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# A history of the Danville Military Institute

Robert Erle Edwards

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A HISTORY OF THE DANVILLE MILITARY INSTITUTE

A Thesis

Presented to

the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of Richmond

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science in Education

by

Robert Erle Edwards

August 1959

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APPROVAL SHEET

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A thesis is an undertaking which certainly cannot be done alone. From time to time many people are called upon to make their contribution to the finished product. The author experienced this fact in writing about the Danville Military Institute.

The study was written under the direction and supervision of Dr. Edward F. Overton, Chairman of the Department of Education, University of Richmond.

The author wishes to express his appreciation to the following persons who helped to make this study possible through their assistance: Mr. R. Russell Neely, Danville; Mr. Hugh Keene Edwards, Churchland; Mr. Frank Edwards Saunders, Leesburg; Mr. James T. Catlin, Jr., Danville; Mr. W. J. Dance, Jr., Danville; Mrs. William Holmes Davis, Norfolk; and many others over the state.

In writing acknowledgments some names are conspicuous by their absence. However, due to modesty there are those who would have it no other way. These unnamed friends and members of the author's immediate family made valuable contributions in the writing of this study. They have unselfishly extended patience, encouragement, and understanding in generous portions when it was needed most.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As the years roll by, primary sources of historical data are either lost or destroyed. This unfortunate fact has held true in the case of the Danville Military Institute. A number of good pieces of original data have disappeared since the school closed. In order to take advantage of available material before it is lost, this study of the Danville Military Institute was made. This is the first intensive study of the school, which was a credit to its city, its state, and its nation.

#### II. DESCRIPTION OF SOURCES OF DATA

Much of the more valuable information used in preparation of this study came from primary sources. The personal interview with men directly connected with Danville Military Institute was used throughout the course of the study particularly in the beginning. This device served to kindle interest, disclose appealing routine incidents in the lives of the cadets not otherwise reported, and also to verify facts given in other interviews and in the secondary sources. Those pieces of primary data which were found to be of greatest value were: school yearbooks published by the student body, school catalogs published by the administration, a booklet of

military regulations compiled by the commandant, deeds to property found in the courthouses of the City of Danville and the County of Pittsylvania, and old newspaper articles. These, obviously, were the foundations upon which this study was built.

The secondary sources of information which bear directly on the subject were fewer in number and to some extent less helpful. These books, having been written by local residents or people very much interested in Danville, generally concerned themselves with brief sketches of the city--its people, its commerce, and its institutions. Nevertheless, these books were helpful in giving in outline form patterns or trends in the development of the school over the years. They left much to be desired in giving detailed information. Of necessity, this had to come from primary sources.

In December, 1938, Mr. R. Russell Neely completed a study of the history of private secondary schools of Danville.<sup>1</sup> In it, he included a sketch of the Danville Military Institute. Mr. Neely was especially fortunate in being able to obtain information for he served as both teacher and treasurer in the school from 1929-1938. Most of the records to which he had access have since disappeared. Nevertheless, his help, counsel, and his work were of great value.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Russell Neely, "A History of Private Secondary Schools of Danville, Virginia" (Unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1939).



### III. ADDITIONAL WORK NEEDED

As the present study progressed, several areas quickly appeared in which there were informational gaps. However, it was apparent in searching for information that there were more readily available data for the period 1890 to 1902 than for any other one given period. Thus of necessity this period was treated more intensively. Due to the fact that the embryo of the later Danville Military Institute appeared from about the beginning of the Civil War and some form of a military school lasted periodically until September of the year 1939, it did not take long to realize that here was a wide field in which much work might be profitably done. Little is known of the Danville Male Academy--the parent of the Danville Military Institute. Who organized it? When was it organized? What were its goals? What influence did it have on its offspring? What connection, if any, was there between this institution and the one of the same name which appeared briefly around 1887?<sup>2</sup> Due to the lack of source material these questions remain unanswered. While the available data were far less than that which they once must have been, even a few short years ago, they were sufficient for purposes of this study. Following 1902 strange informational gaps

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<sup>2</sup>Jean Gray Hagan, The Story of Danville (New York: Stratford House, 1950), p. 80.

appeared continuously until the dissolution of the school in September, 1939. Why were there no primary sources of information for the years 1902-1906? Why did it receive such poor support from the Presbyterian Synod of Virginia while they were in control from 1920-1938? Why are there no school records available, whatever, for the period 1920-1938? This seemed to be a question fraught with a tinge of mystery. The mystery remains due to a lack of information. It seemed inconceivable that a school could exist in modern times for 18 years, die, and leave no official trace of itself. Why?

## CHAPTER II

### THE ACADEMY IN RETROSPECT

To say that academies sprang up entirely within the 18th and 19th centuries would be an error. Actually one of the four great philosophical schools established in Greece in the fourth century was the School of the Academy, founded by Plato in 386 B.C.<sup>1</sup>

It would also be a rather serious error to say that the idea for an academy began with Benjamin Franklin.<sup>2</sup> Here, too, one finds European beginnings. Academies had been established in England about the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> Also, in Germany were found academies for the nobility called Ritterakademien. Such a school for the nobility was started in France in 1638 at the request of Louis XIII.<sup>4</sup>

Thus it would seem that the academies, as they are known and remembered, not only had an European origin and development, but they appeared quite early in the development of

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<sup>1</sup>Stephan Duggan, A Student's Textbook in the History of Education (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1936), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>H. G. Good, A History of American Education (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), p. 73.

<sup>3</sup>Edgar W. Knight, Twenty Centuries of Education (New York: Ginn and Company, 1940), p. 163.

<sup>4</sup>James Mulhern, A History of Education (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1946), p. 291.

western civilization. The American version of the Academy was an attempt to meet the educational needs of the period and locality. Beginning with Franklin's Philadelphia Academy, opened in 1750,<sup>5</sup> the idea spread to other areas. Their period of greatest influence occurred from before the American Revolution until after the Civil War. They largely served the secondary educational needs of the growing country between the period of the old Latin grammar schools and the high schools one finds today.<sup>6</sup>

The academies were generally private institutions although in some cases there was a degree of public control.<sup>7</sup> They were usually distinguished by the fact that control was vested in a board of trustees which often was able to operate under a charter from the state.<sup>8</sup> In New York, while the un-chartered academies greatly outnumbered the incorporated ones, they could expect a certain amount of financial aid from the state if they met certain standards.<sup>9</sup> In Pennsylvania and other states the legislatures voted land to endow academies.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>6</sup>Good, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>H. G. Good, A History of Western Education (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 389.

<sup>9</sup>Good, A History of American Education, pp. 112, 113.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

In the South, county academies appeared with land endowments from the state.<sup>11</sup> In Virginia academies received grants of \$100 to \$200 for a few years. This money came from the interest of the Literary Fund. This form of support left much to be desired, however. The Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations also came into the picture as developers and supporters of academies to educate the children of their faith.<sup>12</sup>

If not an aim, certainly a reason why the American academy came into existence was to provide subject matter of a more practical nature as opposed to the classic tone of the offerings of the old Latin grammar schools. Among the subjects offered in academies were: "modern languages, rhetoric, oratory, logic, geography, algebra, surveying, navigation, English language, and literature."<sup>13</sup>

It is in the academy that science came into its own; nevertheless, it would be unfair to assert that all the credit for the introduction of sciences into American secondary education belongs to the academy as some<sup>14</sup> would say. For we

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Knight, op. cit., p. 163.

<sup>14</sup>Frank Pierrepont Graves, A Student's History of Education (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920), p. 414.

know that toward the latter part of the period of their influence the grammar schools began to offer subjects of a more practical nature, not the least of which were examples of the sciences.<sup>15</sup> Considering the offerings of all academies, it would be something of an understatement to say that they offered many if not too many subjects. The branches of New York Academies numbered 154.<sup>16</sup> As a result the work was often of a superficial nature,<sup>17</sup> an understandable if not a desirable characteristic.

In summary of what has been said so far, the following description of the American academy is largely appropriate.

