

CHAPTER II

William and Mary in the 1920s

In the 1920s most colleges in the United States increased their enrollment, although few grew as rapidly as William and Mary. Movies and fiction glamorized collegiate life and made it seem very desirable for both men and women. Even if one could not attend college, clothes manufacturers marketed "the collegiate look," so non-college students could at least dress the part. The decade of the "Roaring Twenties" emphasized youth, especially college students. All this contributed to the growth in colleges.

Women had an additional reason for attending college. During World War I, women were applauded for taking over traditionally male jobs so the men could go to war. Although the women were expected to give up their jobs and return to their homes when the war was over, many found that they liked working and stayed in the work force. Society became more accepting of women working outside the home (as long as they did not have young children). Many of the jobs held by women, such as sales clerks and domestic help, certainly did not require college degrees. However, more women were going into positions where, if a college degree were not absolutely required, it was at least a great asset. Most professional women were teachers.¹

¹Paula Fass, The Damned and the Beautiful. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), passim. She discusses the 1920s emphasis on youth and the changing roles of women.

At William and Mary, the decade of the 1920s was noted for the rapid expansion of the college. Student enrollment in the 1919-1920 school year was 333. By 1929 enrollment was almost five times as great, totalling 1503 students. Of the 333, 32% were women, double the percentage of their first year. In 1929, women comprised 45% of the student body.

More students meant that more faculty members had to be hired, more courses offered, and more buildings constructed, both for classroom space and living quarters. There were twenty-three faculty members in the fall of 1919; by 1929 there were seventy-four. The number of professors did not increase in proportion to the number of students, which meant larger classes, but the ratio of students to professors was still under twenty to one. The proportion of the faculty who were women more than doubled over the decade, from 13% to 32% in 1928-1929. Several women left at the end of that year, so the decade ended with only 22% of the faculty being women. Most of the women faculty members taught "female" subjects, such as women's physical education, home economics, and typing, or in "female" majors, such as English, fine arts, music, and education. Only a few taught mathematics and biology. The women faculty members were not as well-educated as the men, either. At the end of the 1919-1920 academic year, eight out of the twenty-three faculty members held earned doctorates. None of the eight was a woman. (Dr. Tupper, the first Dean of Women, had resigned during the year.) It was not until 1926 that another woman Ph.D. was hired. This was Kathleen Bruce, a graduate of Radcliffe College and a professor of history. In 1927, there were two women Ph.D.s, the second holder being Grace Warren Landrum, the third Dean of Women and a professor of English. However, Bruce left at the end of that year, so Dr. Landrum was the only woman holding a Ph.D. for the rest of the twenties. Over the

decade, the percentage of faculty members holding doctorates had increased from 35% to 40%, but the women professors did not contribute to this increase. After 1925, about half of the women professors, sometimes a little more and sometimes a little less, had their master's degrees, but the rest held only bachelor's degrees, and a few had no degrees at all. The non-degree holders taught a variety of courses, such as physical education, typing, religion, foreign languages, and music.²

Although not a faculty member, one of the most important administrators, at least as far as the women students were concerned, was the social director who was hired instead of a dean when Dr. Tupper resigned in 1919. There is no extant correspondence between Caroline Tupper and Lyon G. Tyler, the president who hired her as the first Dean of Women at William and Mary, so there is no way to know how well he thought she did her job. Tyler retired in 1919; the new president was Julian Alvin Carroll Chandler. He remained president until his death in 1934 and presided over this decade of rapid growth. However, he and Dean Tupper had very different views on the proper deportment of women. Tupper was very liberal in giving her women permission to go out on dates or walks with men, in general letting the male and female students get to know each other and become friends. Chandler, however, wanted the women to devote their free time to their studies or to their own activities, such as the clubs they had formed, and did not want to promote dating. He insisted on having chaperones at dances and parties and kept up with who had permission to

²This information was taken from the college catalogs and from the application of the College of William and Mary to the Association of American Universities, Appendix A: Growth of the Faculty. In President John E. Pomfret Office Papers, Archives Acc. 1982.55, folder: Association of American Universities.

go out and with whom they went. In a short time, Tupper found the President's interference in her domain intolerable, and on 10 December 1919, she submitted her letter of resignation.³ Chandler wasted no time in replacing her, not with another well-educated woman who would have her own ideas about how modern women should comport themselves, but with a Social Director. On 20 December 1919, Chandler outlined the director's duties in a letter to Bessie Porter Taylor, the woman he had hired for the position:

In general, they [the duties] are to organize and look after the social work among the girls with due consideration to their health and to matters of hygiene, this work to be done under the immediate direction of the President.⁴

Specifically, Miss Taylor's duties included scheduling parties, dances, lectures, and other activities sponsored by any of the women's clubs or organizations, with the approval of Chandler; making room assignments; keeping up with women who were sick, on social probation, or out-of-town, and making sure that the proper permissions for absences were obtained; escorting women to out-of-town physician appointments; furnishing the reception rooms in the dormitories; and assigning chaperones to dances, parties, picnics, and to accompany groups of women attending William and Mary football or basketball games which were played out-of-town. In general, she knew who was going out with whom, where they were going.

