USEFUL AND ORNAMENTAL
VIRGINIA WOMEN'S ACADEMIES 1830-1860

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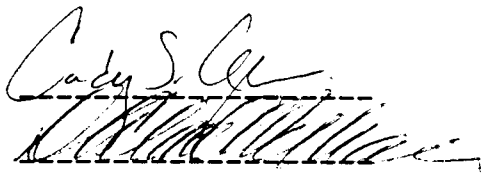

> Thoroughly to educate and fit young ladies to fill the sphere of woman, and to discharge the duties pertaining to her station, will be our constant aim. A mere 'fashionable education,' which leaves the head empty and frivolous, and the heart unprepared for life's pleasures or duties, is no part of our aim.[1]

In 1857, the catalogue of the Piedmont Female Academy in Albemarle County, Virginia explicitly articulated the institution's goals. Like most antebellum schools for young women in the South, the Piedmont Female Academy stressed that only a strong academic education could prepare women for their futures. An education from one of the female academies would strengthen a woman's mind and enable her to adapt to any situation in which she might find herself.

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[1] Catalogue of the Piedmont Female Academy in Albemarle County, Virginia. Richmond: William H. Clemmitt, 1857. Alderman Library, University of Virginia (hereafter indicated as UVA.)

Academies served not only the needs of educators, but of parents, students and the community at large. Parents believed that frivolous young women and Bluestockings would not be able to find happiness. Educating their daughters into usefulness was the only way Southern parents could hope to see them content in later life. The female students who attended the schools saw them as places of opportunity. During their school days the students dreamed of becoming writers or imagined themselves living the heroic lives of such classical figures as Queen Zenobia. Simultaneously, though, young women learned the restrictions inherent in their role. In the family-structured environment of the female academy, students explored both the possibilities available to them and the limits placed upon them as women in Southern society. Female academies also benefitted the communities in which they were located. Purchases by the schools and their patrons stimulated the local economy. In addition, as business ventures, the schools frequently made a

profit for their founders, trustees and employees. The academies provided opportunities for entertainment as well as profit by offering concerts and other cultural events to the public.

On a larger scale, the academies functioned as religious and political institutions. They acted to maintain and protect the Southern way of life against incursions by "foreign" influences such as Catholicism and Northern abolitionism. Southern female academies spread the values of Protestant Christianity and, indirectly, supported the institution of slavery.

Unfortunately, historians have consistently ignored antebellum Southern female education. Occasionally an author, like education scholar Dale Glenwood Robinson in his book The Academies of Virginia 1776-1861, might examine Southern educational institutes. However, Robinson's work primarily concerns men's academies in Virginia. Although he purports to discuss all academies, Robinson dismisses women's academies with the remark that they resembled men's schools with the addition of some of the "polite" branches of curriculum.[2] Historians who

concern themselves with schooling for women before the Civil War, such as Barbara Solomon in her In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America, confine themselves primarily to Northern, specifically New England, academies.[3] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, a noted historian of Southern women, chooses to disregard the academies in her book Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South because the schools did not explicitly train young upper class women to manage a slaveholding household.[4] Fox-Genovese argues that the female academies did not significantly affect Southern life. Another historian, Catherine Clinton, asserts in The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South, that the Southern female academies taught only social

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[2]Dale Glenwood Robinson, The Academies of Virginia 1776-1861. Dutton, Virginia: 1977, p. 11.

[3]Barbara M. Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

[4]Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988, 113.

graces and that their rapid growth was due to provincialism.[5] These authors characterize the Southern women's academies as finishing schools that a young lady might attend in order to enhance her status in society. Academies, North and South, did function in this manner, but they also played a far more important and complex role in society.

Thousands of young upperclass women in the antebellum South attended female academies during the formative years of their adolescence. Between 1830 and 1860, academies for women between the ages of twelve and twenty sprang up in great numbers in the South. This essay focuses on Virginia women's academies in their heyday during the three decades prior to the Civil War. All of the academies discussed here were located in the central and southeastern regions of the state. Less affluent than people in the rest of Virginia, residents in the west favored state-sponsored poor schools rather than the private academies

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[5]Catherine Clinton, The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South. New York: Pantheon Books, 1982, p. 13.

which sprang up in Virginia east of the Appalachian Mountains to service upper class families. Northern Virginia, before the Civil War, was sparsely populated and produced few female academies. Virginia's schools appear to have been fairly typical for the upper class slaveholding South (with the exception of Alabama and Florida). [6]

Women's historians, like Solomon, claim that Northern academies had a great impact on Northern women and their society -- they contributed to the emergence of abolitionism and a woman's movement. Southern academies also had a substantial impact although that impact took a different form. These schools provided young women with a thorough academic education and helped them to foster Southern values and Christian virtues in their society. Female academies performed many functions in the South through their status as political, religious, and educational institutions.

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[6]Dale Glenwood Robinson, The Academies of Virginia, p. 36.

The American Revolution resulted in massive social and cultural upheaval in the new United States. Among the changes brought about by the conflict was a greater recognition of the importance of women's work and women's education.[7] The Revolution, in fact, first led to the rise of female academies in America. Prior to 1776, only very fortunate or very resourceful women could achieve an education above the basic literacy level. Some went to school in Europe, some received private tutoring and some, like the eighteenth century spokeswoman for female education, Judith Sargent Murray, taught themselves by reading their brothers' texts.[8] Most people, however, saw secondary education for females as superfluous and educational opportunities were largely closed to women in the first half of the eighteenth century.

The American Revolution expanded women's apparent presence

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[7]Mary Beth Norton, Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women 1750-1800. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980, p. 298.

[8]Barbara M. Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women, p. 9.

in the Republic and gave them a more public role. For example, by inciting women, to participate in collective political action such as tea and sugar boycotts, the Revolution made women as a group more visible in society. It also led to the development of the rhetoric of the republican citizen. Contemporaries felt that the new country would need to be peopled with virtuous men in order to survive. Upper and middle class women, as republican mothers, had the responsibility to teach virtue to their sons in order to develop them into good citizens.[9] For this purpose, women themselves needed to be educated. One authority on female education, Benjamin Rush, was decidedly in favor of educated women because of the great influence mothers, sisters and wives exerted over their sons, brothers and husbands. To Rush, a woman's education was a step in improving the character of a man.[10]

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[9]Linda Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980, p. 235.

[10]Ann D. Gordon, "The Young Ladies Academy of Philadelphia." In Women of America: A History. (eds.) Carol Berkin and Mary Beth Norton, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979, p. 73.

In addition to the idea of the republican mother, contemporary writers set forth other less influential but still important justifications for women's education. Judith Sargent Murray of Gloucester, Massachusetts, for example, while stressing that an education would instill virtue and humility in a woman also enumerated its personal advantages. In her 1798 series of essays, The Gleaner, she observed that not every woman could marry. In addition, Murray felt strongly that a woman should not marry the first man to propose merely because she had no other way to live. Education, wrote Murray, would give women an alternative. If nothing else, they could teach.[11] Half a century later, Catharine Beecher would also emphasize the value of academies as teacher-training institutes.[12]

Southern women's attitudes towards teaching differed sharply

[11]Judith Sargent Murray, The Gleaner, vol. 3. Boston: I. Thomas and E.T. Andrews, 1798, p. 188-190; and Barbara M. Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women, p. 9.

[12]Kathryn Kish Sklar, Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1976, pp. 97-98.

from those of Northern women. In the North, women came to see teaching as one of the few respectable occupations open to them. Southern women, on the other hand, viewed teaching as degrading and resorted to it only when driven by necessity.[13] James Garnett, who was a popular contemporary lecturer and author on women's education and whose wife operated a female academy in Virginia, wrote, "Another great obstacle, -but equally applicable to the progress of Education in both sexes, is the little estimation in which the class of instructors is generally held. In fact, it is far from uncommon to consider this, - a *degraded class*..."[14] In 1825, Cornelia Randolph wrote to her sister Ellen in despair over financial difficulties. "I suppose not until we sink entirely will it do for the granddaughters of Thomas Jefferson to take in work or keep a school."[15] Even Southern students

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[13] Barbara M. Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women, p. 46.

[14] James M. Garnett, Garnett's Lectures. Richmond: T.W. White, 1825, p. 38. Throughout the paper, any emphasis which occurs in quotations also occurred in the original source. No emphasis has been added.