It was a semi-public, non-sectarian, boarding and (or) day secondary school, which, catering in curriculum and fees, to the needs of the rapidly increasing middle class, from its upper to its lower economic stratum, met the educational demands and aspirations of that class in our period of transition from an aristocratic to a common-man republic.<sup>18</sup>

After the Civil War, as the normal schools and high schools began to compete with the academies, their influence began to fade as the leading institution of American secondary education. Some were sold for debt. Some became normal schools or colleges.

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<sup>15</sup>Good, A History of Western Education, pp. 387, 388.

<sup>16</sup>Good, A History of American Education, p. 117.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Mulhern, A History of Education, p. 476.

Some became the nuclei of high schools. Some tended to encourage the education of women.<sup>19</sup> One can still find instances where religious denominations continue to use the academy as a means of educating their youth. A great many have become military schools where one finds the uniform, discipline, and organization so characteristic of these types of schools. Some have become ranch schools offering horse-back riding and outdoor sports. Both the military and ranch schools are boarding schools.<sup>20</sup> Whatever form the descendant of the academy has taken, they have served a noble purpose in the mainstream of American education. For they bore a growing, oftentimes awkward, but always ambitious young republic from its pre-Revolutionary War days to its post-Civil War days, and did so with no small amount of distinction.

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<sup>19</sup>Knight, op. cit., p. 163.

<sup>20</sup>Good, A History of American Education, p. 116.

## CHAPTER III

### EARLY ASSOCIATIONS

Before the Civil War there existed in Danville, Virginia, an institution of learning known as the Danville Male Academy.<sup>1</sup> It was housed in a brick building near a cemetery on Grove Street. During the early part of the Civil War it was directed by its two co-principals: Colonel Edwin Claxton Edmunds of Alexandria, Virginia, a Virginia Military Institute alumnus, and Mr. Jesse S. Jones.<sup>2</sup> The strong, often romantic appeal to arms for a cause which engendered a fervor approaching the religious did not leave the teachers and students of the Academy untouched. Due to this fact and the fact that because of large manpower losses with few sources of replenishment, the Confederate government was forced to call upon its older as well as its younger citizens. Thus, in the twilight of the war, the enrollments of male schools still operating began to diminish as both teachers and students went to war. After 1863 both principals and some of the older boys entered the Confederate Army.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Jones received a Major's commission

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<sup>1</sup>Gerard Tetley, "Marshall's Glory Born in Danville," Norfolk Virginian Pilot, October 8, 1950.

<sup>2</sup>Jean Gray Hagan, The Story of Danville (New York: Stratford House, 1950), p. 80.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



while Colonel Edmunds commanded the Thirty-Eighth Regiment, and later was killed at Gettysburg.

It was during the tenure of Colonel Edmunds and Mr. Jones that the name Danville Military Institute first appeared. There can be little doubt that the war played no small part in influencing this change of names. The newly created institute received a glowing tribute from Pollock.

There were several well attended private schools, but D. M. I. under Messrs. Edmunds and Jones, had a name and patronage, from at home and abroad, which placed it among the distinguished Educational Establishments of the State.<sup>4</sup>

After the war ended so disastrously for the South, education as well as other once proud Southern institutions received little support and less financial aid. The more immediate requirements of life exerted a more pressing pull on the labors of the Southern people. As a result, for some years after hostilities ceased neither the Academy nor the Institute were to be found on the Danville scene.<sup>5</sup>

About 1887 Captain A. L. Duncan was conducting a Male Academy on Colquhoun Street in Danville. Captain Duncan, having been graduated from the Virginia Military Institute, class of 1883, was assisted by a Mr. Keene.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Edward Pollock, Sketch Book of Danville, Virginia (Petersburg: n.n., 1885), p. 100.

<sup>5</sup>Hagan, op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

During this period Colonel Isaac H. Saunders, a native of Leesburg, Virginia and a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, class of 1884, was teaching mathematics at Staunton Male Academy, having previously taught two years at Fishburne Military School. Colonel Saunders possessed a somewhat slight build tempered with a strict military demeanor. He graduated third in his class at the Virginia Military Institute.

He had been developing in his own mind plans for the organization and development of a high quality military school.<sup>7</sup> His discussion of these plans with Captain Duncan was the act which originated the Danville Military Institute. For later when Captain Duncan was called to the Virginia Military Institute to act as Commandant, Colonel Saunders bought the school property from him on January 31, 1890.<sup>8</sup>

From February 5, 1890 until the end of that session Colonel Saunders and his assistant Mr. A. G. Parr taught 44 boys in a two-story, two-room building on Colquhoun Street (also spelled Colquohoun, Colquehoun, Colcoqhoun). Those months proved to be busy, but fruitful ones. Largely through his interest and efforts a joint stock company was formed, the charter of which was granted on May 17, 1890.<sup>9</sup> The second and

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<sup>7</sup>The Scout Published by the Cadets of the Danville Military Institute (Danville: Trundle Printery, 1899), p. 11.

<sup>8</sup>Deed Book 51, (City of Danville), p. 159.

<sup>9</sup>Charter Book 1, (City of Danville), p. 253.

third provisions of this charter state:

Second. The purpose for which the said company is formed shall be to establish and conduct a male school for the purpose of educating and training young men and boys.

Third. The capital stock of said company shall not be less than Twenty Thousand (\$20,000) Dollars nor more than One Hundred Thousand (\$100,000) Dollars, which shall be divided into shares of One Hundred Dollars each.<sup>10</sup>

The charter was granted to: H. W. Cole, H. A. Wiseman, J. R. Jopling, B. S. Crews, J. M. Johnston, F. X. Burton, F. M. Hamlin, D. S. Lisberger, J. E. Schoolfield and E. R. Waddill.<sup>11</sup> These men elected seven directors who chose John H. Schoolfield president and Colonel Saunders principal. Mr. Schoolfield was soon succeeded by Mr. E. B. Withers.

During these busy days the contract was awarded for the construction of the main building of the Institute to be located on the western rim of the city of Danville, Virginia, in the County of Pittsylvania. The architecture of this building was strongly influenced by that of the Virginia Military Institute at Lexington, Virginia. Meanwhile, Colonel Saunders was sinking his roots deeper into the community when, in August, 1890, he paid \$875.00 for a lot on Park Avenue near the developing school.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Deed Book 97, (County of Pittsylvania), p. 429.

## CHAPTER IV

### A HISTORY OF THE DANVILLE MILITARY INSTITUTE FROM 1890 TO 1902

Writing the history of an early private school often resolves itself into the task of carefully delineating the educational philosophy of one man or a group of men. Such was the case with the Danville Military Institute from 1890 to 1902. For especially during this period and to some extent later too, the strict, equitable, purposeful and knowledgeable hand of Colonel Isaac H. Saunders was seen quietly and forcefully making itself felt among the pages of the Danville Military Institute's history. To have said, then, that during this period the Danville Military Institute was Colonel Saunders and that Colonel Saunders was the Danville Military Institute was, to an extent, a truth.

In September of 1890 the trustees of the Danville Military Institute invited the Roman Eagle Lodge, number 22, to lay the cornerstone of the new building to be located one-half mile beyond the western rim of the city of Danville, Virginia. The ceremony took place on the eighteenth of September.<sup>1</sup> Having previously gathered in town, a large group of city officials,

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<sup>1</sup>George W. Dame, Historical Sketch of Roman Eagle Lodge, No. 22, A. F. and A. M. (Danville, Virginia: J. T. Townes Printing Company, 1939), p. 74.

citizens and students then paraded out to the new school site. The gathering numbering about 1000, then heard an appropriate address delivered by E. B. Withers.<sup>2</sup>

The cornerstone laying ceremony obviously helped to launch the school into a flourishing career. For the next year, Duval Porter, speaking of Danville, said, "Her pet institution, her pride, if you please to call it, is the Danville Military Institute, and her pride in this respect is justifiable."<sup>3</sup>

Until completion of the main building, classes were held in the old Academy of Music, which was later to become the Virginian Theater on Main Street.