³Caroline F. Tupper to J.A.C. Chandler, 10 December 1919, in President J.A.C. Chandler Office Files, Archives Acc. 1982.45, folder: Caroline F. Tupper.

⁴J.A.C. Chandler to Bessie Porter Taylor, 20 December 1919, in President J.A.C. Chandler Papers, Archives Acc. 1982.45, folder: Bessie Porter Taylor.

and for how long. One alumna recalled that Taylor had asked her to spy on other students and to report any wrongdoing. This student refused, but gave no indication whether she knew of any students who were less scrupulous.⁵ Colleges, whether coeducational or for women only, had long deemed it necessary to keep a special watch over their women students, partly to prove to critics of education for women that the experience would not corrupt them morally or physically. After World War I, some of this strictness lessened, perhaps the best example being the granting of permission for women to smoke on campus, but at many colleges, including William and Mary, it would be decades before most of the old rules were finally abolished. The office of Social Director at William and Mary continued until 1934. Miss Taylor was not a college graduate herself, although she had studied at Richmond College, Teacher's College of Columbia University, and the University of Virginia, and had taught English and Latin in high school.⁶

More faculty teaching more students meant that a greater variety and number of classes could be offered. Although all students were required to take certain courses, such as English, mathematics, and United States history, the College was able to offer a greater range of courses in every department and to offer a greater number of subjects. In 1919 only six history courses were offered. In 1929 eighteen different history courses were listed in the catalog. The chemistry department added eight new courses; the English department more than doubled its offerings, from ten to

⁵Questionnaire 25-9, in Alumnae Questionnaires, Archives Acc. 1988.67. The questionnaires are explained more fully in Appendix A. The numbers are composed of the respondent's year of graduation and a sequential number within each class year.

⁶Catalog, April 1920, p. 12.

twenty-two. New subject areas added in the 1920s were Biblical literature, library science, public speaking and dramatics, journalism, jurisprudence (Law School), music, physical education (for preparing teachers of physical education), sociology, and shorthand and typing (no credit was given for these two, however). Thus, students were being offered a greater variety of subjects to study. This meant that after they had satisfied their distribution requirements, they took fewer of the broad-survey courses that were so familiar to them from high school. They spent more time studying narrower subjects in greater detail, a process which would equip them with the tools to analyze the world around them. A 1928 graduate wrote that the first two years of college courses were not intellectually stimulating and were very much a repeat of her high school curriculum. During her last two years, her courses "encouraged independence of thought." She said she was adequately prepared to do graduate work at the University of Chicago.⁷

Aside from home economics, which had been added during the first year of coeducation, most of the new courses were not designed specifically for women, although some, such as music or sociology, may have been of more interest to women than to men. Two exceptions were library science, a predominately woman's field, especially in school libraries, and shorthand and typing, for which no college credit was given but which would be very useful to students, especially women, planning office careers. Some of the courses, such as business administration and jurisprudence appealed more to the men than to the women. These new courses exemplified William and Mary's changing educational mission. Although teacher-training was still

⁷Questionnaire 28-4.

very important, it was now primarily the women who were being trained to be teachers, not the men. The men were being prepared for a variety of careers. One could take the preliminary courses for engineering or forestry degrees, transferring to other colleges, usually after the sophomore year, to get the specialized training required. The college catalogs also listed suggested courses for students planning to study medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, or public health. Women, in addition to being teachers, could also prepare for a career in home economics or take courses that would enable them to enter schools of nursing or social work. Although the women were not entirely excluded from the male-dominated medical and law schools, not many women entered those fields in the 1920s.

The admission of women students also led to the appointment of women to the Board of Visitors. Four women Visitors were appointed in the 1920s. Mary Cooke Branch Munford was the first woman Visitor, serving from 1920 to 1925. She was from a prominent Richmond family. Her husband Beverly Bland Munford had been a student at William and Mary and had served on the Board from 1888 to 1909. Mrs. Munford worked hard to provide better educational opportunities for all children. In addition to being William and Mary's first female Visitor, she was also the first woman to serve on the Richmond School Board. Later, she was a trustee at the University of Virginia. Mrs. Munford had also worked for the Cooperative Education Commission, which had sought to establish a coordinate women's college at the University of Virginia. Kate Waller Barrett, a physician active in many organizations, served from 1921 until her death in 1925. Dr. Barrett was from an old Virginia family. Her most important work was with the National Florence Crittenton Mission, of which she served as president after the death of the mission's founder. She was a member of the Virginia

Equal Suffrage League, the National Council of Women, served as Virginia regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and was involved with other women's organizations. Barrett Hall, the second dormitory built for women students, was named in her honor. Lulu D. Metz, later Mrs. Norman T. McManaway, served on the Board longer than these other women, from 1925 until 1952. Little information was found about her, but she was involved with schools in her hometown of Manassas, Virginia, although it was unclear whether she was a teacher, a supervisor, or held some other position. Gabriella Page of Richmond also served a long term, from 1925 until 1940. She was from an old Virginia family, and some of her ancestors had attended the College. Nothing else was uncovered about her life.⁸ These women were faithful Board members, attending meetings regularly and serving on committees. The minutes of the Board meetings do not record whether they made a particular point to represent women's causes.