[15] Jan Lewis, The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 148.

sometimes displayed scorn towards their instructors. In 1856, Ellen Pollard wrote to her father from the Leavenworth Female Seminary that "We are only afraid the teachers will get above themselves." [16] Southerners did not advocate teaching as a profession for upper class women until after the Civil War. While in the North unmarried women founded many of the female academies, in Virginia, men or married women established most of the schools. These Virginia founders intended to prepare women to be useful and happy within their domestic role, not to provide them with an alternative to it. The teacher-training focus of most Northern academies is missing from Virginia women's education.[17]

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[16]Ellen Pollard to her father, Nov. 27, 1856. Pollard Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia, (hereafter indicated as VHS.)

[17]The most famous and experimental of the female academies clustered in New England. Sarah Pierce opened a "respectable academy" in Litchfield, Connecticut in 1791 which focused for the first time on intellectual rather than ornamental branches of study. Lyman Beecher taught religious classes at the school, and his daughters Harriet and Catharine both attended it. The next of the prominent Northern academies was Emma Hart Willard's Troy Female Seminary which she opened in New York in 1821. Emma Willard published a plan for a liberal arts curriculum for women which was extremely influential in the establishment of other Northern academies. Catharine Beecher established the Hartford Seminary in

Because of the low status of teachers in the South, the upperclass men and women who were well enough educated to be teachers did not find themselves attracted to the profession. Partly for this reason, few female academies existed in the South prior to the 1830s. In addition, in Virginia, from 1810 until the 1830s, Northerners almost completely dominated mastership of those academies that did exist.[18] This pattern held true for both male and female academies. In other cases, Virginians and other Southerners would send their daughters North to be educated. For example, from 1785 to 1830, the Bethlehem Female Seminary in

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Connecticut for well-to-do women in 1823 before she turned her focus to expanding education for women in the West. Mary Lyon and Zilpah Grant in Massachusetts were the two women who first made higher education affordable to women of the working or middle classes in 1836 with the founding of Mount Holyoke Seminary. The New England academies became the models for women's education in the North. As new institutions were created they drew teachers and staff from Litchfield, Troy, Hartford and Mount Holyoke. Frequently students from these academies went on to found their own schools. (Barbara M. Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women, pp. 17-18, 29; Thomas Woody, A History of Women's Education in the United States. New York: The Science Press, 1929, p. 346-358; and Edward T. James et al. (eds.) Notable American Women 1607-1950, vols. 1-3. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971.)

[18]Dale Glenwood Robinson, The Academies of Virginia, p. 42.

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania enrolled 25 percent of its students from the Southern states (7 percent of Bethlehem's students hailed from Virginia).[19]

A new demand for female education in the South blossomed during the antebellum period. Private boarding schools for upperclass women between the ages of thirteen and twenty began to spring up, according to contemporary Charles Cocke, at "every city, town and village and many crossroads in the country."[20] There were at least fifty female academies in Virginia between 1830 and 1860.[21] Frequently these schools lasted only a few

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[19]William C. Reichel, A History of the Rise, Progress and Present Condition of the Bethlehem Female Seminary, 1785-1858. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1858, pp. 307-453.

[20]Charles L. Cocke, "Schools for Virginia Girls" in The Seminary Magazine (1869) vol. 1, p. 18.

[21]In 1872, the first year such statistics were available, there were eighty-eight female academies in the South, thirteen of which were located in Virginia. There were 1,826 students, 65 male teachers, and 85 female teachers at these academies. (Annual Report of the Commissioner of Education. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872.) Statistics for earlier years are more difficult to obtain. Blandin lists 177 female academies founded in the South between 1830 and 1860, thirteen of these were in Virginia. This figure does not include male academies with female departments and many times dates are not noted. (I.M.E. Blandin, History of Higher Education of Women in the South Prior to

years and they often changed their names several times. The Southern Female Institute of Fredericksburg changed its location to become the Southern Female Institute of Richmond around 1852, for example. Too, although the schools usually numbered between twenty and 200 pupils, some schools enrolled only a few local students.[22] Even so, female academies began to appear in significant numbers throughout the state. As W.F. Broaddus of the Broaddus Female Institute in Fredericksburg explained to parents in 1854:

> In proposing to you to place your daughter under my charge, I have neither disposition nor occasion to institute a comparison between my Seminary and the

1860. New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1909.) Dale Glenwood Robinson asserts that by 1835 there were 382 academies in Virginia, twenty of which were for women. (Dale Glenwood Robinson, The Academies of Virginia, p. 55.) In the Index to the Code of Virginia from 1830 to 1860, 38 academies with the word "female" in the their names were incorporated by the Virginia legislature. (John Williams (compiler), The Index to Enrolled Bills 1776-1910, Richmond; Davis Bottom, 1911.) Interestingly, a similar statistic for the state of New York shows only 27 such schools incorporated. (Lucy Forsyth Townsend, The Best Helpers of One Another: Anne Peck Sill and the Struggle for Women's Education, Chicago: Educational Studies Press, 1988, p. 14.) More than 50 female academies were uncovered during the course of research for this paper and undoubtedly more existed.

[22]Since these smaller schools drew pupils from the community, often they did not advertise and are therefore hard to trace.

> many others within reach of you in almost every direction. Although the number is now considerable, and still increasing, the supply is not yet equal to the demand for such Institutions; and there is abundant patronage for us all.[23]

Many factors led to the development of educational institutions for women in the South after 1830. One of the most influential was a protectionist movement for purely Southern education which arose in the South in reaction to Northern views on abolition and states rights. Before 1830, many Southern parents sent their daughters North to receive an education. After 1830, in light of anti-Southern rhetoric in the North, most of these Southerners felt it necessary to control their daughters' educations more closely. To continue with the example cited earlier, for the years 1830 to 1858, Southern students at the Bethlehem Female Seminary in Pennsylvania dropped from 25 to 14 percent (Virginia students dropped from 7 to 3 percent).[24]

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[23]Catalogue of the Broaddus Female Institute, 1854. Individual item not contained in any collection (hereafter indicated as No Coll.) VHS.

[24]William C. Reichel, A History of the Rise, Progress and Present Condition of the Bethlehem Female Seminary, 1785-1858. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1858, pp. 307-453.

The dwindling numbers of Southern students in Northern schools and the rising numbers of female academies in the South after 1830 reflect the widening gap that developed between North and South at this time.

The Southern Female Institute in Richmond, Virginia claimed to have been founded, "...when the attention of Southern men was forcibly directed to the importance of training the youth of the South, amid such influences as would tend to wean their affections from the habits and manners of their fathers, at a time when the rights of the South were seriously threatened in the councils of the nation..."[25] The Reverend Benjamin Smith of the Augusta Female Seminary made a speech in 1844 which was a diatribe against the frivolity and unsuitableness of foreign ways. In a footnote to his own speech, and speaking of himself, he asserted that, "What, as an American, he has said of foreigners, as a Virginian he is accustomed to think and say of Northern

[25]Catalogue of the Southern Female Institute of Richmond, 1853. No Coll., VHS.

men..." Reverend Smith continued his speech by arguing that he was against foreigners or Northerners educating Southern women.[26] His view was shared by many Virginians. In 1843, Lorenzo Lea, the president of the Female Collegiate Institute in Buckingham, revealed that "a new organization of the faculty was made last June to obviate an objection raised against the Institute on account of the employment of Northern men."[27] Furthermore, according to The Southern Literary Messenger in 1852:

> ...for the last few years a serious objection has been felt by many of our best citizens to the importation of governesses for their daughters from a region, where society, in all its gradations, is more or less infected with a fanaticism, which is at war with our peculiar institutions, upon which depend as the effect upon the cause nearly all that is distinctive in our habits, our manners, and our governmental policy.[28]

The Southern Literary Messenger linked together habits, manners,

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[26]Quoted in Mary Watters, The History of Mary Baldwin College 1842-1942. Staunton, Virginia: Mary Baldwin College, 1942, p. 29.

[27]Sue Roberson West, Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute: First Chartered College for Women in Virginia 1837-1843. 1848-1863. Charlotte, North Carolina: Delmar Printing, 1990, p. 25.

[28]J.R. Thompson (ed.), The Southern Literary Messenger. Richmond: MacFarlane and Fergusson, Printers, 1852, p. 118.

governmental policy, and peculiarly Southern institutions such as slavery. These elements combined to make the South distinctively Southern. When something menaced one of these elements, it menaced them all. The female academies, like the male academies and colleges of the period, developed in the South, after 1830, to maintain its "peculiar institutions" against threats by the North.