#### I. THE PHYSICAL PLANT

When completed the main building and its lesser associates formed a complete and pleasing educational facility. The main building was of stuccoed brick. In hollow spaces, especially built for the purpose, over the main front entrance were white marble tablets on which were inscribed the names of those students who attained the rank of excellent in their studies.<sup>4</sup> Such cadets were known as First Cadets. The

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Duval Porter, (ed.), Men, Places and Things As Noted By Benjamin Simpson (Danville: Dance Brothers and Company, 1891), p. 318.

<sup>4</sup>Interview, Hugh Keene Edwards, June 20, 1959.

building was fireproof and heated by steam. Each room had its own closet. Also hot and cold water was available in each room. The rooms were well lighted by gas.<sup>5</sup>

The quarters of the superintendent and commandant adjoined the grounds. The residence of the principal was considered something of a social center of the school. All other officers of the school occupied quarters on the grounds.

Another building containing a mess hall, kitchen, store-room, and the infirmary was located a few yards from the main building. A matron presided over the mess hall.

In addition to an armory, study hall, offices, lecture rooms and laboratories, the main building contained a library of some distinction. In the second year of operation the following were listed as having been donated to the library:<sup>6</sup>

1. Dicken's Complete Works given by Cadet H. B. Hoge.
2. An Early History of Virginia up to 1614 written by Raphe Hamon donated by Cadet H. A. Wiseman. This book was printed in London in 1615 and valued then at \$500.00.
3. A genealogical chart of the Rulers of England from the time of William the Conqueror given by Judge Berryman Green.
4. Three large topographical maps of the three days fight at Gettysburg given by Captain E. E. Bouldin, 14th Virginia Cavalry, C. S. A. These maps had the reputation of possessing rare detail.

The Danville Military Institute was placed in an unusually pleasant situation. It occupied a hill of 700 feet elevation

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<sup>5</sup>Catalog of the Danville Military Institute 1891-92, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

which sloped gradually in all directions. The school was near enough to the city to enjoy the social, educational, and recreational advantages of Danville, Virginia. But it was far enough away from the city so that the bustle of commerce did not disturb it. In the rear of the main buildings was a large forest. It was traced with paths creating a park of beauty as well as usefulness.

These advantages, plus pure water and air combined with a mild climate, insured an especially healthful educational environment for the young school.

## II. THE AIMS AND METHODS

In the first Prospectus issued by the Institute Colonel Saunders said:<sup>7</sup>

Educate your son! Do not leave him a mere machine to be governed by those who naturally have weaker minds. Develop his mind, so he may be the governing power.

It is the developed and systemic mind that is the power of the great motor of human progress.

By means of education Colonel Saunders believed most definitely in the improvement of the individual and through him society. A year after he wrote the above, he listed the following aims for the Danville Military Institute:<sup>8</sup>

First. To render the cadets comfortable by supplying them with well-heated, well-lighted,

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<sup>7</sup>Prospectus of the Danville Military Institute 1890-91, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup>Catalog of the Danville Military Institute 1891-92, pp. 5, 6.

well ventilated and conveniently arranged quarters so there may be no obstacle to impede their progress.

Second. To give thorough training in every department.

Third. To increase mental, moral and physical power by careful training, proper influences and systematic exercises.

Fourth. To give ease, grace and manliness of carriage by military training.

Fifth. To give confidence and ease in speaking by instruction in elocution and exercises in Liberal Societies.

In the same catalog he described his methods of instruction.<sup>9</sup>

Instruction is given in daily recitations, based upon clear, concise and logical textbooks, approved by the best educators of the day, with such explanations that the pupils may not simply collect facts, but that he must understand the principle, rules, and laws governing these facts and their applications. In order to secure individual instruction the classes are subdivided into sections, the members of which are required to discuss, analytically, synthetically or deductively the subject of their daily recitation.

The instructor requires blackboard diagrams to be made by the pupil, questions, comments, and explains until the subject, its bearings and applications are thoroughly understood.

### III. THE FACULTY

Being principal and later superintendent and owner, Colonel Saunders was certainly the most important member of the instructional staff during his tenure at the Danville Military

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 6.



Institute. Though firm he was soft spoken, making his desires known without raising his voice. He taught mathematics, elocution, English, drawing, engineering, and modern languages. He was quite fond of mathematics, having originated several pet theories concerning the subject.<sup>10</sup> His students took no license with him during the course of their student-teacher relationship. Though a helpful, interesting and wise teacher, he was ever a firm one who expected big achievements from his classes and who knew at all times exactly what was going on in his classrooms. He had a habit which proved disconcertingly baffling to his classes, the secret of which he did not reveal until many years after he left Danville. In the course of teaching mathematics he was obliged to draw certain diagrams and drawings on the blackboard from time to time. Rather than face the blackboard, leaving his class unobserved as most teachers did, he would turn sideways so that his right hand had access to the blackboard. Without looking he then proceeded to construct drawings and diagrams, the perfection of which was a constant source of wonder and admiration among the students and faculty during his tenure at the Danville Military Institute. While drawing he never took his eyes off the class, thus he had them constantly under his careful observation. In later years the explanation proved to be a

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<sup>10</sup> Interview, Frank Edwards Saunders, July 7, 1959.

simple one indeed. It seemed that the Colonel wore rather thick glasses. Standing so that the light formed a reflection on the glass lenses he was able to do two things at once, construct diagrams on the blackboard and observe his class at the same time.<sup>11</sup>

The faculty was never a monumental one as far as numbers were concerned. It generally numbered from four to six during the period from 1890 to 1902. Colonel Saunders had complete responsibility for selecting the faculty. Good character, high scholarship and teaching experience were big considerations in the selection of the faculty. Since the men had to live in the quarters with the cadets it was necessary that they be men of a high order. In searching for information concerning the faculty several items of interest were noted. The teacher turn-over was fairly rapid. They would remain only a few years. Apparently the process of hiring teachers was something of an uncertain business, for in several instances the catalogs revealed blank spaces for teachers of certain subjects when printed. Later their names were inserted in longhand. It was almost impossible to learn from reliable sources which degrees were held by the faculty members. In the catalogs generally the only information given was their

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

names and the schools from which they graduated. However in The Scout<sup>12</sup> for 1899 some degrees were given.

Tables I through IV, found on pages 22-25, list the faculty members for the following sessions: 1890-91; 1891-92; 1895-96; 1898-99. The names of each faculty member, their alma mater and the subjects they taught are given.

#### IV. THE ENROLLMENT

During the tenure of Colonel Saunders the enrollment of the Danville Military Institute grew steadily. He began with forty-four in February 1890. By 1898-99, the enrollment was ninety students, the largest of the period 1890-1902. Much of the credit for this was due Colonel Saunders but the chairman of the Board, Colonel E. B. Withers ably supported and advised him during this period.

Between 1890 and 1902 the Danville Military Institute grew from a mere day school to a military institute recognized by the War Department, having a full time commandant, and having known cadet representatives from eighteen states, one foreign country and the District of Columbia. However, most of the students came from Danville, Virginia.

Table V indicates the numbers of students attending the Danville Military Institute during its first two years of

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<sup>12</sup>The Scout, Published by the Cadets of the Danville Military Institute (Danville, Virginia: The Trundle Printery, 1899), p.8.

TABLE I  
 FACULTY AND OFFICERS FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR 1890-91<sup>13</sup>

Name	Alma Mater	Subject
I. H. Saunders Principal	Virginia Military Institute	Mathematics, elocution
Captain J. Jett McCormick Commandant	Virginia Military Institute	Ancient and modern languages and tactics
A. G. Parr Secretary of Faculty	University of Nashville Eastman Business College	English and commercial course
Frank Dawson	Hampden-Sydney	Natural Sciences
Norman W. H. Schafer	Royal Conservatory of Music, Stuttgart, Germany	Music

<sup>13</sup>Prospectus of the Danville Military Institute, 1890-91,  
 p. 2.