With more women coming to William and Mary every year, they were able to form more clubs and athletic teams. The 1920 Colonial Echo lists clubs with such interesting names as the Man-haters and the Vamps, but these were of little consequence and quickly died out. The yearbook gives no hint of the nature of these clubs. More substantial organizations were also begun. Some, such as the Dramatic Club, were for both male and female

⁸Mrs. Munford and Dr. Barrett are listed in Notable American Women, 1607-1950 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971). The information about Mrs. McManaway and Miss Page was gleaned from correspondence in President John S. Bryan Papers, Archives Acc. 1979.35 and President John E. Pomfret Paper, Archives Acc. 1982.55.

members⁹. In the early 1920s, the most important of the new women's organizations was the Whitehall Literary Society. In nineteenth century American colleges, literary societies, which sponsored debates, public speakings, readings, and sometimes dramatic events, were very popular. On many campuses, all students belonged to literary societies. Although they had begun to die out before the twentieth century began, most William and Mary men still belonged to one of the two societies on campus. When the women came, neither society would admit them, so the women established their own in response to this snub. In 1921, a second society for women, the J. Lesslie Hall, was begun because there were too many members in Whitehall for effective work to take place. Almost as soon as they were launched, however, they began to die. At the end of this decade, the college catalog states that membership in a literary society was mandatory for all sophomores. This edict helped to perpetuate this dying institution, but the literary societies had a hard time competing with the more purely social groups.

Each year saw the beginning of new organizations and clubs. Some, such as the German (dance) Club, the social sororities, and the ribbon societies, were primarily for social activities. Others, such as the Edith Baer Club and the H2E Club, promoted interests in particular academic pursuits, home economics and physical education respectively with these two examples. The YWCA was a service organization. Its primary duties

⁹Althea Hunt came to William and Mary in 1926 as assistant professor of English. She also served as the director for theatre productions. The formal beginning of the William and Mary Theatre dates from her arrival. Althea Hunt, The William and Mary Theatre (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1968), p. xiii.

were to provide orientation for new women and to hold religious services. It also sponsored some social activities, the most interesting being the annual "Manless Dance." At this dance, half the women dressed as men, and half came as themselves; real men could attend as spectators only.¹⁰ A more important activity was the Y's "service bureau," which sought to provide part-time employment for women doing typing, babysitting, sewing, and tutoring.¹¹

Musical women banded together to form a glee club and an orchestra. "Jilted lovers" started a Muffet Club, whose motto was "Give them up before they throw you down." Discussion groups were formed in two women's dormitories, Brown and Tyler, to discuss "modern problems."¹²

Almost all students participated in at least one of these activities. Joining in was part of the collegiate tradition. In order to be accepted, one had to join clubs. In a small college town like Williamsburg, where few students had cars, clubs were almost essential simply because there was little else to do in town and few opportunities to go elsewhere. As one alumna expressed it, "Our whole life and interests were there [at William and Mary]."¹³ Indeed, residents of Williamsburg tended to look to the College to provide entertainment in the form of concerts, plays, and lectures.

¹⁰Two of the many articles about this event are found in the Flat Hat, 17 February 1922, p. 2; 1 February 1927, p. 2.

¹¹Flat Hat, 10 March 1922, pp. 1 and 7.

¹²Flat Hat, 23 November 1927, p. 11; 2 November 1928, p. 2; and 9 November 1928, p. 8.

¹³Questionnaire 28-6.

Athletic opportunities for women also increased during the 1920s. Field hockey quickly joined basketball as an intramural sport, followed by golf, tennis, baseball, hiking, swimming, and track. The first intercollegiate basketball games were held in the winter of 1921, against Hampton High School, the Richmond YWCA, and Fredericksburg Normal School. In 1923 the William and Mary women won all five of their intercollegiate games and made their first northern trip, to Washington, D.C., where they played teams from George Washington University and Swarthmore. In the fall of 1925, the hockey team began intercollegiate competition. A varsity tennis team was also formed, but basketball continued to be the major sport for women. The bulk of the athletic activity, however, stayed on the intramural level, and consisted mostly of competition between teams formed by the different classes.¹⁴

Women's athletics were overseen by the Women's Athletic Association, whose purpose was "the promotion of healthful and recreative physical activities for all women students of this college." All regularly matriculated women paid an athletic fee and were members of the association. It was run by a committee composed of three officers elected by the women and three faculty members appointed by the college president. The committee named team managers, approved schedules, set academic eligibility requirements for playing varsity sports, purchased equipment, and at one meeting decided to ask members of the Edith Baer Home Economics Club to remodel the previous year's basketball uniforms to fit the new team in order to spare the expense of new uniforms. They also set up a

¹⁴The Colonial Echo and the Flat Hat provide much information about sports.

point system that awarded monograms for participation in intramural sports. Basically, the association wanted athletics to be open to all who were interested and not just to the most talented.¹⁵

Women's lives at William and Mary were well-regulated by all sorts of rules. The men did not have as many, although some of the restrictions placed on women affected them, also. The rules were deemed essential to protect the students and to assure parents that their daughters were being well cared for.