Southerners identified women with the habits and manners of the South, and also with slavery. "...If the institution of slavery has supplied a school of moral discipline to the men of the South, we believe it has had a direct agency in preserving to us the noblest, loveliest and purest race of women ever sent by Heaven to comfort and adorn humanity," declared The Southern Literary Messenger in 1854. It went on to state that "Southern women have been taught, and are happy in the belief that their rights are best maintained in the performance of their duties."[29] Slavery

[29]J.R. Thompson (ed.), The Southern Literary Messenger. Richmond: MacFarlane and Fergusson, Printers, 1854, p. 198.

required a variety of institutions to support it in a variety of ways. In part, female academies arose in the South to serve as one of these institutions.

Academies reinforced the idea that slave labor was indispensable to Southern society. The students lived in daily contact with slaves at the female schools. Slaves constructed the academy buildings, cooked, cleaned and drew water for the young ladies. (In 1837, for example, the Female Collegiate Institute in Buckingham hired 191 slaves.) While students rigorously studied academic subjects such as Chemistry, Philosophy or Latin, they also learned that their own place in society depended on how well they were suited to perpetuate the ideals of that society. They learned to be useful and happy in a role that was incomplete without slavery.

Female academies served as bulwarks against foreign religious influences as well. A man who signed himself Brutus wrote about Catholicism in the Southern Religious Telegraph as a "foreign

conspiracy." "Have not the wily manoeuverings of despotism already commenced? Is he not enveighling our children to his schools? Is he not intriguing with the press? Is he not usurping the police in our country..."[30] At least one Southerner, the Reverend Benjamin Smith, welcomed the establishment of female academies with ties to Protestant churches as a check on this Catholic menace to the Southern way of life.[31]

Southerners indirectly acknowledged the important role women and the female academies played in Southern society. The Southern Female Institute while still in Fredericksburg carefully selected members for its board of sixteen trustees "from all the different Christian [Protestant] churches and political parties."[32] If Southerners placed little significance on the educations women received from female academies, there would be no reason to take pains to assure an impartial board of trustees. Nor would it matter whether or not young women

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[30] Southern Religious Telegraph, November 14, 1834.

[31] Mary Watters, The History of Mary Baldwin College 1842-1942, p. 12.

[32] J.R. Thompson (ed.), The Southern Literary Messenger, 1852, p. 118.

absorbed Catholic or Northern ideas unless women's beliefs could affect society. The academies taught more than academic subjects; they helped to shape the way that Southern women looked at their world. Southern educators deliberately excluded outside influences from the academies and taught their pupils to see the world from the Southern, Protestant point of view.

In general, in Virginia, female academies were founded in three main ways; either by individuals, by joint stock companies, or by religious groups. Individuals founded most of the smaller schools. Some such institutions, however, like Mr. and Mrs. Eichelberger's Angerona Seminary in Winchester, seem to have been fairly substantial in size. Individual founders, most often a man, a married woman or a married couple, established a school for the education of their daughters or for profit. Undoubtedly, in many cases, both motives carried equal weight. Dr. James P. Boisseau of Petersburg announced the opening of the Female School at Mount Liberty in 1857, "I have concluded to open a small

School for the benefit of my children and would be pleased to take a limited number of Boarders."[33] Joseph Wilson wrote a letter to the trustees of the Halifax Academy (for men) asking their support to establish a female branch of the academy. He wrote, "I taught school for five years myself when a young man, and have recently taken it up again as a livelihood..." Wilson also mentioned his eight children and the fact that they all lived with him "for I cannot afford to board them out."[34]

Many prosperous men in the South saw the new demand for Southern female education after the 1830s as a means to increase their wealth as well as to ensure the maintenance of the Southern way of life. Joint stock companies, crowded with ministers, professional men, and military officers, proliferated throughout the state. Historian William M. E. Rachal has said of the Female Collegiate Institute in Buckingham, "Its backers

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[33]Broadside, 1857: 17. No Coll., VHS.

[34]Joseph Wilson to the trustees of the Halifax Academy, no date. Bailey Family Papers, VHS.

looked upon it as a business venture. Not only did they think the Institute would be self-supporting; they expected it to make a profit."[35] The New Baltimore Academy founded a female department in 1827 ordering the principal to devote as much time to it "as its interest and prosperity may demand."[36] Unfortunately, by 1830, the female department had ceased to be profitable and its prospects had dimmed. The trustees decided to abandon it and turned it over to the woman, probably Miss Mary Thomas, who had been teaching the female students. (It reverted back to its original status as a branch of the male academy a few years later.) An early nineteenth century law ensuring that incorporated academies could not be taxed undoubtedly contributed to the attractiveness of academies as business ventures.[37]

Academies served as sources of profit not only to their

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[35]William M.E. Rachal, "Virginia's First College for Women." In The Virginia Cavalcade (1952-1953) vol. 2, p. 44.

[36]Trustees Book of the New Baltimore Academy, 1827-1869. New Baltimore Academy Records, VHS.

[37]Dale Glenwood Robinson, The Academies of Virginia, p. 39.

founders, but also to the communities surrounding them. The influx of pupils meant an influx of money into the economy as students bought clothing and "trifles" from area stores. The academy itself would require supplies from area farmers and, in the case of some institutions, young women would need respectable homes in which to board. Moreover, a female academy meant concerts and speakers and other forms of "culture" that the schools frequently threw open to the public. Examinations and graduation ceremonies drew local spectators and students' relatives from all over Virginia. Even those local young women who did not attend the academy could benefit from its presence. William Shepard also pointed out the "social importance" of a female academy to young men in the region.[38]

Unfortunately, despite the hopes of trustees, joint stock companies, and communities, female academies in Virginia (and also male academies) often experienced financial problems.[39]

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[38]William Shepard, "Appended Data on Buckingham Female Institute" in Felixville, a Forgotten Village in Cumberland County and Other Sketches, p. 46.

[39]In 1843, the students of the Female Collegiate Institute sent a petition to the

Funding for antebellum female academies might have come from lotteries, gifts, bequests, loans, subscriptions or the sale of stock.[40] In general, though, academies made money through tuition. Though tuition scales and schedules varied widely from academy to academy, pupils usually paid between $100 and $200 each year. This would include board and basic tuition with extra money charged for ornamental branches of study such as piano, needlework, or painting.

Finally, official organizations of such religious denominations as the Baptists, the Methodists, the Presbyterians, or the Episcopalians also founded academies, such as the Albemarle Female Institute in Charlottesville. The 1872 census (the first to

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General Assembly of Virginia begging for funds to keep the school open. This would indicate, although the state did not respond in this case, that there may have been some history of state funding of female academies. Such occurances must have been rare, however. The census records of 1872 report that none of the female academies in existence in that year received any money from the state. (Annual Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1872.)

[40]Dale Glenwood Robinson, The Academies of Virginia, p.24; The Trustees Book of the New Baltimore Academy, 1827-1869; Loulie Patteson, "Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute," in Felixville: A Forgotten Village in Cumberland County, Virginia and Other Sketches, The Farmville Herald, 1967, p.25.

record such data) reveals that of the thirteen female academies in Virginia in that year, only two had no affiliation with a religious denomination.[41] Even the "secular" academies founded by private individuals or joint stock companies bore an intimate relationship with one of the Protestant denominations. For example, one of the academies not officially linked with any church was Hoge's Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies which was founded by the Presbyterian reverend, Moses Drury Hoge. For those concerned about the quality of his school, Hoge listed "the Presbyterian clergy of Virginia" as references who could recommend it.[42] The Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church endorsed the privately-owned Valley Female Institute in Winchester and appointed an annual committee to hear the examinations of its pupils.

The Female Collegiate Institute of Buckingham (founded in 1834 by a joint stock company) had no official ties to any

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[41] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1872.

[42] Broadside 1848:1. No Coll., VHS.

denomination. In fact, the academy's charter of incorporation stipulated that "no test of religious character whatsoever shall ever be required of any young lady..."[43] It went on, though, to decree that students should attend family and public prayers, keep the sabbath, and attend church. In 1841, Colonel Fuqua created a furor at F.C.I. by withdrawing his daughters because he believed that "there was too much religious (i.e. Methodist) pressure brought to bear on the daughters of gentlemen of different denominations."[44] In fact, in 1842, Mary E. Bailey wrote to her mother from the Institute that only four girls at the school had not found religion at the revival at a nearby Methodist church.[45] In 1843, due to financial difficulties, the trustees tried to sell the Female Collegiate Institute to the James River Baptist Association. The Association was unable to buy the Institute but expressed its temptation "in view of the fact that

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[43]Catalogue of the Female Collegiate Institute, Buckingham County, Virginia, 1839. No Coll., VHS.

[44]William Shepard, "Appended Data on Buckingham Female Institute," p. 45.