TABLE II  
 FACULTY AND OFFICERS FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR 1891-92<sup>14</sup>

Name	Alma Mater	Subject
I. H. Saunders Superintendent	Virginia Military Institute	Mathematics, drawing engineering
Capt. R. T. Goodwyn Commandant	Virginia Military Institute	Mathematics, elocution and tactics
A. G. Parr Secretary of Faculty	University of Nashville Eastman Business College	English, commercial course
Frank Dawson	Hampden-Sydney	Ancient languages

<sup>14</sup>Catalog of the Danville Military Institute, 1891-92, p. 3.

TABLE III

FACULTY AND OFFICERS FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR 1895-96<sup>15</sup>

Name	Alma Mater	Subject
I. H. Saunders Superintendent	Virginia Military Institute	English, modern languages
First Lieutenant J. C. Byron Commandant	United States Military Academy	Military science and tactics
Thomas Williamson	University of Virginia	Ancient languages, drawing
C. W. Watts	Virginia Military Institute	Mathematics, natural science
L. B. D'Armond	University of Tennessee Knoxville Business College	Commercial department

<sup>15</sup>Catalog of the Danville Military Institute, 1895-96, p. 3.

TABLE IV

FACULTY AND OFFICERS FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR 1898-99<sup>16</sup>

Name	Alma Mater	Subject
I. H. Saunders Superintendent	Virginia Military Institute	Mathematics, elocution, English
W. W. Ballard, Jr. Commandant	Virginia Military Institute	Natural science, English and tactics
W. M. Adams	Hampden-Sydney special work University of Virginia	Ancient languages, English
Andrew Kempe	Gustavus Adolphus College	Commercial branches, stenography typewriting
E. L. Scharf	Paris Conservatory of Music	French, German, music
S. J. Hurt	Virginia Military Institute	Mathematics, English

<sup>16</sup>The Scout, Published by the Cadets of the Danville Military Institute (Danville: The Trundle Printery, 1899), p. 8.

TABLE V  
 ENROLLMENT BY STATES AT THE DANVILLE MILITARY INSTITUTE  
 FOR THE PERIOD 1889-91<sup>17</sup>

State	Session 1889-90	Session 1890-91	Total
Florida		1	1
Illinois		1	1
North Carolina	2	5	7
Virginia	48	73	121
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>130</b>

<sup>17</sup>Prospectus of the Danville Military Institute 1890-91,  
 p. 23.



operation. It includes resident students as well as town students. It should also be noted that by February 5, 1890, when Colonel Saunders began teaching at the Danville Male Academy six students had left, reducing the enrollment from fifty to forty-four.

Table VI, found on page 28, gives the enrollment for the last four years of Colonel Saunders' tenure. It will be noted that the numbers of students and the states from which they came had increased markedly.

#### V. THE MILITARY ASPECT

The great value which Colonel Saunders attached to a military corps of cadets was shown when he said,

The attrition of a corps of cadets is of the greatest value in reducing self conceit, wearing off roughness, adjusting peculiarities and cultivating habits of gentleness, courtesy and mutual forbearance.<sup>18</sup>

He had great faith in this type of school and during his tenure the Danville Military Institute was strictly a military school. The tight military schedule observed by the cadets tended to point out this fact.

#### SCHEDULE<sup>19</sup>

6:30 a.m.	Reveille
7:00	Inspection
7:10	Breakfast
8:00	Sick call

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

TABLE VI

ENROLLMENT BY STATES AT THE DANVILLE MILITARY INSTITUTE  
FOR THE PERIOD 1898-1902<sup>20</sup>

State	Session 1898-99	Session 1899-1900	Session 1900-01	Session 1901-02	Total
Arkansas				1	1
Colorado		1			1
Georgia	2	1	1		4
Kentucky	4	6	6	3	19
Maryland	6	3		2	11
Mississippi	2	2	1	3	8
Montana		1	1	1	3
New Jersey		1	1		2
North Carolina	3	3	4	5	15
Ohio	2				2
Pennsylvania	1			1	2
South Carolina	2			1	3
Tennessee				4	4
Texas		1	1		2
Virginia	65	64	48	53	230
District of Columbia	2	3	3		8
West Virginia			1		1
Cuba	1		1	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>319</b>

<sup>20</sup>Robert Russell Neely, "A History of the Private Secondary Schools of Danville, Virginia" (Unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1939), p. 173.

8:30 a.m.	Prayers
8:45	Recitations and study
10:45	Inspection
11:00	Recitations and study
2:00 p.m.	Dinner
2:40	Reports to commandant
4:00	Drill
5:00	Call to barracks
6:00	Retreat
6:15	Supper
7:15	Study
9:30	Tattoo
9:50	First taps
10:00	Taps

This schedule was changed but little during the years.

The Danville Military Institute received the sanction and approval of the United States government. There were only three such schools in the state and one hundred in the United States. An officer from the active list of the regular army was detailed to give instruction in military subjects. The officer sent by the government served as commandant and took charge of the discipline of the cadets. He was a member of the faculty. The government also provided the school with arms and materials for instruction.<sup>21</sup>

Under the rules of the War Department instruction was given in the following: infantry drill, artillery drill, small arms practice, signaling, and camping.<sup>22</sup>

Though young, the commandants were generally men of a

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<sup>21</sup>Catalog of the Danville Military Institute, 1895-96, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

high order. Since many young men graduated from military school while still twenty years old and since commissions in the regular army were not granted until age twenty-one, these young men often found it profitable to take a job until called into the service. Often they would take jobs at military schools as instructors. Several such young men were employed at the Danville Military Institute.<sup>23</sup>

The commandants who served during Colonel Saunder's tenure were:

Major J. Jett McCormick

Major R. T. Goodwyn

First Lieutenant H. Cabaniss

First Lieutenant J. C. Byron

Lieutenant F. C. Marshall

Captain W. W. Ballard

Lieutenant G. C. Marshall, Jr.

Of these men several were more outstanding than others. Lieutenant Cabaniss was largely responsible for drawing up the first booklet of Cadet Military Regulations in 1892.<sup>24</sup> Lieutenant Byron was much loved and respected by his students. This was exemplified when the cadets presented to his son,

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<sup>23</sup>Interview, W. J. Dance, Jr., July 16, 1959.

<sup>24</sup>Regulations For the Government of the Danville Military Institute (Danville, Virginia: Dance Brothers and Company, 1892), p. 1.

Joseph C. Byron, Jr., a miniature uniform completely like that of his father. Lieutenant Byron was a hard worker and many improvements were noted during his tenure. One of his military projects was the digging of the sewer line from the city system out to the Danville Military Institute. Every Friday afternoon he would march the cadets down Main Street into the heart of Danville much to the delight of the local townspeople. After leaving the Danville Military Institute Lieutenant Byron participated in the engagement on San Juan Hill in the Spanish-American War.<sup>25</sup> Lt. G. C. Marshall, Jr. was remembered as being quite strict and as the commandant who taught the cadets a complicated but showy system of drill.<sup>26</sup>

In the annual spring army inspection, the Danville Military Institute at one time ranked just below the Virginia Military Institute and just ahead of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute.<sup>27</sup>

Cadet life was rigorous. The uniform was worn at all times in neat fashion. One's room, one's body, one's habits and one's language were expected to be immaculately clean at all times. Room orderlies were posted each week. Each cadet

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<sup>25</sup>Interview, Mr. James T. Catlin, Jr., July 16, 1959.

<sup>26</sup>Interview, Mr. W. J. Dance, Jr., July 16, 1959.

<sup>27</sup>Interview, Mr. James T. Catlin, Jr., July 16, 1959.

did his share of the work involved in cleaning their rooms. Obedience and punctuality were also demanded. Liquor, tobacco, profanity, and disrespectful observance of the Sabbath were not tolerated. Punishments ranged from confinement to rooms to dismissal. There were three roll calls each day. Drill periods ranged from forty-five minutes to one hour and a half. Cadets were marched to and from the mess hall and classes.<sup>28</sup> The corps of cadets was divided into two companies and a band.