The first class of women did not have their rules printed for them, but Dr. Janet Kimbrough, a member of the class, recalled that the women had a nightly study hall from 8:00 until 10:00 p.m., when they had to be either in their rooms or in the library. At 10, they had to leave the library because "lights out" was at 10:30, unless they had permission to stay up until midnight. Lights in the stairways, however, made the breaking of this rule fairly easy, and women would sometimes go there to study or to talk.

Men were permitted to visit in the reception rooms of the women's dormitories from after supper until 8:00 p.m. Dancing was a popular activity, until Dr. Chandler ordered a curtailment because he thought too much dancing would give the college a reputation for frivolity. Dr. Kimbrough also recalled that Social Director Bessie Porter Taylor would warn women she thought were wearing unsuitable clothes, such as dresses that were too short, or too much makeup, or who were dancing too closely

¹⁵Women's Athletic Association Minutebook, Archives Acc. 1980.1. The purpose is stated in the constitution, found on p.412 of the minutebook.

with their partners.¹⁶ Another alumna recalled that she had to send all her dresses home to have the hems let out because Miss Taylor thought they were too short. She also had to learn to dress her hair in a more grown-up fashion because of Miss Taylor's disapproval of her long style.¹⁷

The first rulebook for women was printed in the fall of 1923. It detailed very stringent rules, but also differentiated between classes so that seniors had more privileges than freshmen.¹⁸ Quiet hours extended for most of the day, except for mealtimes and a final burst of energy between 10 and 10:30 at night. Lights out was still at 10:30, except on Saturdays, when it was midnight, but late hours were allowed three nights every week. Seniors and student council members were allowed late hours every night. Dates could only be held during certain social hours, the times depending on one's class, freshmen having the fewest hours. Seniors were permitted to attend church with a date and could have two dates a week without another couple along. Freshmen always had to double date, even to church, and could not take walks with men.¹⁹ Women had to receive permission to spend the night out of their dorms or to go on dates. If leaving campus after supper, they had to sign their names in a book in the

¹⁶Janet Coleman Kimbrough, interview in the Oral History Collection, College Archives, Swem Library.

¹⁷Questionnaire 21-6.

¹⁸Rules are found in the Women Students' Cooperative Government Association handbooks, which were published annually.

¹⁹Many of the women who returned their questionnaires wrote that attending church was a popular activity because they could have a date there. Many also recounted the no-hand-holding rule.

dormitory. Freshwomen could not leave campus by themselves. No smoking was allowed. Men and women were not permitted to hold hands, much less walk arm-in-arm.

The women could laugh at these rules. The Flat Hat published a new list of rules in 1924: women were limited to purchasing one pack of gum a week; they were to wear blinders at all times except during social hours so they could not see the men; they were limited to wearing seventeen hairpins at a time; and they were discouraged from having dates, but if they insisted, they should only date men who had passed the test set by the Society of Pure Minds.²⁰

As each year passed, the rules were slightly loosened, primarily to allow more dates. The no smoking rule was quickly dropped, although smoking was allowed only in certain places. Women were not to smoke in academic buildings, reception rooms, or dormitory hallways. Dancing was allowed in certain places at specified times every day. In 1926, lights out was moved to midnight, but a woman had to maintain an eighty average in order to keep her dating privileges. This last rule called for the formation of another silly club, the Psi chapter of Nu Sigma Phi (No Social Privileges), composed of women who had an average of less than eighty. They were not supposed even to talk to men, and this prohibition prompted an anonymous poet to send to the Flat Hat a verse about a poor NSP member, one of whose galoshes was stuck in the mud, who could not call upon the lone passerby to assist her because he was a man.²¹ However, this rule does underscore

²⁰Flat Hat, 8 February 1924, p. 2.

