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Annie Wood: A Portrait

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ANNIE WOOD: A PORTRAIT

by

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B.S. May 1970, Old Dominion University

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ABSTRACT

ANNIE WOOD: A PORTRAIT.

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Old Dominion University, 1996
Director: Dr. Michael Pearson
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Dr. Jefferson Harrison

In 1871, Anna Cogswell Wood and Irene Kirke Leache founded a school for girls in Norfolk, Virginia which had a profound influence on the community. The Leache-Wood Seminary became Norfolk's center for cultural pursuits. After the death of Irene Leache in 1900, Annie Wood established a memorial to perpetuate her friend's interest in literature, music, art, drama, and spiritual studies. Wood began a number of cultural programs which grew to shape the cultural life of the town in remarkable ways, leading directly to the Virginia Symphony, the Norfolk Little Theater, the Irene Leache Memorial, the Norfolk Society of Arts, and The Chrysler Museum of Art.

Wood published two novels, two memoirs of Irene Leache, two books of essays, and a book of dramatic sketches. She also wrote a number of pensées, in album format, sixteen of which are in the collection of the Irene Leache Memorial. Her writings trace the development of an independent Victorian woman who closely observed the changes in society from the Civil War to World War II.

This study explores the life and times of Anna Cogswell Wood. In doing so, it also examines the enormous changes in education, the role of women, and the growth of the cultural arts in the South, and particularly in Norfolk.

To my family,
past, present, and future

and

To the members of the Irene Leache Memorial,
past, present, and future

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thanks also to Peggy Haile and Carl Griffler of the Norfolk Public Library, to thee calm and agreeable librarians at Old Dominion University, and to the patient staff of the Chrysler Museum.

I offer special thanks to the members of my thesis committee, Michael Pearson, Douglas Greene, and Jefferson Harrison, for their many helpful suggestions and careful reading of the text. Their guidance has been a great benefit.

My husband and children have, without doubt, heard more about Annie Wood than they would have chosen to know, and have yet remained steadfast in their encouragement and support. They have my love, always.

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PROLOGUE

The two women arrived in Norfolk in 1871 on a typical August day, sultry and still. They had traveled for seventeen hours by train from the relative cool of the Valley of Virginia, leaving far behind the rolling hills of Winchester for the flat Tidewater coast. They had been asked to establish a school for girls in a town just awakening after the Civil War, where education had necessarily been set aside for more compelling concerns. They came with a promise and a plan, and little else.

Their long Victorian dresses only exacerbated the intensive heat. The only stir of air seemed to come from the passing wheels of carriages and carts, but the clomp of horses going by sent unwelcome waves of dust flying onto shoes, skin, face, and hair. Mule-drawn wagons were stacked high with bales of cotton or tobacco. Truck farmers from the outlying counties bringing vegetables to sell in the city market jostled for room amid the chickens, pigs, fish, and oysters being hauled to wharves and stalls. Boats of every description lined the harbor, delivering lumber and supplies, waiting to take on goods, and transporting people and merchandise by the fastest means available, over the waters of Hampton Roads. The port was bustling with activity since the war; economic recovery seemed tangible. The town of 20,000 was poised for sustained growth.

The permeating odor of salt and seafood reminded the travelers how far they had come from the Blue Ridge Mountains. The narrow streets smelled of a small town's odors: dust, manure, peanut shells, and grape skins carelessly discarded in the road. The old

houses, set close to the curb, were sheltered by huge trees planted before the Revolution. Hitching posts lined Main Street, which was still in disrepair from the war years, a pitted, rutted, lane of mud. Always essentially a port town, and always at the end of the line, Norfolk was working hard to achieve a prominent place in the post-war prosperity. Her citizens could now afford to give time and effort toward educating their children. And so the two women had come, under the sponsorship of a committee led by a minister, to provide for Norfolk's daughters an educational experience of the highest standards. The time was right for a new beginning for the city, and for the two teachers.

This was their first trip together. It marked the beginning of a partnership whose significance would outlive them both. It began a journey which would lead them far beyond the Valley of Virginia, to the sands of the Middle East, the splendors of Czarist Russia, and to prolonged stays in the cultural centers of Europe. Their arrival in Norfolk also marked, more significantly, the beginning of the awakening of cultural life in Norfolk. From their first days in town, these two women planted the seeds of a renaissance. Norfolk continues to reap the benefits which grew from the ideas initiated and inspired by Anna Cogswell Wood and Irene Kirke Leache.¹

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Anna Cogswell Wood is all but unknown today. To the handful of people who recognize her name, the response is usually, "Oh, the Irene Leache lady." The association would have undoubtedly pleased Annie Wood, for it was precisely what she chose as her life's work: to memorialize her friend, Irene Leache, the extraordinary teacher who is remembered in Norfolk after three generations. That Annie Wood succeeded so thoroughly that her own life stands deeply shadowed today would also have pleased her, for she would have preferred that the accolades and attention remain focused on Irene Leache.