Though Spartan in character the life of a cadet was not without its rewards. In what little free time the cadets had often they frequented a nearby house of business known as Gatewood's Store. It was reached by a path going through the forest at the rear of the school. Here they enjoyed candy, crackers and cheese, in such amounts as their allowances would permit.<sup>29</sup>

## VI. THE ACADEMIC ASPECT

At the second meeting of the association, held in Nashville, Tennessee, in November 1896, the Danville Military Institute was admitted as a member of the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Southern States.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Regulations for the Government of the Danville Military Institute (Danville: Dance Brothers and Company, 1892), pp. 5-31.

<sup>29</sup> Interview, Hugh Keene Edwards, June 20, 1959.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Russell Neely, "A History of the Private Secondary Schools of Danville, Virginia," (Unpublished Master's thesis, the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1939), p. 125.

The curriculum offered gave boys sufficient preparation for the United States Military Academy, the Naval Academy, college, university and business life.

The courses of study offered in the session 1890-91 were: a preparatory course, the complete course and a commercial course. Entrance examinations were not required. Elocution was taught as were higher mathematics, surveying, mining, civil engineering, mechanics, mineralogy, geology, astronomy, physiology, botany and mental and moral philosophy. It is not known how well or how often these latter courses were taught. They were intended for those students who had finished the complete course and desired to go ahead. Semi-annual examinations were held and diplomas were given. In the spring those desiring it were taken by a faculty member on an instructive trip to such cities as Washington, Richmond or New York City.<sup>31</sup>

In the next school session, 1891-92, there was little change in the courses of study. There were the same preparatory, complete and commercial courses. The commercial course embraced double entry bookkeeping, business arithmetic, penmanship, commercial law, business correspondence and the handling of commercial papers. Stenography and typewriting were taught. Emphasizing its importance in the early days, penmanship received separate coverage and description in the old

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<sup>31</sup>Prospectus of the Danville Military Institute, 1890-91,  
pp. 12-17.

Institute catalogs. Gold incentive medals were given in English, mathematics, Latin, Greek, French, German, general scholarship and penmanship by Colonel Saunders. A literary society was formed which had a large and beautiful hall for its exclusive use. During this session, 1891-92, New York was deleted from the list of cities visited on the spring instructional trip and the city of Norfolk was added. Also a special course in chemistry was added at this time.<sup>32</sup>

During the session 1895-96 the studies were divided as follows to accommodate four classes of boys:

1. Classical course to prepare for the classical department of a college.
2. Scientific course to prepare for a scientific school including the United States Military Academy and the Naval Academy.
3. The English course to prepare those who did not expect to finish college.
4. The commercial course to prepare for business life.

By this time realistic training in banking had been added to the commercial course to complement the existing theoretical department and practical department.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Catalog of the Danville Military Institute, 1891-92, pp. 5-14.

<sup>33</sup>Catalog of the Danville Military Institute, 1895-96, pp. 19-24.



A listing of the courses for the year 1899-1900 is given in Table VII on page 36.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to athletic contests with the following schools: Martinsville Military Academy, Roanoke College, Bellevue High School, Alleghany Institute, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Guilford College and the Greensboro Base Ball Club, several student clubs or societies were mentioned. Among them were: a Lawn Tennis Association, the Cadet Literary Society, the Danville Military Institute Glee Club and band. An orchestra was anticipated for the year 1900.<sup>35</sup>

#### VII. THE ADMINISTRATION

During the period 1890 to 1902 elements of the administration of the Danville Military Institute changed very little. This was largely due to the fact that one man filled the role of superintendent. It was also due to the fact that the faculty and student body remained fairly constant during this period, and the courses offered each year changed but little.

Colonel Saunders was the deciding factor in who was admitted to the school. No student who might exercise an

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<sup>34</sup>Neely, op. cit., p. 166.

<sup>35</sup>The Scout Published by the Cadets of the Danville Military Institute (Danville: The Trundle Printery, 1899), pp. 34, 35.

TABLE VII

A LIST OF COURSES OFFERED DURING THE SESSION 1899-1900

FOURTH CLASS		
<u>English Course</u>	<u>Classical Course</u>	<u>Scientific Course</u>
Arithmetic	Latin	Latin
Algebra to Quadratics	Arithmetic	Arithmetic
History-English	Algebra to Quadratics	Algebra to Quadratics
History-General	History-English	History-English
English-Advanced	History-General	History-General
Spelling	Spelling	Spelling
Penmanship	Penmanship	Penmanship
THIRD CLASS		
Algebra-Advanced	Latin	Latin
Geometry-Plane	Algebra-Advanced	Algebra-Advanced
Rhetoric	Geometry-Plane	Geometry-Plane
Literature	Rhetoric	Rhetoric
Civil Government	Literature	Literature
World Analysis	World Analysis	World Analysis
Penmanship	Penmanship	Penmanship
SECOND CLASS		
Geometry-Solid	Latin and Roman History	Geometry-Solid
Trigonometry	Greek	Trigonometry
French or German	Trigonometry	French
Physics	French or German	Literature
Literature	Physics	Drawing-freehand
Synonyms	Literature	Synonyms
Penmanship	Synonyms	Penmanship
	Penmanship	
FIRST CLASS		
Analytical Geometry	Latin and Roman History	Analytical Geometry
French or German	French or German	French
Chemistry-General	Greek and Grecian History	Chemistry-General
Literature	Literature	Literature
Moral Philosophy	Moral Philosophy	Drawing-Mechanical
Elocution	Elocution	Elocution

injurious effect was retained. Only those who presented adequate credits and recommendations were admitted. Because the school was a private one it could afford to restrict admissions. Applicants for admission were classified according to the credits presented. Residence of at least one year was required before a diploma was granted.

In addition to teaching, keeping a study hall and administering the school, Colonel Saunders, an Episcopalian, was responsible for the religious life of the school. The Danville Military Institute was non-sectarian. Each Sunday, cadets were required to attend the church of their choice, while each day was begun with chapel exercises consisting of Bible readings and prayers. Colonel Saunders always took charge of the chapel services. On one occasion, as a prank, one of the cadets took the Colonel's Bible. The next day the Colonel stepped onto the platform to open the chapel exercises and found his Bible missing. Calmly he looked up at his audience and began to recite perfectly from memory the Bible selection for the day, much to the astonishment of the group. After prayers he then gave an impromptu lecture on the worth of the Bible not only as a source of great literature, but as a source of great moral benefit as well. He concluded by stating that someone realizing these benefits had taken his Bible to use for their own spiritual and intellectual improvement. But since the Bible had been a gift

of his mother he greatly desired to have it returned. So he suggested that if the person who had taken his Bible would return it, he would personally buy him a new one. The next morning arrived with the Bible in its appointed place.<sup>36</sup>

The Board of Trustees had absolute control of the Danville Military Institute from 1890 to 1895. Their wishes were carried out by the superintendent, who enjoyed a co-operative relationship with the Board during this period. In 1895 Colonel Saunders leased the property and operated the school using the Board of Trustees as an advisory board.<sup>37</sup> On May 19, 1899, Colonel Saunders bought for \$8,150.00 the Danville Military Institute at auction from H. R. Miller, H. W. Cole, M. P. Jordan, F. X. Burton, and Eugene Withers administrator for E. B. Withers.<sup>38</sup> From then until 1902 he was in complete control of the school. The school had been experiencing some financial difficulties and the estate of E. B. Withers was in the process of settlement.<sup>39</sup>

Previous to purchase of the Institute, on February 5, 1898, Colonel Saunders sold to Mr. S. E. Edwards for \$400.00 cash the site of the old Danville Male Academy on Colquhoun

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<sup>36</sup>Interview, Mr. Frank Edwards Saunders, July 7, 1959.

<sup>37</sup>The Scout Published by the Cadets of the Danville Military Institute (Danville: The Trundle Printery, 1899), p. 11.