²¹"New Fraternity Formed by Girls," Flat Hat, 5 November 1926, p. 1; and "When a Friend Needs a Feller...", Flat Hat, 3 December 1926, p. 2.

that the college administration considered education, not amusement, as the primary function of the college. The liberalization of the rules was actually quite modest, though it was part of a national trend.²²

There were rules for men, as well, such as restrictions on automobile use, gambling, drinking, and keeping of firearms, but they generally applied to the entire student body. Yelverton O. Kent, a male student in the 1920s, recalled that because the women had such strict rules about when they could go out and where they could go, the men often dated non-college women who were not bound by the same restrictions. Elizabeth Cleveland Kent, who graduated in 1932, recalled that although most of the women obeyed the rules most of the time, everyone managed to break them at least a couple of times without getting caught.²³

The rules were enforced by both the Social Director and the Women Students' Government Association. All women were automatically members of the WSGA, which had several functions. It supervised dormitory life, judged honor code violations, provided some social functions, made recommendations for rule changes, and dealt with infractions of the rules. In the 1920s, these functions were divided among several committees. The Discipline Committee (later the Judicial Council) punished women for infringements of the social rules. The Student Council, or Executive Committee, punished honor code violations and made rule change recommendations. Less important committees included the Social

²²Mabel Newcomer discussed the 1920s as a decade marked by increased freedom for teenagers in *A Century of Higher Education for American Women* (Washington: Zenger Publishing Co., 1976), p. 106. The loosening of rules was a reflection of this change.

²³Yelverton O. Kent and Elizabeth Cleveland Kent, interview in the Oral History Collection, College Archives, Swern Library.

Committee, which arranged social events, and the House Committee, which regulated order in the dormitories. All the women met together once a month to hear about proposed and enacted rule changes, and hear inspiring talks from faculty members and administrators, such as Miss Taylor speaking on "Growth" and "Personality."²⁴ Elections of new officers took place at one of the spring meetings. Although the women could recommend changes in the rules, the ultimate decision rested with the college administration. Also, the administration reserved the right to review all punishments for honor code violations and for infractions of the rules.²⁵

Another set of rules common to many colleges was established just for freshmen students, often with different rules for men and women. At William and Mary these were called "duc" rules, the word duc being short for introductory classes. The general intent of these rules was to remind the freshmen that however important they had been in high school, they were now lowly college frosh; high school records did not count, and they had to start building a new career for themselves. Dr. Kimbrough said that the first class of women was not subjected to the duc rules. In the fall of 1919, these first women tried to impose rules on the second class but were unsuccessful because there were more new women than old ones.²⁶ After the older women began to outnumber the new ones, duc rules were imposed. The rules made the freshwomen stand out from the other women but were rarely in effect for more than a week. The rules frequently instructed the

²⁴Women Students' Government Association Minutebook, Archives Acc. 1983.95; these talks were given on 8 April 1929 and 20 May 1929.

²⁵Board of Visitors Minutes, 16 March 1924, p. 74.

²⁶Janet Coleman Kimbrough interview.

freshwomen to wear ribbons or caps, stay on the sidewalks, address older students as "miss" or "mister," wear their dresses backwards for a day or wear mismatched shoes. Sometimes they were forbidden to date the older men.²⁷ The culmination of the special week of rules was the Supreme Court, where the freshmen were tried by a judge and jury of upperclasswomen. The charges were not always related to the rules; all the freshmen were found guilty of something and were appropriately punished. In 1923, the Flat Hat article listed such charges as showing disrespect to the Confederate flag (the guilty party had to sing "Dixie" as punishment) and being shocked by nothing except electricity (punishment not listed).²⁸

The women who came to William and Mary in the 1920s were mostly from Virginia, although each year saw more out-of-state women. They were, for the most part, from middle class families who could afford to send their daughters to college, although a fair number earned money to help pay for their own education. Scholarships were available to those who pledged to teach in the public schools after graduation. One woman drove a school bus to earn money. Some had to drop out of school, work full-time, and save their money in order to continue their education. Several recalled that Dr. Chandler found scholarship money to help normal school graduates finance the final two years of a college education.²⁹

²⁷The rules were often printed in the Flat Hat; for examples see 5 October 1923, p. 8; 3 October 1924, p. 8; 9 October 1925, p. 2.

²⁸Flat Hat, 12 October 1923, pp. 1 and 8.

²⁹Questionnaires 27-11, 28-2, and 26-4 are examples of these.

For the most part, the women enjoyed their college years. Many 1920s graduates wrote of life-long friendships that began in college. Since the college and town were so small, the students were also close to the faculty members. Professors entertained students in their homes, and the students invited professors to their parties. The wife of one professor always invited several of the students to go with her whenever she went to Richmond, certainly a treat on a campus where few students had cars.³⁰ Not all the memories were good ones, however. One woman called the social rules "childish," and found the food in the dining hall of very poor quality.³¹ A Jewish student found herself excluded from many of the college's social activities, although accepted as an equal in student government and on the debate team.³²

The women students at William and Mary contributed their share to the growth of the college. As they increased their numbers from a paltry two dozen to almost seven hundred, they added activities to amuse themselves, to further their education, to keep physically fit, and to govern themselves. They participated in school activities and helped make William and Mary a more interesting and exciting place to be. The interest of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., in restoring Williamsburg to its colonial appearance would soon bring the nation's attention to this small Virginia town, but hundreds of women had discovered it before he had. The great New York stock market

³⁰Questionnaire 29-4.

³¹Questionnaire 28-4.