[45]Mary E. Bailey to Mrs. Early, 1842. Early Family Papers, VHS.

the Baptist denomination has not in this state a female school of high order and believing that such a school will be highly beneficial to the denomination."[46] After the Baptists failed to purchase the academy, the trustees attempted to sell it to the Episcopalians. Eventually the school reopened as a private academy under the guidance of the prominent Methodist minister, Reverend John C. Blackwell.

Southerners saw religion and education as closely linked[47] For both men and women many of the goals of the one were the same as the goals of the other. In 1832, James M. Garnett compared the "utmost attainable perfection of man's nature with the lowest state of abasement to which the vices and crimes of

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[46]Sue Roberson West, Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute, p. 25.

[47]Religion also played an integral role in the rise of the Northern academies. The need to spread Christianity and for women to teach their children Christian virtues is frequently equated -- as Christian motherhood -- with the idea of republican motherhood. (Barbara M. Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women, p. 16.) Many of the most prominent female founders of academies in the North were protegées of the Congregationalist minister, Joseph Emerson who believed that the coming of the millenium was close at hand and that the education of women was a necessary requirement for its advent. (Thomas Woody, A History of Women's Education, p. 358.)

neglected education can degrade him."[48] Children who did not receive a good education would learn no self-control. Without discipline they would stray from God and follow the path to Hell. Dr. Wisner in the Southern Religious Telegraph in 1834 argued that:

> ...the fact is, religion and education must go together. We must rely for real reformation of character not on transitory excitements but on the convictions of the understanding...Young men need the discipline of colleges and seminaries...to secure a balance of character -- that indescribable, but indispensable symmetry which will render them permanently useful.[49]

Virginians felt that young women, as well as young men, needed an education. George Elliott wrote concerning his daughter Isabella, "to remove her from school now does seem to be arresting her efforts and cutting short her education; and

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[48]James Mercer Garnett, A Discourse in Scholastic Reforms and Amendments in the Modes and General Scope of Parental Instruction, Delivered before the Fredericksburg Lyceum, Sept. 28, 1832, Richmond: Thomas W. White, 1833, p. 18.

[49]Speech by Dr. Wisner at a meeting of the Education, Foreign Mission and Colonization Societies recorded in the Southern Religious Telegraph, November 21, 1834.

thereby frustrating my original desire of placing every facility within her reach to obtain a good Education."[50] In 1835, Senator W.A. Roane wrote his homesick daughter, Sarah:

> Console yourself for the separation my dear child, as I do, by the reflection that it is indispensable to your future welfare, that it should be so; and that it is I who suffer most by it; and voluntarily, sacrifice the present pleasure of having you with me, for the sole purpose of promoting your welfare, which is far dearer to me than my own. I could have been much happier than I have been, during my long and painful seclusion here, could I have reconciled it to the duty and love I owe you, to withdraw you from your school and society merely to minister to my paternal fondness...[51]

Likewise, Robert Yates Henley wrote to his son in 1852:

> I have to stint myself to keep you and Caroline [his daughter] at school and supply your demands and I think you ought to improve your time and not be squandering my means...Do, I entreat you, let your reports be much improved...Your Sister is getting on very well with her studies. Her reports are as good as they can be and why may yours not be as good...[52]

In a later letter, he remarked that "Your Sister...should complete

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[50] George W. Elliott to ?, 1833. Elliott Papers, VHS.

[51] Senator W.A. Roane to Sarah Anne Lyons Roane Harrison, Jan. 13, 1835. Harrison Family Papers, VHS.

[52] Robert Yates Henley to Thomas Henley, Dec. 15, 1852. Henley Family Papers, VHS.

her education by that time. She as well as yourself has had a fine opportunity and if you are not both educated it certainly is your own faults."[53]

Many Virginians believed that women had the same intellectual capacity as men. As Mary Virginia Early Brown, a student of the Female Collegiate Institute in Buckingham put it, "the progress of Civilization has developed the truth that woman is possessed of mind, and although the question is still agitated whether she is equal in mental ability to man, yet it is generally conceded that she is in some respects even superior..."[54] The Patriarch, edited by R. W. Bailey, the principal of the Augusta Female Seminary in Virginia, opined that women were as intelligent as men but that their education was generally inferior. The magazine rejoiced in the rise of the female academies as institutions to change this situation.[55]

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[53]Robert Yates Henley to Thomas Henley, Feb. 10, 1853. Henley Family Papers, VHS.

[54]Speech written by Mary Virginia Early Brown at F.C.I., June 13, 1842. Early Family Papers, VHS.

[55]R.W. Bailey, The Patriarch: A Family Magazine, vol. 1, New York: George A

In most cases, the new female academies in Virginia after 1830 modelled themselves after schools for young men. Educators saw this as appropriate because many of them believed that women's minds and men's equalled one another in strength. In addition, they lacked other models since they deliberately did not emulate Northern female academies. According to the Broaddus Female Institute in 1853:

> Now in almost every town, and in many country places, schools are to be found, exclusively devoted to Female Instruction -- while Academies and even Colleges are being established all over the land, offering to females the privilege of entering the higher walks of science and enjoying the benefits arising from mental cultivation, to an extent fully equal to what was for a long time, regarded as appropriate to the other sex.[56]

The Southern Female Institute in Fredericksburg adapted its curriculum and its system of merits and demerits from the Virginia Military Institute and the University of Virginia curricula and disciplinary systems for men.

Peters, 1841, p. 198.

[56]Catalogue of the Broaddus Female Institute, Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1853. No Coll., VHS.

The editor of the Southern Religious Telegraph in 1833 expressed his views on male and female education prior to the 1830s. He felt that "in spite of all the disadvantages under which they suffer, females have not only become good (which they have done oftener than men) but great." He extolled the virtues of Queen Elizabeth and Queen Margaret and the literary prowess of Hannah More. However, he went on to say that:

> ...the end in view in our institutions for the education of males is to make them useful: In that of females, to make them admired. Men will pay anything to have their daughters taught to manage their feet in dancing, to daub over a few pictures &c., to be admired by a few silly young men. I cannot speak on this subject without indignation.[57]

After 1830 the picture changed. Female academies in the South took on a new role as serious educational institutions. In part this was due to a backlash against the frivolity and shallowness of earlier women's education. One of the reasons the new female academies followed the pattern of Southern men's schools was because the two Southern branches of education had

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[57]Southern Religious Telegraph, December 6, 1833.

the same goals after 1830. Young women, like young men, needed to learn to be useful. This idea that usefulness was a primary aim of the academies appears repeatedly in contemporary letters, newspapers, and school catalogues.

By useful Southerners meant not idle or frivolous. A useful woman in the South was one who was pious and serious-minded. The charm of gay, empty-headed girls would last only so long as they remained young. As Christians and mothers, women had to be educated in order to instruct and influence those around them. Only by being well educated and intelligent could a woman ensure her happiness and worth to society.

Over and over, Southern educators emphasized the importance of instilling virtues as habits into young women. In a typical statement, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Towell advertised for their female seminary that:

> ...its principal aim will be to impart that general Intellectual activity and culture, which develop harmoniously and vigorously all the faculties of the mind, and to give to them that training and direction and foster those tastes and habits, which will make intelligent and cultivated women, filling efficiently

> and gracefully those spheres of usefulness in which they are called upon to move.[58]

James Mercer Garnett told a group of young women at his wife's academy that what was expected of them was "diligent earnest application to all your studies; for without this...you will fix upon yourselves habits of inattention and negligence, which no future effort can conquer."[59] Garnett frowned upon frivolity:

> If during the years of your pupilage your hands have had little other voluntary employment than adorning your persons; and your minds have found pleasure in no other occupation but juvenile frivolities, rely on it, that death itself is not more sure than the certainty that your maturer years will bring along with them a plentiful harvest of distressing cares, bitter disappointment and lasting pain, -- not of the body, but what is infinitely worse, of the heart and soul...[60]

A mind only fitted for parties and gay society would be unable to take the "dull, homely and often most laborious details of

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[58]Circular of Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Towell's Female Seminary at Winchester, Virginia, 1860. No Coll., UVA.

[59]James Mercer Garnett, Lectures on Various Topicks of Morals, Manners, Conduct, and Intellectual Improvement. Addressed to Mrs. Garnett's Pupils at Elmwood, Essex County, Virginia 1825-1826. Richmond: Thomas W. White, 1827, p. 140.