<sup>38</sup>Deed Book 110 (County of Pittsylvania), p. 259.

<sup>39</sup>Danville Register, January 5, 1899.

Street which he had bought from Mr. A. L. Duncan on January 31, 1890.

In addition to the Danville Military Institute, Colonel Saunders, at various times, purchased other pieces of real estate in Danville. He had purchased the lot on Park Avenue in 1890. In 1893 he paid \$150.00 for a lot on College Avenue.<sup>40</sup> Again in 1899 his wife, Marie N. Saunders paid \$1,700.00 for another lot on College Avenue.<sup>41</sup>

The year 1901 found Colonel Saunders' health in a poor state.<sup>42</sup> As time passed no improvement was noted so he decided to sell his interests in Danville and return to his home in Northern Virginia. Thus on February 27, 1902 a deed was drawn up between him and his wife and Horace Campbell and Clement A. Sydnor for the sale of the Danville Military Institute. It was sold for \$20,000.00 with Colonel Saunders retaining the privilege of remaining at the Institute until June 5, 1902.<sup>43</sup> Later that year on June 14, 1902, when payment of \$17,500.00 in notes was made, Colonel Saunders released his claim to the property.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Deed Book 102 (County of Pittsylvania), p. 301.

<sup>41</sup>Deed Book 109 (County of Pittsylvania), p. 298.

<sup>42</sup>Interview, Frank Edwards Saunders, July 7, 1959.

<sup>43</sup>Deed Book 114 (County of Pittsylvania), p. 129.

<sup>44</sup>Deed Book 115 (County of Pittsylvania), p. 209.

After returning to his home, Colonel Saunders later engaged in the mineral and timber business with his brother William H. Saunders in Washington, D. C.<sup>45</sup>

Thus ended the history of the Danville Military Institute from 1890 to 1902, probably its most continuously successful period.

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<sup>45</sup>Interview, Frank Edwards Saunders, July 7, 1959.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DANVILLE MILITARY INSTITUTE SINCE 1902

After Colonel Saunders left in 1902 the history of Danville Military Institute exhibited a series of alternate successes and failures until the end finally came in 1939. This period of thirty-seven years can be divided into several smaller periods: Danville Military Institute, 1902-1906; Danville School for Boys, 1908-1918; Danville Military Institute, 1919-1932; Virginia Presbyterian School, 1933-1936; Danville Military Institute, 1936-1939.

Colonel Saunders seemed to have a great deal of confidence in his successors.<sup>1</sup>

In transferring my property interests in the Danville Military Institute, I wish to say a word in regard to my successors.

Having been the prime mover in the organization and development of the institution, it is natural that I should desire its continued success. It is a source of great satisfaction, therefore, to feel that it is to be in charge of two capable gentlemen as Captain Campbell and Captain Sydnor, both of whom are by taste, habits, education, experience and cultivation, eminently fitted to discharge the responsibilities of their position and to add greatly to the success already attained. I most heartily commend them to parents in search of a school where their sons will receive every benefit to be derived from careful training and constant contact with these who possess character of highest integrity.

I. H. Saunders

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<sup>1</sup>Danville Register, June 5, 1902.

Captains Sydnor and Campbell operated the school jointly in 1902-1903. Captain Campbell had a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University while Captain Sydnor had received his education from Hampden-Sydney College and South Carolina College. Both possessed one year of teaching experience at the Danville Military Institute.

In 1903-1904, due to poor health, Captain Campbell ceased to serve as a principal and became secretary and general agent. Captain Sydnor continued as principal until he resigned in the fall of 1905, leaving the school in the charge of Captain Campbell. His poor health plus an erratic disposition<sup>2</sup>--not to mention increasing financial difficulties and certain irregularities in the administration of the school--forced it to close about two weeks before the end of the regular session in 1906.

Unfortunately, during the tenure of these two gentlemen there had been a drop in enrollment of town students and a noticeable relaxation of discipline accompanied by a lowering in morale.<sup>3</sup> Apparently not all of Colonel Saunders' early optimism was justified by later performance.

During this period the faculty consisted of six or seven teachers. A new gymnasium was added and enlargements and

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<sup>2</sup>Interview, W. J. Dance, Jr., Danville, Virginia.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



improvements were made on the laboratories.

Once more the Danville Military Institute, as an operating institution, passed from the scene from 1906 to 1908. There was an indebtedness on the property and buyers were reluctant to commit themselves.

In 1908 a group of local citizens raised the money to pay off the mortgage and organized themselves as the Board of Trustees of the Danville School For Boys. The Board included: William P. Boatwright, President; A. B. Carrington, H. B. Fitzgerald, R. A. James, J. Pemberton Penn, James S. Pritchett, and T. S. Williamson.<sup>4</sup> Mr. William Holmes Davis was appointed superintendent and the school opened in September 1908.

Mr. Davis had had wide educational experience in North Carolina before he came to Virginia--his native state. Here he was Principal of Randolph Macon Institute for eight years and Superintendent of Public Schools in Danville.

Work of high caliber was done at the Danville School. Its graduates entered advanced classes in colleges and universities. The Danville School for Boys was elected to membership in the Southern Association of Accredited Schools and Colleges, which met in Knoxville, Tennessee, on November 7,

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<sup>4</sup>Hagan, op. cit., p. 82.

1913.<sup>5</sup> By 1914 only two graduates of the Danville School for Boys had not entered a college or university. The following institutions recognized the qualified graduates of the Danville School for Boys by awarding scholarships at this time: University of Virginia, Washington and Lee University, Hampden-Sydney College, and Tulane University.

The Danville School apparently was something of an exclusive school. Tuition and living expenses for boarding students was \$400 per session.<sup>6</sup> Of a faculty of six, all but one had Bachelor's degrees while two held Master's degrees. The curriculum showed a predominantly academic course of study. Four years of Latin were offered, two years of French, five years of history, one year of German, and one year of Greek. No commercial course was offered.<sup>7</sup>

Numbering 67 in 1912, the enrollment had trebled since September of 1908. It continued to grow until 1914-15, but from then on enrollments fell. As a result, the school closed in the spring of 1918.

Mr. Davis went to Norfolk, Virginia where he entered business. In 1956 he passed away.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Catalog of the Danville School 1914 (Lynchburg: C. P. Bell Company), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-27.

<sup>8</sup>Postcard from Mrs. William Holmes Davis to Robert E. Edwards, June 25, 1959.

During the First World War the flu epidemic found the building of the Danville School for Boys being used as an emergency hospital. Containing fifty beds and having nurses and a resident physician, the building once more proved to be a boon to the people of Danville.

When the school closed in 1918 it had a \$12,000.00 mortgage on it. Later that year when it was sold at public auction it was bought by a group of Danville citizens. These interested citizens and alumni were desirous of re-establishing the old Danville Military Institute. Thus, with Colonel R. A. Burton as Superintendent, the Danville Military Institute once more opened on September 17, 1919. The Board of Trustees included: Malcolm K. Harris, H. B. Watkins, R. A. Schoofield, J. M. Ley, George A. Lea, Colonel A. B. Carrington, T. S. Williamson, R. A. James, H. M. Martin, Frank Talbot, J. M. Seager, W. P. Boatwright, C. G. Holland, John T. Watson, and Julian Jordan.<sup>9</sup>

The year 1919-20 proved to be perhaps the most outstanding year in the history of the school for there were 124 students enrolled from seventeen states. This glory did not last however, for after this the enrollment fell until it reached 100 by 1921-22. As was so very often the case

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<sup>9</sup>Robert Russell Neely, "A History of the Private Secondary Schools of Danville, Virginia" (Unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1939), p. 136.

the school was experiencing financial difficulties. Then too, the mess hall burned at this time. Meanwhile negotiations had been going on with the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Virginia relative to their assumption of the operational responsibilities of the school. Hoping to perpetuate the school even at the risk of perhaps losing money themselves, the trustees, the Danville Chamber of Commerce, and local business organizations donated, free of debt, the plant of the institute to the Synod, after having paid off the mortgage. The only stipulation was that the Synod maintain a high grade school for boys.