³²Questionnaire 26-1.

crash of October 1929 would certainly affect William and Mary, but not as severely as it would have if the women and Rockefeller had not been there.

CHAPTER III

William and Mary During the 1930s

Life for students at William and Mary in the 1930s was not much different from what it had been in the 1920s. The Great Depression afflicting the whole country also affected William and Mary, leading to a smaller enrollment because fewer families could afford to send their children to college. Professors at William and Mary had to take paycuts when the state reduced appropriations for the college. Several building projects were able to proceed only because the College received assistance from federal sources, such as the Public Works Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps. At the same time, however, the number of faculty members continued to increase slowly throughout the decade. The impact of the depression in Williamsburg was mitigated by the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg which brought new jobs to town. The restoration project was quite unusual at the time and received much publicity. The College itself was featured in some of the publicity because of the restoration of its three oldest buildings. The news brought William and Mary to the attention of more people around the country and helped recruitment efforts. Alumnae who responded to the question about what factors had influenced their decision to attend William and Mary often cited the history and attractiveness of the area in which the College was located as important. Several specifically mentioned that they had read about the

college in articles about the restoration. For those who could afford it, "to be in college [during the depression] was a sort of insulation from the outside world; it was a safe feeling to be sure of three meals a day, work to do, and friends. . . ." ¹

Most women who attended William and Mary could afford to be there. Almost all of them came from middle class or upper middle class homes. Seventy percent of the fathers held jobs that could be classified as white collar, although that designation does cover a wide range of salaries and responsibilities. They were doctors, lawyers, businessmen, military officers, salesmen, merchants, and accountants. The largest single occupational group was that of farmers, not at all surprising in a largely rural state. Less than 1% of the women came from homes where the father held a blue collar job. The occupations of 12% of the fathers were not given, and another 9% could not be ranked as either white or blue collar because of lack of information about the position held. ²

The fathers were fairly well educated. Fifty-one percent had had at least some college education. By comparison, in 1940, only 10% of the male population as a whole had attained this level of education. Almost 19% had done some graduate work. Less than one percent had had no formal education at all; 12% had quit by the end of the eighth grade; and another 12% had not finished high school. A few of the women indicated that their fathers had grown up during the difficult Reconstruction years when schools

¹Questionnaire 35-7.

²Stephan Thernstrom's The Other Bostonians (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973) was used for classifying jobs as white or blue collar.

were not always available, however much they may have wanted an education.³

Most of the mothers, 88%, were listed as housewives or as having no occupation at the time their daughters attended college. Several women indicated that their mothers had worked prior to marriage. Of the mothers who did work, many were widowed, divorced, or married to men who were unable to work. Most of the working mothers held white collar jobs, with over half of them being teachers.

The mothers were also better educated than the female population as a whole, with 45% having had some college education, compared with less than 10% of women in 1940. Only 2.5% had attended graduate school. Less than 1% had had no formal education; 7% had stopped by eighth grade; and another 10% quit before graduating from high school.

Clearly, most of the alumnae were from households which placed a value on education as evidenced by either the parents' educational background or by the occupations they held. Of course, parents with poor schooling or low status jobs could also encourage their daughters to attend college in order to improve their status. Although money was tighter during the Depression, most of the women students came from families which valued college education enough to make the necessary sacrifices for it.

Ninety-two percent of the women students received financial help from their parents in order to pay for their education. Some proudly noted that their parents, however hard they had had to struggle, had paid all of their daughter's expenses. Still, a large number did receive outside help or

³Questionnaires 25-10, 27-10, 28-6. The same situation held true for some of the mothers, also.

earned some of their own money. Twenty-three percent received full or partial scholarships, 16% held part-time jobs, and 9% received help from family members other than parents. Seven percent listed other sources of money, primarily loans from the College, but also loans from banks, friends, and family. Inheritances, trust funds, savings, and gifts provided money for some women. A few worked during the regular school year and attended college only in the summer or on a part-time basis.

Despite pay cuts, money worries, and a slightly smaller enrollment, the college administrators were able to take pleasure in the realization that they could be more particular about whom they admitted. One of the results of admitting women was that William and Mary received ever-increasing numbers of applications throughout the 1920s. The college was quickly deluged with more applicants than it had room to house. Initially, the problem was solved by accepting students on a first-applied, first-admitted basis, provided the applicant met the minimal admission standards. It quickly became evident that this method would exclude better qualified students who applied later in the year. A better screening process was needed, and the best process was the simple expedient of raising admission standards.

In 1918 the qualifications for admission were three in number: a student had to be at least sixteen years old, had to "present a certificate of honorable discharge from the last school attended," and had to demonstrate "adequate preparation" by submitting a high school transcript or by taking entrance examinations.⁴ Throughout the 1920s, the entrance requirements were made only a little more stringent and were probably as much a

⁴William and Mary Catalog, June 1918, p. 32.

reflection of higher standards in high schools as a changing standard in admissions at William and Mary. The April 1921 catalog stated that an applicant had to have completed a four-year high school course, earning fifteen units.⁵ The next year, graduation from an accredited high school, with sixteen units, was specified.⁶ Two years later, an applicant also had to provide a recommendation from his or her high school principal.⁷ Despite these more stringent requirements, applications and enrollment at William and Mary continued to increase throughout the 1920s.