[60]James Garnett, Lectures on Morals, p. 115.

housekeeping, without insufferable fatigue and disgust."[61] Women learned strenuous subjects not because they were expected to "use" them, but because through disciplining their minds to learn them, they themselves became "useful." Mary Virginia Early, for example, learned the French language as "not only an accomplishment but [to] serve to improve the mind."[62]

Much of a woman's usefulness had to do with the continuance of Southern culture. After the American Revolution, women, as mothers of future citizens, took on the responsibility of keeping Americans virtuous. By teaching virtues to their sons, republican mothers ensured that the republic would not fail. Southerners in 1830 saw their women in the same light. Southern women would teach their sons the values and virtues that upheld the Southern way of life -- one which was being threatened at the time by Northern abolitionism. Education was essential for young women who would grow up to teach the next generation. A. Judson Crane

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[61] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

[62] Composition by Mary Virginia Early Brown at the Female Collegiate Institute, 1839. Early Family Papers, VHS.

praised the classical figure, Queen Zenobia, with the words, "She strengthened and adorned her mind by liberal study. She taught her 3 sons in the Latin tongue."[63]

Bishop Richard Channing Moore of Virginia clearly laid out this view of women in his endorsement letter for one of James Garnett's books. The bishop stated that:

> The influence of the female character upon the minds of our sex is universally acknowledged; every effort therefore which has a tendency to extend their information and to increase their moral power, must meet with the approbation of the virtuous...it rests very much with well educated and religious women, to check in their progress those errors in our sex, which frequently destroy the comfort of society; and to give that tone to publick [*sic*] morals.[64]

In 1833, the Southern Religious Telegraph invoked a vivid image from the preface to The Mother's Journal. "To mothers is committed the moulding of the whole mass of human mind, when it turneth as wax to the seal."[65]

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[63]A. Judson Crane, Zenobia: Address to the Zenobian Society of the Fluvanna Female Institute July 6. 1859. Richmond: H.K. Ellyson, 1859, p. 24.

[64]James Mercer Garnett, Garnett's Lectures, Richmond: T. W. White, 1825.

[65]The Southern Religious Telegraph quoting from Jane Tylor's preface to the

Southern women's educations functioned to make them useful within the limited family-oriented roles provided for them by their patriarchal slave-holding culture. According to The Southern Literary Messenger, the goal of women's education was "to qualify a woman to do with the greatest wisdom and modesty, efficiency and ease the duties resulting from all her relations in life."[66] "If Woman is an intelligent, moral agent," the Messenger asked, "why should not her mind be developed and beautified by culture? Can it be that an educated woman will be less useful or ornamental as wife, mother or daughter than an ignorant one?"[67]

Naturally, Southerners worried about the well-being of their daughters. They wanted to prepare their children to be happy in later life. Southern parents in the antebellum period felt great anxiety over their futures and those of their children. As James Garnett pontificated to the pupils at his wife's female academy:

> At the very outset, inexorable death, as sudden as the lightning's flash, may cut [life] short with all your

Mother's Journal, October 18, 1833.

[66]J.R. Thompson (ed.), The Southern Literary Messenger, 1852, p. 117.

[67]*Ibid.*

> foibles, faults and sins upon your head, unrepented of, and consequently unforgiven. But if this journey is to be protracted to old age, far, very far different must be your destiny from the common lot of humanity, if it prove not one of much difficulty, probable suffering, and great moral hazard. How, I most earnestly beseech you to consider, before we part forever, how are you prepared to encounter such a pilgrimage...[68]

For many Southerners, as for Garnett, this preparation could only be accomplished by educating young women, through the academies, into usefulness. Garnett felt that "useful occupation both of body and mind...is the true source of human happiness."[69] He defined "useful knowledge" as that which "comprises everything necessary to be known towards qualifying you to perform, in the best attainable manner, every practical duty of life, as well as to embellish and adorn it, with all those innocent arts invented by genius and good taste..."[70] This was the proper focus for a female academy. Along these lines, W.F. Broaddus advertised his Broaddus Female Institute as a school for

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[68]James Garnett, Lectures on Morals, p.109.

[69]James Mercer Garnett, Garnett's Lectures, Richmond: T. W. White, 1825, p. 74.

[70]James Garnett, Lectures on Morals, p. 135.

"preparing your Daughters and Wards to become useful as well as happy members of society."[71] In the words of an 1848 advertisement for the Danville Female Academy addressed to parents:

> ...the aim of the teachers is to develop all the mental faculties, refine the sensibilities, polish the manners, form correct habits of thought and action, instill proper principles of action and educate the affections, so as to train a child to act faithfully and honorably, and happily, her part in that state of life in which Providence may place her.[72]

Likewise, Senator W. A. Roane wrote to his daughter in 1837 that it pleased him "to think that you are disposed to avail yourself of all the means I may be enabled to afford you, to improve your mind, morals, manners, habits and reason, so as to enable you to become a usefull [*sic*] and ornamental member of society is the must."[73] Parents wanted their daughters to have strong minds and morals and to be useful and happy. They felt that the

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[71]Catalogue of the Broaddus Female Institute, 1854. No Coll., VHS.

[72]Broadside 1848: 21. No Coll., VHS.

[73]Senator W.A. Roane to Sarah Anne Lyons Roane Harrison, Sept. 19, 1837. Harrison Family Papers, VHS.

academies could bring this about.

The Northern academies, as well as the Southern schools, set out to teach women to be useful. However, the separate demands of their societies gave each a different meaning for the word. In the North, useful meant utilitarian. Education was useful to a woman not by disciplining her mind, but in so far as she could apply the knowledge she learned. Joseph Emerson, a Northern educator, stressed that teachers at his academy would "teach nothing but what appears conducive to the usefulness of [the] pupils...let every branch receive attention in proportion to its probable utility."[74] Southerners measured usefulness differently. Where in the North knowledge was useful in its specific applications, Southerners generally viewed knowledge as useful if it served to discipline and strengthen the mind. Whether or not knowledge could be directly utilized in daily life was irrelevant. Knowledge was useful in the South if it produced

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[74]Joseph Emerson, Prospectus of Mr. Emerson's Female Seminary at Wethersfield, Connecticut, Wethersfield: A. Francis, 1826, p. 14.

useful people. This analysis is not meant to suggest that Northern society valued frivolity in women or that all Northern women were free enough from role constraints to become teachers if they wished. However, slavery made the South different from the North. The South was a region of aristocrats, at least among the upper class. Southerners saw work as demeaning because workers were defined as slaves. The usefulness of knowledge, therefore, did not depend on its vocational attributes.[75]

Differences between the curricula of Northern and Southern academies and their justifications for these differences illustrate this varying attitude towards usefulness. The

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[75]As Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Catherine Clinton have shown, the "cult of domesticity" in the North did not develop in the South. (Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household, p. 98; Catherine Clinton, The Plantation Mistress, p. 16.) General or academic knowledge was appropriate to members of the Southern upper class both as a mark of status and as training for their future positions in society. It is significant that Northern male academies before the Civil War began to filter Latin and Greek out of their curricula while the classical languages remained staples of Southern male education. The same trend in the Southern female academies is only partly due to imitation of men's schools. The same cultural forces which operated on male schools in the South also affected the female institutions.

catalogue of the Danville Female Academy explained that its curriculum included Natural Sciences because they were "so well adapted to polish and adorn the mind and refine the sensibilities of the young..."[76] The Southern Literary Messenger argued that mathematics and sciences should be taught to young women. It averred that "this knowledge is useful as well as ornamental -- it strengthens the mind -- accustoms it to systematic arrangement -- gives habits of discrimination and observation, ..."[77] Southern educators frequently taught ancient languages such as Latin or Greek to women for just this purpose. Northern curricula included classical languages only infrequently. As Joseph Emerson believed, "To know a language which has scarcely any affinity to our own, a language, which we should never have occasion to read, write or speak, must be likely to engage meditations which might be more profitably employed upon other

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[76]Catalogue of the Danville Female Academy, Danville, Virginia, 1857, p. 9. No Coll., VHS.

[77]J.R. Thompson (ed.), The Southern Literary Messenger, 1852, p. 119.

subjects..."[78] To Emerson, Latin and Greek were not useful subjects, like book-keeping, because they could not be applied practically in life.

Despite the philosophical differences between Northern and Southern female academies, they resembled one another in at least one aspect. The primary purpose of the schools in both regions was to provide a thorough academic education to their pupils. Southern schools attempted to impose a rigorous course of study on the students. Most institutions would not admit pupils for less than half a year, and they restricted diplomas or certificates to those women who had passed a thorough examination in each branch of study. Educators of Virginia women felt that:

> ...the exclusive use of the formal questions appended to the popular school books of the day, which results either from the inefficiency or indolence of the teacher, should be deplored. In a majority of cases, memory is the only mental facility which is exercised in such training.[79]

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[78]Joseph Emerson, Prospectus of Mr. Emerson's Female Seminary., p. 14-15.