The Institute was controlled by a Board of Trustees, composed of fifteen men who were elected by the Synod. Colonel W. M. Kemper, a Virginian and graduate of Hampden-Sydney College, was chosen Superintendent of the newly organized Danville Military Institute. Colonel Kemper had taught two years at the Shenandoah Valley Academy, at Winchester, Virginia. He was Superintendent of Bethel Academy, near Warrenton, Virginia for eight years, and he had been President of Palmer College in Florida for ten years.<sup>10</sup> Needless to say, the new Superintendent brought with him a wide background of experience. It was to find ample use in the years ahead.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

That the Danville Military Institute was first and foremost a military school was an evident fact. It had received United States Government recognition twice in the past, once under Colonel Saunders and once under Colonel Burton. This recognition brought with it not only a certain honor, but also a Professor of Military Science and Tactics plus arms and munitions for the Cadets' use. From the beginning, the Presbyterians put such emphasis on Christian morals and the development of a noble Christian character that it seemed inevitable that eventually some conflict would arise between an emphasis on things military and on things Christ-like. The passing years proved this to be the case.

From 1919 to 1928 the course of study covered a period of six years. It was divided into two years of lower work and four years of secondary work. Later the lowest grade was discontinued and still later a post graduate course was offered. Sixteen units were required for graduation. These units were divided among the following courses: three in English, three in mathematics, four in foreign languages, two in history, two in science, and two in electives. Though not unit courses, military science and Bible were required.<sup>11</sup> A study of the course offerings showed that French and Spanish appeared for the first time.

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<sup>11</sup>ibid., p. 168.

In 1928, the University of Virginia, Washington and Lee University, Hampden-Sydney College and Tulane University awarded scholarships to qualified graduates of the Danville Military Institute. During the same year the College of William and Mary and Roanoke College added their scholarships to the list of schools recognizing the graduates of the Danville Military Institute. In 1924 a scholarship in honor of Colonel Isaac H. Saunders, original founder of the Institute, was established, but it was discontinued later in 1932 when military training was dropped. The Lions Club of Danville provided a scholarship for a resident of Pittsylvania County. From 1928 to 1932 the Board of Trustees gave scholarships to deserving students who needed financial help.<sup>12</sup>

Academically, the Institute was rather outstanding. Based on the success of its graduates in 1927 in institutions of higher learning, the school stood second among the military schools in the South which were members of the Association of Military Schools and Colleges in the United States. Based on the success of its graduates in 1927 in institutions of higher learning the school ranked second among the preparatory schools in Virginia which were members of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

Southern States, of which the Danville Military Institute had been a member since 1923.<sup>13</sup>

The Institute did not receive the support from the Synod it needed.<sup>14</sup> This fact was made known to the Synod. Immediately the question of compulsory military training in a church school was raised. In 1931-32 the enrollment began to drop. This fact, plus the usual financial difficulties did not deter the Synod from discontinuing the military system despite heated protest from alumni. In the fall of 1933 the Institute became the Virginia Presbyterian School.

After some soul-searching the Synod three years later ordered the trustees to restore the military title. But the damage had been done. In changing the name from the Danville Military Institute to the Virginia Presbyterian School, the military following of the school had been rebuffed. In changing the name back to the Danville Military Institute the friends of the Virginia Presbyterian School had been checked.<sup>15</sup> Then too the depression was in progress and World War II was approaching.

Colonel W. M. Kemper resigned as Superintendent of the Danville Military Institute, January 15, 1938 to become

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 141, 142.

<sup>14</sup>Hagan, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>15</sup>Interview, Robert Russell Neely, July 16, 1959.

executive secretary to Governor James H. Price of Virginia.<sup>16</sup> Colonel Thomas Wilborn, a member of the staff since 1931, took charge of the Institute.

By 1937 the Institute had acquired a mortgage of \$59,000.00. On February 7, 1938 the Synod of Virginia of the Southern Presbyterian Church voted to sell the Danville Military Institute to the Hughes Memorial School in Danville, Virginia, another school affiliated with the Presbyterian church. Since the Hughes school held a large part of the mortgage, \$50,000.00 in fact, the final agreement was that the Danville Military Institute was to go to the Hughes School in exchange for a cancellation of the debt.<sup>17</sup>

The Danville Military Institute was operated for the school year 1938-39 under a Board of Trustees consisting of twenty-four men with Mr. C. G. Holland, President. The ever-present financial malignancy continued to eat at the heart of the school. It had risen and fallen, failed and succeeded, but now it was to rise no more. On a Sunday morning early in September, 1939, a notice appeared in a local newspaper stating that due to insufficient funds

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<sup>16</sup>Hagan, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>17</sup>Robert Russell Neely, "A History of the Private Secondary Schools of Danville, Virginia" (Unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1939), p. 145.



the Institute would not open that session.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Interview, Robert Russell Neely, July 16, 1959.

## CHAPTER VI

### OMEGA AND ALPHA

For about eighty years the Danville Military Institute, in one form or another had rendered a rather distinguished educational service to the people of the city of Danville, the state of Virginia, in addition to the United States and certain foreign countries. Now it lay idle. The snap of rifles at target practice was missing. Main Street was no longer the scene of proudly marching cadets every Friday afternoon. No lights could be seen beaming from the turrets of the austere building on the hill. These memories plus many others were to be found only in the hearts of those remaining few who had been associated with the school and in the pages of history. Where life had once been so vibrant it seemed to leave the old school completely. But this was not the end. For soon new and, perhaps, more timely uses were found for the buildings. It took on renewed life once more. After having been vacant for several years it was used as barracks for German Prisoners of War and then rented to engineering units as a training school.<sup>1</sup> In 1950 it was remodeled for use as a Technical School and as an extension branch of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute. The

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Gray Hagan, The Story of Danville (New York: Stratford House, 1950), p. 83.

Danville Branch and the Danville Technical Institute, sponsored by the state of Virginia and the Virginia Polytechnic Institute offers the first two years of principal engineering curricula,<sup>2</sup> plus an array of courses ranging from electronics to cosmetology.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Catalog of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute (Blacksburg: Virginia Polytechnic Institute Printing Office, 1959).

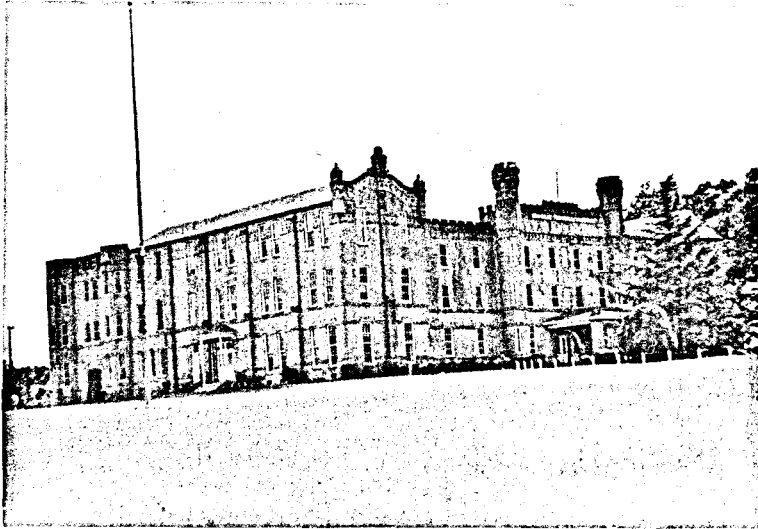
<sup>3</sup>Gerard Tetley, "Marshall's Glory Born in Danville,"  
The Norfolk Virginian Pilot, October 8, 1950.