When the depression came, the number of applicants dropped and enrollment also declined. However, the College decided not to lower its admissions standards in order to admit more students. Indeed, the College continued to increase its standards for admission. The imposition of stricter admission standards during the Great Depression is perhaps the surest sign that William and Mary was well on its way to becoming a good quality small liberal arts college. The April 1933 catalog announced that applicants had to rank academically in the top half of their high school classes.⁸ This was the last new standard imposed until a total revamping of the admissions requirements were published in March 1940. Applications had to be submitted on special forms and were still considered in order of receipt, so it was necessary to apply early. Women were urged to apply by

⁵Catalog, April 1921, p. 43. A full year of one high school subject earned one unit of credit.

⁶Catalog, April 1922, p. 50.

⁷Catalog, January 1925, p. 57.

⁸Catalog, April 1933, p. 73.

March 1, because of the stiffer competition for spaces. Men were advised to apply by May 1. The essential requirement for admission was graduation in the upper half of one's high school class. However,

[s]ince the number of applicants who meet the essential requirements is considerably in excess of the number that can be admitted, the College selects those who present the strongest qualifications in scholarship, character, personality, performance in extra-curricular activities, and breadth of interests.⁹

In February 1936, President Bryan reported to the Board of Visitors that William and Mary, despite its declining enrollment, had rejected one hundred applicants for the 1935-1936 school year because they were deemed academically deficient.¹⁰ This is probably the best proof that the College could give of its commitment to higher standards. The years of merely filling classrooms with warm bodies were over. Now William and Mary would try to attract the more academically capable students.

The College of William and Mary did not find it necessary add any other new academic departments during the 1930s. One department, journalism, was dropped and its creative writing courses were incorporated into the English and theatre departments. The college was still in the business of producing teachers, although one could not major in education. The students had to major in some other subject area and take at least seven education courses if they wanted to prepare to teach. Pre-

⁹Catalog, March 1940, p. 75.

¹⁰Board of Visitors Minutes, February 11, 1936, p. 195.

professional studies were also emphasized for students interested in engineering, medicine, pharmacy, or dentistry.¹¹

The women generally chose to major and minor in one of the subjects that make up the humanities and social sciences. The single most popular major was English, with almost 20% of the women choosing that subject. The next most favored majors, in decreasing order, were history, home economics, library science, mathematics, French, and sociology, with between five and ten percent of the women majoring in one of those fields. The most popular minor was education, followed by English, French, history, biology, and chemistry.¹²

Campus organizations continued on as during the 1920s. The students still had to provide most of their own entertainment because there was little to do in Williamsburg. Travel out-of-town was difficult, and women had to have permission to leave town. There were a great number of concerts and lectures on campus. Many famous people visited the College. Some, such as Franklin D. and Eleanor Roosevelt, came to see the restoration project as well as the College. But most, including Amelia Earhart, Gertrude Stein, and Frank Lloyd Wright, were invited by groups at the College. In 1934, President Julian A. C. Chandler died, and John Stewart Bryan was elected to replace him. Bryan loved parties and everyone on campus got involved in the elaborate Christmas parties he sponsored. Final dances before graduation were held in the newly-built Sunken Gardens and brought some of the well-known big bands to town. Bryan was also instrumental in enlarging and improving the Fine Arts Department. The William and Mary

¹¹Catalogs, 1930-1939.

¹²Alumnae Questionnaires, Archives Acc. 1988.67. See Appendix C.

Theatre, part of this department, staged many productions which were very popular. The department also sponsored art exhibits and asked noted artists, such as Georgia O'Keeffe, to speak to its students.¹³

The most important women's organization continued to be the Women's Student Cooperative Government Association. In 1930, increased numbers of women students made it necessary for the Executive Committee to divide its duties between two committees. The new Executive Committee recommended the social rules, edited the women's handbook, and in general governed the students. The rules had to be approved by the college president before going into effect. The newly-formed Honor Council was to judge code violations and to instruct the students in the workings of the honor system. Although the Honor Council judged honor code violations, the college administration reviewed all cases. The Judicial Council continued to be in charge of judging rule violations. Its chairwoman gave permission to visit in town during the evening, to have dates with men who were not William and Mary students, or to have dates outside of normal social hours, which previously only the WSCGA president could grant.

