement using the quote, “‘A true man of honor feels humbled when he cannot help humbling others.’ I think we all gained some humility from Mr. Floyd and can see how the police and government are lacking in that honor. I encourage everyone to read the definition of a gentleman again.”²⁹⁸ This member and student choose a quote from Confederate General Robert E. Lee to describe a murder that had resulted from systemic racism and police brutality. The use of the quote is evidence of the internalization of the Lost Cause ideology Kappa Alpha Order promotes. It is also evidence that members of the JMU chapter are subscribing to the image of Lee as a Christian gentleman and in doing so are perpetuating a false historical narrative.

²⁹⁷ “Kappa Alpha Order,” James Madison University, Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, accessed July 20, 2021, <https://info.jmu.edu/fsl/fraternities/kappa-alpha-order/>.

²⁹⁸ Kappa Alpha Order (@jmu_ka), “The Brothers of the Kappa Alpha Order JMU believe our generation is the vehicle for change. Donate and sign the petition to help drive change forward! (link in the bio),” Instagram, June 3, 2020, [https://www.instagram.com/p/CA-8SUXHDUa/?utm_medium=copy_link.](https://www.instagram.com/p/CA-8SUXHDUa/?utm_medium=copy_link.;); It should be noted that the student later amended his comment to note that he felt only “some of the police” were lacking the honor the spoke of.

Hierarchies of race, class and gender and the Lost Cause ideology did not end on the campus of James Madison University when the literary societies ended in 1942. These hierarchies and this ideology, established from the beginning of the State Normal and Industrial School at Harrisonburg became the foundation on which the college built its campus identity. This established history can be seen not only in symbolism scattered across campus but also in the organizations that replaced the Lee and Lanier literary societies. Building names and school colors on the campus are interconnected with the campus' history of reverence for Lost Cause mythology. James Madison University is still actively perpetuating this ideology and hierarchies of race, class, and gender through the social organizations that it continued to host even after the early groups left. The Phi Mu chapter that was on campus until 1989 embraced the gender ideals of the Old South and continued the rehearsal of race through their Old South plays and blackface minstrels. Today, the chapter of Kappa Alpha Order that remains on campus also plays into the gender ideals of the Old South as their description of what it means to be a gentleman subscribes to the romanticized patriarchal society. The spiritual founder Robert E. Lee was not "a marble man without sin" nor was he the example of a Christian gentleman.²⁹⁹ He was a man who was deeply entangled in and who fought to preserve the institution of slavery, the systematic trafficking of Black individuals. The Kappa Alpha Order, which continues to perpetuate an inaccurate and harmful historical narrative stands on the JMU campus a living monument to the Lost Cause alongside the physical symbols. All of this is a direct result of the institution's established history of hierarchies of race, class, and gender.

²⁹⁹ Seidule, *Robert E. Lee and Me*, 8.

The legacy of the Lost Cause is still present on the campus of James Madison University because of the foundational role that the young women played in the early years of the college. The women who attended the college from 1909 to 1942 signaled a new era in South. They were individuals who were raised in the shadow of the Civil War and instilled with the ideals and hierarchies of the Old South. Yet, the women who attended the college also held an unrepresented amount of freedom. They had opportunities available to them that neither their grandparents nor their parents had. The students constantly tested the boundaries socially acceptable behavior and looked to other women at the institution that served as examples of what a modern woman looked like. The women crafted their own identities through the practice and rehearsal of hierarchies of class, race, and gender. When they left the college there was no doubt what each of the women's roles in society was as they had spent their years on campus rehearsing. The young women carried with them the weight of a false heritage of the Civil War as they walked the line between Old and New South.

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