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APPENDIX A  
PHOTOGRAPHS



JUL 59

The Danville Military Institute, side view,  
as it appeared July 14, 1959



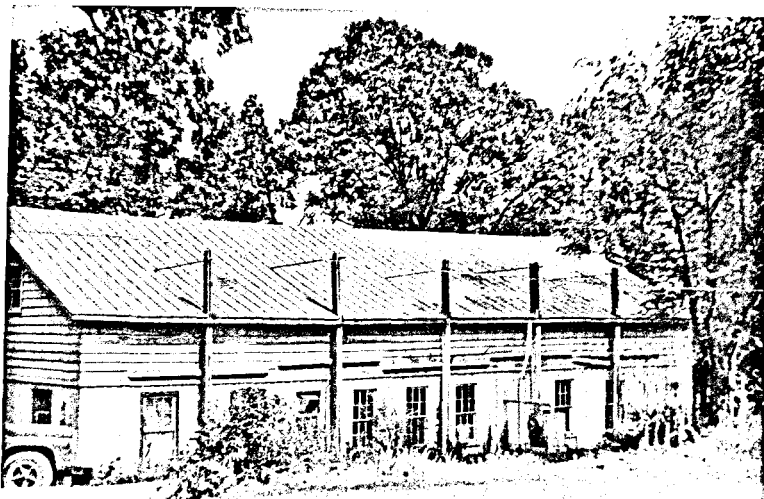
JUL 59

The Danville Military Institute, front view,  
as it appeared July 14, 1959



JUL 59

The mess hall and infirmary, front view,  
as it appeared July 14, 1959



JUL 59

The gymnasium as it appeared July 14, 1959

## APPENDIX B

### NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

#### THE DANVILLE MILITARY INSTITUTE.

We learn that a movement is on foot to establish this institution on a permanent basis. The plan suggested is to give scholarships to be paid for now and utilized at any time the subscribers may wish. This plan has been successfully adopted by various institutions of learning at divers times, not only in this State, but elsewhere, and we hope and believe it can be effected here.

Danville cannot afford to allow this institution to suspend.

The reasons therefor are both numerous and various. In the first place, to allow any sort of public enterprise that is being successfully conducted in a city the size of Danville to be permanently removed for the want of a little capital, is a great injury to the community and would show a lamentable want of public spirit on the part of our people, but to allow one of our institutions of learning, and one that is doing such valuable work, to be closed, would, in our opinion, amount to a calamity. A word of explanation may not be amiss here.

The school buildings and grounds will have to be sold shortly for partition amongst the owners. This is rendered necessary by the fact that one of the purchasers at the auction sale several years ago has since died and his estate is in process of settlement. If the present proprietor cannot make the arrangement suggested, there are parties here willing and anxious to purchase it upon the terms offered to establish a sanitarium or hospital.

While the establishment of such an institution is commendable and desirable, it will not take the place of the Institute.

We, therefore, hope that not only those who have sons to educate, but those who are interested in our city, will see to it that the requisite amount of money is raised.

(Danville Register,  
January 5, 1899)

#### HOW THE CADETS THRIVE.

The Danville Military Institute has enrolled twenty-seven more new scholars this year than were enrolled this time last season.

Mr. J. C. Leighman of Brunswick, Ga., was in the city yesterday with his son and the son of Dr. Hugh Buford, also of Brunswick, who were enrolled as cadets at the institute.

The commercial department will introduce the new cabinet system this year and this is in itself a great benefit to the school.

The drill started Friday with a well-armed squad of new recruits who afforded the old scholars some amusement. This, however, will be different before the session closes, as new recruits often win drill medals before the session ends.

Eight members of the old band are back and Professor Scharf is preparing for a splendid band this year.

(Danville Register,  
September 18, 1898)



Sunday, October 8, 1950

D. M. I. Commandant

# Marshall's Glory Born In Danville

By Gerard Tetley

Danville.

Gen. George C. Marshall's recent appointment as Secretary of Defense is the latest step in a long and remarkable career which began at a Virginia military school while waiting for his Army commission.

Many Danville men, some a bit older than they care to admit, remember Danville Military Institute's 1901 semester when Marshall, with reddish hair and striking face, came to the school straight from Virginia Military Institute.

J. Allan Herman, Willis J. Dance and John Overby, all Danville businessmen, are among those who recall Marshall as a stern drillmaster and disciplinarian. In addition to putting two battalions through manual-of-arms exercises, he taught mathematics, history and spelling.

Ernie Mitchell, a Danville druggist, says Marshall remained at the school for only half a year. He entered the Army following that single semester and began the career that has made him a dominant figure in military and national affairs.

If he has returned to Danville, there is no record of it. He has told old friends who've seen him in Washington that he has flown over the city many times during the course of his duties during World War II.

## Was to Make Speech

He was scheduled to make a speech at a Virginia Department of American Legion convention in Danville a few years ago but his diplomatic trip to China prevented it. Gray Miller, a former VMI company captain who had been in the tobacco business in the Orient for some years, saw the general on that particular trip.

Danville City Sgt. Holt Lyons sees Marshall frequently. Lyons says he is admitted to Marshall's office ahead of high-ranking government officials.

Marshall always likes to talk of his times in Danville, Lyons says. "He seems to have a warm spot in his heart for the old town."

The military institute here stemmed from the old Danville Male Academy which was in operation before the War Between the States. It adopted uniforms during the war and some of the teachers and cadets joined the Confederate forces. Operations during and after hostilities were spasmodic but by the turn of the century the institute was recognized as being a leading military school.

Some 75 or 80 students were enrolled when Marshall arrived. The school was under the leadership of Col. I. H. Saunders who had been in charge since the latter part of the 19th Century.

Saunders was succeeded by William Holmes Davis, who had been superintendent of both a Ran-



Virginia State Chamber of Commerce Photo

Gen. George C. Marshall, who was Army Chief of Staff during World War II and twice since has held Cabinet posts, began his career nearly half a century ago as commandant of cadets at the old Danville Military Institute, shown above.

The building now is used for a vocational school.



General Marshall

dolph-Macon branch and Danville city schools. Davis left in 1908 to come to Norfolk where he is now associated with the Dichmann, Wright and Pugh shipping agency.

After more unsteady operation, Presbyterian Church interests chose Col. W. M. Kemper to organize a reopening after the first World War. Kemper later served as Gov. James Price's secretary.

The school performed in roles of both a prison camp and a National Youth Administration center during World War II. It is now in operation as a vocational school, offering courses ranging from electronics to cosmetology, and is sponsored jointly by the State and Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

Physically, the school is almost the same as when Marshall was drillmaster there.

There is one change the general's former students would like to make. Hannon Schoolfield, a former cadet now living on Long Island, heads a committee to erect a wall plaque honoring Marshall's tenure at the school.

(Norfolk Virginian Pilot)

APPENDIX C

A STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT

Danville, Va. June 4, 1902.

Statement of Account of *Wm. S. E. Edwards*

With DANVILLE MILITARY INSTITUTE.

J. H. SAUNDERS.

For Cash *W. S. E. Edwards*

1901					
Sept.	17	To Lintim 1st Half Session	\$87 50		
1902	Jan.	15 " " 2nd " "	87 50		
"	21	" Coal 1 <sup>00</sup>	1 00		
"	25	Pay Cheat		\$58 00	
"	27	" Cks		8 00	
1901	Apr.	13 Door Glass	50		
Dec.	16	Window-pane	30		
"	19	1 Door Glass	40		
		Coal Damage	1 31		
		To Bal. due		122 51	
			\$178 51	\$178 51	
		To Bal. due \$112 51			

I just send this as a memorandum. Pay it as you suggested in August, or I can give you more time.  
J.H.S.

## VITA

The author was born April 28, 1932, in Portsmouth, Virginia, the oldest son of Hugh Keene and Helen Peele Edwards. He attended elementary schools in Norfolk County and Woodrow Wilson High School in Portsmouth, Virginia.

In 1949 he entered the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, from which he was graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1953. Having also received his commission as a second lieutenant in the United States Air Force at this time, he entered active service in January of 1954. Most of his tour of duty was spent in Japan.

When he was released from active duty he entered the graduate school of the University of Richmond.

Since September of 1957 he has been employed as a classroom teacher with the Fairfax County Schools.