According to its constitution of 1936, the purpose of the WSCGA was to enforce the college rules, "to legislate in all matters that do not fall under the direct jurisdiction of the [college] authorities," and to "further the best interests of the women students." It also tried to get more rights for women, although this was difficult to achieve. It was considered a victory when senior women won the right to visit the College Shop on Sunday

¹³The Flat Hat gave extensive coverage to lectures, plays, concerts, and other events on campus.

evenings.¹⁴ But the administration flatly rejected a major petition in 1937 requesting more liberal rules for women. Billie Newberry, who had circulated the petition, wrote an editorial for the Flat Hat in which she quoted another, unnamed, publication as stating that "William and Mary [had] the most archaic social rules for women of any co-educational institution in America."¹⁵ It would be a long time before the situation changed. William and Mary was very concerned about maintaining its upright image and preferred to put severe restraints on the women students in order to do this.

Surviving records of the WSCGA Judicial Council give an indication of what rules were being broken and the punishment for the breaking of those rules. A sampling shows that the most commonly broken rules were dating out of social hours, leaving town without permission, and coming back into the dorms late after having been out. These three categories comprised 75% of the broken rules. Other violations included going somewhere other than the place for which the woman was signed out, smoking in unauthorized places, going to the park around Lake Matoaka with fewer than the required number of couples, shooting a gun on campus, being intoxicated, breaking punishment, riding in a car without permission, "improper" conduct with a date, and talking out of dormitory windows. The punishments ranged from a simple warning, usually given for a first offense, to being put on social probation or being "campused." The latter punishment meant that a woman was not to leave campus. Social probation meant a woman could not have dates. Being campused was the most common punishment, usually lasting from three to seven days. Two women who were drunk were campused for

¹⁴Flat Hat, 31 October 1933, p. 6.

¹⁵Flat Hat, 18 May 1937, p. 4.

three and four weeks respectively. The gun shooters were campused for two weeks apiece (it was a b-b gun and apparently no harm was done). Three women were punished for smoking in unauthorized places. One was campused for two days, to be served when she returned in the fall since the offense took place after spring exams were over; one was campused for one week; and the third was put on one week's social probation. The woman found guilty of unspecified "improper conduct with a date" was campused for four weeks and put on social probation for a week.¹⁶

The women's rules and the work of the Judicial Council point out a major difference between the male and female students. Other than the rules that applied to all students, there were no social rules for the men as there were for the women. Men did not have to sign out of their dorms or get permission to leave campus. If a man returned his date to her dormitory late, she was punished but he was not. Men who broke college rules were brought to the attention of the Dean of Men and sometimes even the President. Men could be expelled or suspended for breaking rules. However, the women were given more control over their erring sisters. Infractions of all rules, social as well as college, were brought before the Judicial Council. It seems inconsistent that the administration would have protected the women so much by keeping them hedged in with all sorts of rules and dormitory mothers, while at the same time trusting them to judge their own when infractions occurred. The men were treated the opposite way: they were allowed great freedom in what they could do, but not trusted to judge their own when rules were broken. Perhaps other studies will show the same situation true of other coeducational schools. The situation may

¹⁶WSCGA Judicial Council Sample, Archives Acc. 1982.58.

have arisen because after the Strode Bill was passed in 1918, President Tyler visited women's colleges, not coeducational colleges, in looking for models on which to base the plans for the new women students. The administration may well have adopted rules for women from women's colleges, rather than studying whether coeducational institutions discriminated between their male and female students.

Many of the alumnae expressed the belief that the social rules were oppressive and silly and recalled that they disliked them while they were in college. At the same time, however, they generally accepted them as being a normal part of college life in the 1920s and 1930s. One alumna, who had been at a girls' school, said she was attracted to William and Mary because its rules were so much less restrictive than the ones to which she was accustomed. At the other extreme was the woman who found the rules too suffocating and transferred after being put on six months probation for leaving town without permission. One California woman noted that the rules made William and Mary more acceptable to her parents. Since they were too far away to make sure she was all right, they relied on the security of the rules to assure themselves that their daughter would not get into any trouble. Despite the rules, the general consensus was that the women students had great fun. As one woman said, "We accepted the rules cheerfully and then looked for ways to break them." She recalled wearing raincoats over rolled-up pants in order to go out for cokes, since the women were not permitted to wear pants outside the dorms or off the athletic fields. She also recounted how a fire drill saved her from getting into trouble one night when she returned late from a date. With everyone outside, it was easy for her to mingle with the crowd and pretend she had been there all the time. Another woman recalled that she was always

breaking the rules, especially about signing out and the prohibition on talking out of windows, and had to go before the Judicial Council many times. But she ended by saying "It was a great life, and I loved my W&M days." Obviously, the women students could and did have fun despite the restrictive rules. Daring students saw them as a challenge: how often can I break the rules and not get caught? Quieter students just went along with them, even if they did find them rigid and demeaning. For some, who had been in girls' schools, the rules were less restrictive than what they had been used to following. Few found them so intolerable that they transferred to other schools where the rules were less strict. For many women, transfer was out of the question, anyway. Virginia residents who could not afford private college or out-of-state tuition had only one other option, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, which began admitting women in 1921, but Tech did not welcome women students with as much warmth as William and Mary did.¹⁷

¹⁷Questionnaires 30-6, 34-9, 32-9, 42-7, 42-31, 44-13, and 44-16.