[79]Catalogue of the Southern Female Institute of Richmond, 1858. No Coll., VHS.

Teachers at female academies often used a variety of methods in order to instruct young women. For example, at the Angerona Seminary in Winchester, "Familiar lectures, accompanying the recitations in the higher branches of Education, with the use of good Philosophical Apparatus, Maps, Charts, &c., will secure to their [the proprietors'] pupils the benefit of thorough and substantial instruction."[80] At the Valley Female Institute in 1857, according to its catalogue, "the method of recitation [was] analytical, mingled with oral instruction for the younger classes; the aim not being to pass over the most space, but to reach principles."[81] As a woman named Mary wrote to her cousin Robbie, a homesick pupil at the Augusta Female Seminary in 1853, "Remember, dear child, that you have not gone there for pleasure, or to indulge your appetite for good things, but to <u>improve your mind</u>..."[82]

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[80]Prospectus of Angerona Seminary in Winchester, Virginia, 1847. No Coll., VHS.

[81]Catalogue of the Valley Female Institute, Winchester, Virginia, 1857. No Coll., VHS.

[82]Mary ? to Robbie ? at the Augusta Female Seminary in Staunton, Virginia,

The classes offered by the Virginia female academies did not propose to provide women with a smattering of knowledge. Academy authorities meant to develop the minds of the pupils and to teach them how to think their way through an extensive exploration of an academic subject. The Southern Female Institute of Richmond saw its role as to "develop the mind, and train it to think and investigate for itself..."[83] Many Southerners deplored so-called accomplishments that comprised nothing more than a veneer of knowledge. The Southern Literary Messenger called for discipline and a thorough education for women, "the discipline for which we contend would drive the whole generation of Blue-Stockings from the land."[84] While every academy in the South offered ornamental subjects, just as the Northern academies did, these subjects only added to the main curriculum. Academic subjects formed its core. This was similar to the male

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October 8, 1853. Unidentified Letter (MSS2 Un 3 A5), No Coll., VHS.

[83]Catalogue of the Southern Female Institute, 1853. No Coll., VHS.

[84]J.R. Thompson (ed.), The Southern Literary Messenger, 1852, p. 117.

academies where gentlemen would learn, not needlework or music, but riding, hunting, dancing, conversation and manners.[85]

The course of study at the Valley Female Institute in Winchester, Virginia for 1857 is typical of the academic schedules of Virginia female academies between 1830 and 1860. (See Appendix) The Institute had a Preparatory Department which consisted of a one year course to prepare girls around the age of twelve for the higher levels of learning at the school. During this year, the pupils would learn the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Pupils could remain for as much or as little time as they needed to master the skills in this department. They advanced only on the basis of merit. The Academic Department, which followed, was a two year program which continued with the basics and also introduced the pupils to history, French and Latin. After the age of about fifteen, young ladies entered the Collegiate Department. In their first year, as Sophomores, they chose from classes in Physical Geography, Algebra, Natural

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[85]Dale Glenwood Robinson, The Academies of Virginia, p. 2.

History, French, Latin, Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene, and Botany. Juniors took courses in Natural Philosophy, Mental Philosophy, Ancient History, Greek, Latin, Chemistry, Rhetoric, and Astronomy. In their third and final year, Seniors attended classes in Political Economy and Logic, Evidences of Christianity, Elements of Criticism, Greek, Moral Science, Geometry, Trigonometry, Geology, and Mineralogy. In addition to the normal course of study, the academy also offered German, Italian, Piano, Drawing, Painting and Embroidery.[86]

Lists of curricula in the school catalogues do not seem to have been false advertising. Letters from pupils and report cards sent to parents indicate that many, if not all, students undertook a rigorous schedule of classes at the academies.[87] Miss E. T.

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[86]Catalogue of the Valley Female Institute, 1857-1858. No Coll., VHS.

[87]Report Card of Georgia S. Bryan from the Southern Female Institute, 1854. Grinnan Family Papers, VHS; Report Card of Mary Miller from Jane H. Randolph to Mrs. Elizabeth Miller, Nov. 30, 1844; March,1845; and May 1845. Randolph Papers, VHS; Mary Virginia Early to her mother, Oct. 26, 1839. Early Family Papers, VHS; ? to Sue Wright, October ?. No Coll., VHS; Diploma of Anna Maria Dandridge from the Southern Female Institute, 1856. Smith Family Papers, VHS; Accounts of Anne Virginia Watson and Caroline Homassel Watson at MacKenzie's School, 1841. (Includes lists of textbooks

Pilson of the Augusta Female Seminary, for example, was enrolled in Reading, Writing, Elementary Drawing, Ancient Geography, Arithmetic, Composition, Latin, Chemistry, Logic and Mental Philosophy according to her report card in 1852. (She was doing very well.)[88] Bettie Coons' student notebook from her stay at the Richmond Female Institute contained detailed notes on such topics as the anatomy of the eye, the elements, the crusades, the nature of government, music, Shakespeare, and moral virtue.[89]

It is important to remember, though, that just because classes formed a part of the schedule did not mean that all students attended them. For example, the Female Collegiate Institute announced in 1839 that "young ladies may take the whole or any part of a course and may pursue at any time as many studies as

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purchased.) Watson Family Papers, VHS; William Shepherd, "Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute," William and Mary Quarterly, vol. 20, no. 2, April, 1940, pp. 167-193.

[88]Report Card of Miss E.T. Pilson from the Augusta Female Seminary, 1852. Pilson Family Papers, VHS.

[89]Student notebook of Martha Elizabeth Coons from the Richmond Female Institute, 1859. Coons Family Papers, VHS.

their health or abilities will admit."[90] Of forty-one students in the Collegiate Department of V.F.I. in 1857, thirty-two attended Latin classes. In the Academic Department only thirteen pupils out of fifty-eight learned Latin.

Based on an incomplete list of 279 students at the Female Collegiate Institute in Buckingham, 234 women, or 84 percent, remained for only one year. Thirty-six women stayed for two years, eight women for three years, and only one dedicated young woman completed four years at the academy. At the Southern Female Institute, for the years 1850-1857 except for the academic year 1855-1856 for which data is not available, 185 women attended the school. Of these women, 48 percent stayed for one year, 43 percent for two years, and only 8.5 percent remained for three years. These results are complicated by the school's change in location in 1852. For the Valley Female Institute in Winchester, lists of pupils are only available for the

[90]Catalogue of the Female Collegiate Institute, Buckingham County, Virginia, 1839. No Coll., VHS.

years 1857-1859. From a pool of seventy-seven students, however, forty-eight students, or 62 percent, remained at the academy for at least two years. In many cases, women who left a school after one year or a part of one year would enroll in a different academy at a later time. Confusing and incomplete as this data is, it indicates not only that much of the student body was transitory, but also that many pupils did remain at the schools long enough to complete the average two or three year program.

Discipline at the female academies of Virginia was paternal or "parental" in nature. Where principals often whipped young men in case of wrong doing, authorities at the female academies would lecture their pupils or send notices of the students' transgressions to parents along with monthly or weekly reports on their deportment. At the Female Collegiate Institute in Buckingham, three such notices would result in the final step of discipline; dismissal from the academy. Female pupils did not receive beatings and lectures included "no rudeness of

language."[91] Even at the age of twelve or thirteen, young Southern women were treated as ladies. Academy catalogues and letters from the students habitually noted the parental influence of the principal. Sarah Hall Douglass looked upon the Reverend R. W. Bailey of the Augusta Female Seminary "as a father."[92] Indeed, an 1848 broadside advertising Hoge's School in Richmond indicates that the principals, as well as the students, viewed their role as paternal. "Mr. Hoge will receive 25 young ladies as boarders and members of his own family."[93] Although many educators of women saw the female mind as equal to that of the male, they did not view women as equal to men. Women, especially young women, required supervision and protection. Both the structure of Southern society and traditional attitudes towards women had an effect on the ways in which male trustees and principals visualized their positions.

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[91] *Ibid.*

[92] Essays of Sarah Hall Douglass, Augusta Female Seminary, 1846. McCue and Robertson Family Papers, VHS.

[93] Broadside 1848:1. No Coll., VHS.

As young Southern women left home for the first time to attend the academies, they did not leave behind their familiar patriarchal, family-structured world. At the Danville Female Academy, the Reverend George W. Dame and his wife, Mary Maria Page Dame, occupied the positions of principal and vice principal. In 1857, two of their daughters attended their academy.[94] At the Female Collegiate Institute in Buckingham in 1852, while the Reverend John C. Blackwell served as principal, two Misses Blackwell attended the academy while an additional Miss Blackwell helped teach the Literary course. Mr. Arnaud Préot, professor of modern languages and music, had three daughters at the school, while the daughter of Mr. J. J. Potts of the mathematics department also attended classes.[95] Students of the Virginia female academies frequently lived, studied and played with the children of their teachers and principals. Even in

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[94]Catalogue of the Danville Female Academy, 1857. No Coll., VHS.

[95]Loulie Patteson, "Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute" in Felixville, a Forgotten Village in Cumberland County and Other Sketches, p.32-36.

cases where no actual kinship ties existed between principal and students, the principal would assume the duties of a relative in times of need. Thomas Jefferson Randolph, for example, described the actions of Mrs. Jane Nicholas Randolph when she risked her own health to nurse the girls under their care ("our family", he called them) during an outbreak of scarlet fever at Edgehill School in 1845.[96] Pupils and teachers roomed together at some academies, and they often became very close friends. Too, young women frequently entered academies with their sisters or other female relatives.

Academies stressed the parental role of the teachers and principals not only because it aided in keeping discipline, but also because it was the best way to prepare women for what lay ahead. In the South, the family formed the center of women's lives. Southerners, unlike many Northerners, did not remove young women from a patriarchal family setting in order to educate them. As James Garnett explained to his wife's pupils,

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[96]Thomas Jefferson Randolph to William Miller, 1845. Randolph Papers, VHS.

teachers "must necessarily be invested, -- temporarily at least, with all the rights of parents."[97] At the Angerona Seminary in 1847, Mr. and Mrs. Eichelberger announced that "In their government of the school, the principles of a judicious and impartial parental influence, which seldom fails, will always direct the course to be pursued."[98]

Nevertheless, pupils viewed their school days as a unique time of transition. To a limited extent, academies offered young women a period of experimentation; of testing the boundaries of their role as women in society. While some young women grew very homesick, and some looked forward to a time, as Mary Hunter put it in 1847, "that I am to be no longer regarded as a schoolgirl but am to occupy the more exalted station of young lady,"[99] others found camaraderie and new life among women their own age. When Hortensia H. Harris' father wrote to tell her to leave

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[97]James Garnett, Lectures on Morals, p. 9.

[98]Prospectus of the Angerona Seminary in Winchester, Virginia, 1847. Jones Papers, VHS.

[99]Mary Hunter to Mary Miller, May 2, 1847. Miller Family Papers, VHS.

the Female Collegiate Institute because of his concern for her health, she responded by begging him to let her stay. "When I am at home, I feel as dull and stupid, I imagine, as it is possible for me to feel...until I received that letter, I felt gay, and cheerful as a lark."[100]

Two compositions in a book written by the pupils of the Alexandria Female Seminary in 1853 show the range of emotions felt by these young women. The first of the eighteen essays focused on Pocahontas.[101] Through the intercession of the beautiful Indian maiden, the Indian savages stifled their warlike ways and set the Englishman free. This young student believed that virtuous women had power over men through their good influence. The second essay, entitled "Soliloquy of a Canary Bird,"

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[100]Hortensia H. Harris to her father, 1857? Allen Family Papers, VHS.

[101]The other sixteen essays address very traditional topics; bearing titles such as "Scene on a Winter's Evening," "Consolation of Religion," and "A Rainy Day." Two of these essays, which have the intriguing titles "The Advantages of a Good Education" and "On the Advantages of Cultivating a Taste for Composition," unfortunately treat their subjects cursorily. They do state, though, that an education is important in forming good habits and that letter writing cultivates the mind.

was written in the first person, and the author pined over her lack of liberty, "Alas! What does it avail me that I am in the free country of America, when that Liberty which enjoyed by others is denied me."[102] The academy was a chance for women to find both the extent and the limits of their influence in society.

Some young women at the academies stretched the limitations of women's sphere so far as to experiment -- if only in fun -- with male roles. Martha Elizabeth Coons, at the Richmond Female Institute in 1859, inscribed her name on her student notebook as "Bettie Coons Esquire, Captain of the [illegible] Company of Light Horse at R. F. Institute, Dragoon Company."[103] Apparently, a few of her female friends styled themselves as military officers as well. At Edgehill School, Mary Hunter described an incident in which she threw a dinner party in her room for some of the other students. Mary dressed herself as a gentleman and was gallantly

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[102]"Specimens of the Compositions of the Pupils of Alexandria Female Seminary; Selected and Written by Themselves." 1853. No Coll., VHS.

[103]Student Notebook of Martha Elizabeth Coons at the Richmond Female Institute, 1859. Coons Family Papers, VHS.

complimenting the ladies "when the door opened and Col. R. [Thomas Jefferson Randolph] walked in; but he could not scold us at all; he just dropped on the bed and almost died laughing at me..."[104] Other pupils rebelled mildly against the confinement of their position by breaking academy rules. Mary Hunter found that regulations against talking in school or visiting other pupils' rooms after study hour stifled her social urge. "But I have broken both of those rules several times and intend to do it again," she wrote to her friend.[105]

While their parents perceived the purpose of the Virginia academies as to teach young women to be useful and happy in their sphere, the students saw their education as an opportunity to stretch, though not break, the boundaries of that sphere. Bettie Coons saw her future position in society as dependent on the use she made of her time at school. She felt that by applying themselves, she and her fellow students "may at some future day

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[104]Mary Hunter to Mary Miller, May 2, 1847. Miller Family Papers, VHS.
[105]*Ibid.*

become distinguished writers, and thus immortalize our names."[106] Mary Virginia Early Brown saw power in woman's role when she was enabled, through education, to make the most of it as an "Authoress, perhaps as a Poetess." She perceived in Woman, "a power which can subdue more than armies, which completes conquests without causing to flow the lifeblood of thousands..."[107] Some young women looked to the academies to prepare them not only for life, but for the afterlife as well. Ellen Tryphosa Harrington saw the mind as powerful, eternal, independent of the physical body and worth more than wealth or secular power. She felt that after death, given an education in life, "we shall forever priceless fruitage reap."

> Then will our minds disrobed of earthly clay,
> In realms of light untrammelled soar away;
> With sun and stars, we'll search for hidden truth,
> O'er which we only dreamed in days of youth;
> And germs of wisdom that we now may store,

[106] Composition by Martha Elizabeth Coons, May 22, 1858. Coons Family Papers, VHS.

[107] Speech written by Mary Virginia Early Brown at F.C.I., June 13, 1842. Early Family Papers, VHS. In her obituary, it was noted that Mary Brown had indeed gone on to be a useful part of her society. For seventeen years she had been the secretary for a benevolent society to help the poor.

Shall then expand, increasing evermore.[108]

Ellen Harrington felt that there was great power in the human mind, male or female, and that education was the key to that power. Nevertheless, as a woman in the nineteenth-century South, Ellen Harrington was well aware of her limitations. She felt that the power of the mind could only be realized after death.

The academies played a meaningful role in giving these young women a sense of importance and self-worth whether they went on to realize their dreams or not. It is significant that Fluvanna Female Institute sported a Zenobian Society. Queen Zenobia ruled Palmyra, a city which rivalled Rome. "About her origin history disputes, but about her great attainments, her valor, her prudence, her heroic exploits, her domestic fidelity, her patriotic services, her melancholy fall and pitiable end, all is known and certain."[109] Young Southern women saw "domestic fidelity" as an

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[108]Ellen Tryphosa Harrington, Valedictory Address at the Anniversary of the Charleston Female Seminary, Boston: J. Howe, 1848, p. 13.

[109]A. Judson Crane, Zenobia: Address to the Zenobian Society of the Fluvanna Female Institute, p. 21.

integral part of their lives, but they also used the opportunity the academy afforded them to dream of "heroic exploits." In one letter, Sarah Ann Caperton wrote to her brother to say how unhappy she was at school. She closed the letter, though, by announcing her intention to remain an extra year because she had not been applying herself and she wanted to make the most of her education.[110]

Mary Virginia Early Brown, a student at the Female Collegiate Institute in Buckingham expressed Virginia's philosophy towards female education in a speech she wrote in 1842, "Woman's Destiny is to promote peace, love and happiness in the social circle, to exert a happy influence..." In order to accomplish this destiny,

> She [Woman] must have a thorough and complete education, that the faculties of her mind may be developed and rendered useful. Give her a perfect knowledge of Science and Literature. Instruct her in the more abstruse Sciences that her mind may be strengthened; let her be familiar with the rules of Composition...

[110]Sarah Ann Caperton to William Caperton, June 10, 1842. Caperton Family Papers, VHS.

In a tone less representative of Southern educators, though not Southern pupils, Mary Brown then called for Woman to "wield her pen as an Authoress, perhaps as a Poetess. Let her be acquainted with the object of her existence and instructed how to fulfill her destiny."[111] Mary Brown referred to women as the "mainspring" of society. She saw education for women as of paramount concern:

> ...For instructing her, schools must be provided, teachers furnished, and when the Community is brought to acknowledge her influence, and her importance in the scale of Being, Academies, Colleges and Schools of every kind and of sufficient number will be created. It is an admitted principle that the state of Female Education in a country is a sure criterion by which the prosperity of that country may be determined...[112]

Not every Virginian saw women's education in the same light as this articulate young student, nevertheless, after 1830 women's education and female academies grew in importance as they came to play a variety of significant functions in Southern society.

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[111] Speech written by Mary Virginia Early Brown at F.C.I., June 13, 1842. Early Family Papers, VHS.

[112] *Ibid.*

Years spent at the female academies meant a great deal to the young women who attended them. Their parents also saw value in the schools and felt that the institutions played an important role in preparing their daughters for future usefulness and happiness. The schools drew communities together and reinforced the family. As political, religious, and educational institutions, the Southern female academies made themselves felt at all levels of upperclass Southern society. Primarily they provided young women with a strong academic education, but they also spread Christian values, defended Southern society against Catholic and Northern influences, maintained the South's "peculiar institutions," and ensured the continuance of the Southern way of life.

After the Civil War, the academies continued in the South, but they had changed.[113] During the war, the academy buildings sometimes became boarding houses for the safety of the pupils

[113]William Shepherd, "Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute," William and Mary Quarterly, Vol. 20, no. 3, July, 1940, p. 363-365.

and classes were usually suspended.[114] Alternatively, sometimes one of the two armies would commandeer the large, sturdy structures as headquarters or hospitals. Defeat brought destitution to the South. Upper class women who had spurned the occupation of teacher before the conflict found it one of the few ways they could earn much needed money for their families afterwards. The nature of the academies changed, coming to resemble their earlier Northern counterparts. The Civil War altered upper class women's role in the South. They could no longer be the center of a slaveholding society. They could no longer maintain and propagate Southern culture based on peculiar Southern institutions. This was the main reason that the female academies spread to the South in such numbers in the first place. Once the structure of Southern society and women's place within it changed, it is not surprising that the institutions established to maintain them changed as well.

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[114]Nora Miller Turman, Pamphlet on Locustville Academy, Locustville, Accomack County, Virginia, The Society for the Preservation of the Locustville Academy, 1973.

APPENDIX

Courses of Study at Virginia Female Academies

(Sources for the material in this appendix are the school catalogues, broasides and prospecti. Please see Bibliography.)

Angerona Seminary, Winchester, Virginia 1847:

Introductory class:

Elementary Branches, Orthography, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, History.

Junior class:

Orthography, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, History, Grammar, Latin, French, German, Drawing, Music, Painting, etc.

Senior class:

Orthography, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, History, Grammar, Natural Philosophy, Moral Philosophy, and Mental Philosophy, Antiquities, Chemistry, Astronomy, Geology, Biology, Rhetoric, Criticism, Composition, and Mathematics, Latin, French, German, Drawing, Music, Painting, etc.

Augusta Female Seminary, 1852:

Spelling, Reading, Writing, Elementary Drawing, Grammar, Ancient Geography, Arithmetic, History, Composition, Natural History, Natural Philosophy, Physiology, Latin, Algebra, Geometry, Chemistry, Botany, Geology, Astronomy, Logic, Rhetoric, Mental Philosophy, Moral Philosophy, Physical Geography, French, Drawing, Painting, Embroidery, Piano, Guitar.

(This data is taken from the report card of Miss E. T. Pilson. The subjects underlined above are the ones in which she was enrolled in 1852.)

Broaddus Female Academy, Fredericksburg, 1853-1854:
Reading, Arithmetic, Geography, English Grammar, History, Natural Philosophy, Astronomy, Rhetoric, Logic, Geometry, Algebra, Parsing, Analogy, Moral Science, Bible, French. "The Latin Language is taught, if desired, by,a respectable number of pupils." "Piano music, with other ornamental branches amply provided for."

Female Collegiate Institute, Buckingham, 1839:
Preparatory course:
Reading, Writing, Spelling, English Grammar, Geography, Modern History, Arithmetic through vulgar fractions, Latin, Greek, Mythology.
Collegiate Department, classical course:
First class: Latin, Greek, Ancient History, Arithmetic, Mythology, Ancient Geography.
Second class: Latin, Greek, Algebra, English Grammar, Parsing, Geometry, Geology, Philosophy of Natural History.
Junior class: Latin, Greek, Trigonometry, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Geography of the Heavens.
Senior class: Latin, Greek, Logic, Mental Philosophy, Moral Science, Political Economy, Exposition of the Constitution, Rhetoric, Polite Literature, Political Classbook, Evidences of Christianity, Botany.
Collegiate Department, English course:
First class: Arithmetic, Ancient History, Geology, Philosophy of Natural History, Ancient Geography, Geography of the Heavens, Mythology, English Grammar with Parsing.
Second class: Algebra, Political Economy, Natural Philosophy, Geometry, Exposition of the Constitution, Chemistry.
Senior class: Trigonometry, Grammar of Logic and Mental Philosophy, Moral Science, Political Classbook,

Mensuration, Grammar of Rhetoric and Polite Literature, Evidences of Christianity, Botany.

Ornamental branches: French, Spanish, Music, Drawing, Landscape Painting, Oriental Tinting.

Female Collegiate Institute, Buckingham, 1852:

English course:

First class: English Grammar, Arithmetic, Modern History, Modern Geography, Algebra, Ancient Geography, Mythology.

Second class: Algebra, Chemistry, Natural History, Ancient History, Geometry, Natural Philosophy, Botany, and Physiology.

Senior class: Moral Science, Trigonometry, Mensuration, Logic, Rhetoric, Mineralogy. Mental Science, Evidences of Christianity, Geology, One Modern Language, Bible Lessons on Sundays, Vocal Music 4 days/week.

Classical course is the same as the English course with the addition of Latin and Greek.

Hoge's Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies, Richmond, 1848:

All branches pertaining to a thorough English education, together with ancient and modern languages, music and drawing.

Southern Female Institute, Richmond, 1853:

Juniors:

Mental Philosophy, Ethics, History, Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Natural Philosophy (general mechanics, mechanics of solids, liquids, airs, acoustics, thermotics, electricity, magnetism and optics.)

Seniors:

Moral Philosophy, Rhetoric, Belles Lettres, Philosophical Criticism, Trigonometry, Analytical Geometry, Shades, Shadows and Perspective, Organic and Inorganic Chemistry.

Languages:

Latin, French, Spanish, German, Italian.

Valley Female Institute, Winchester, 1857-1858:
Preparatory Department:
Reading, Writing, Spelling, Geography and Map Drawing, Mental Arithmetic, and English Grammar.
Academic Department:
First class: Reading, Writing, Spelling, Written Arithmetic, English Grammar, Parsing, Geography, History of the U.S., History of England.
Second class: Reading, Writing, Spelling, Analysis and Parsing, Higher Arithmetic, French, Latin, English Composition.
Collegiate Department:
Sophomore class: Physical Geography, Algebra, Natural History, French, Latin, Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene, and Botany.
Junior class: Natural Philosophy, Mental Philosophy, Ancient History, Greek, Latin, Chemistry (with experiments), Rhetoric and Astronomy.
Senior class: Political Economy and Logic, Evidences of Christianity, Elements of Criticism, Greek, Moral Science, Geometry, Trigonometry, Geology, Mineralogy.
German, Italian or Piano may be substituted for Greek.
Drawing, Painting, Embroidery, etc. can be pursued along with the above topics but may not be substituted for any other courses.

Young Ladies' Seminary, Prince Edward Courthouse, 1834:
First year:
Reading, Writing, Spelling, Composition, Arithmetic, English Grammar, Geography, Natural History, History of the U.S.
Second year:

Reading, Writing, Spelling, Composition, Arithmetic, English Grammar, Geography, Rhetoric, Ancient and Modern History, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Botany, Mineralogy, Geology, Algebra, Geometry.

Third year:

Reading, Writing, Spelling, Composition, Natural Theology, Algebra, Geometry, Botany, Mineralogy, Geology, Intellectual Philosophy and Logic, Evidences of Christianity, Moral and Political Philosophy and Astronomy.

Instruction also given in Ancient and Modern Languages, Music, Painting, Drawing and Scripture History.

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