Yet she deserves more. By any standard, Annie Wood was a remarkable woman. As a talented writer, her books deserve a new reading. As an influential educator, her accomplishments in educating women warrant exploration. And as a visionary community leader, her guidance and initiative merit high recognition.

She was, moreover, a complex and seemingly contradictory character. Opinionated, strong-willed, pert when young and formidable when old, she was always known as "Miss Wood" to all but her closest friends. She wore costumes rather than clothing, outlandish outfits that betrayed a love of luxury and a style quite her own. While maintaining the strongest ties to Norfolk, she lived most of her adult life in Florence, Italy.

The model used for this thesis is *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 4th ed., Joseph Gibaldi, ed. (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1995).

Though she espoused the virtues of family in the strongest terms, she neither married nor chose to live near anyone related to her. She wrote enthusiastically throughout her life, yet instructed her closest friend in Norfolk to destroy all her correspondence. Despite being raised in the North, she firmly respected the Southern position on states' rights. She taught by example the value of independence, but was in complete sympathy with the circumscribed domestic role of the Victorian woman. And the contradictions continue.

Annie Wood's life began in the South of Stonewall Jackson and ended in the Italy of Mussolini. The changes she observed—and she was a keen observer—were arguably the boldest, most pervasive changes in human history before the ascendancy of technology. She lived through a most remarkable time: from the Industrial Revolution to the A-bomb; from the romantic era of the South influenced by Sir Walter Scott to the astonishing vision of Darwin and Nietzsche; from Scarlett O'Hara to Rosie the Riveter.

In 1871, Annie Wood came to Norfolk with her friend and former teacher, Irene Leache, to start a school for girls called the Leache-Wood Seminary. Open under their leadership for twenty years, the school had a profound influence on the city of Norfolk. It was described by a contemporary as “an institution second to none of its kind in the country.”¹ The founders stressed life-long learning. Leache-Wood was designed to be a center for literary and philosophical discussion; for poetry readings, dramatic presentations, and lectures; and (as Wood expressed it) for any “activities which expanded the interests of the school into the broader claims of society.”² Its teaching mission, therefore, addressed more than those who were enrolled as students. Leache and Wood set out to involve the whole community. On Saturday evenings, men, women, students, and

graduates gathered on an informal basis at the school (and later in homes) for an open house. Designed as both social occasion and educational enrichment, these singular evenings included programs which spanned a broad cultural range. Minuets might be danced, French comedies performed, ballads sung, or Bret Harte read.³ Norfolk had seen nothing like it before.

These programs had an enormous influence on those who attended, opening a new world of intellectual stimulation to the residents of a small, poor town then enjoying the first warm breezes of recovery after the Civil War. As these evenings grew in popularity, study groups like the Fireside Club were formed. Founded by Leache and Wood as a literary society for men and women, it met in their living room above the school.⁴ One offshoot of the original group, called the Monday Club, has continued to meet for more than one hundred years. Moreover, older students and graduates began to sponsor dramatic programs and special evenings. Leache-Wood gave to Norfolk a heightened expectation for what the town might provide culturally. With the growing financial recovery of the port came a natural spirit of optimism about future economic prosperity. Under the guidance of Leache and Wood, the school sowed the seeds of hope for a more enriching intellectual future as well.

Wood is best known, however, as the founder of the Irene Leache Memorial, with which she was most closely associated from its inception in April 1901. Founded as the Irene Leache Library Association, the organization changed names (as well as intentions) several times. An adjunct organization called the Leache-Wood Alumnae Association was added in 1905 and the two were merged in 1914 into the Irene Leache Art Associa-

tion. In 1917, as the group continued to broaden in scope, and with the hope of also broadening its membership, the name was changed to the Norfolk Society of Arts. Concerned that her original intention of perpetuating Irene Leache's name in a meaningful way might have been obscured by the name change, Wood reinstated, a few months later, a smaller group of men and women more closely connected to the school, using the name which had been used to describe an early lecture course, the Irene Leache Memorial.⁵

From the beginning, Wood intended to work toward the creation of a public art gallery named for Irene Leache. First by seeking a collection of rare books, and then by acquiring copies of exemplary works of art and decorative arts for public display, the Irene Leache Memorial stayed focused on its goal of promoting cultural awareness in Norfolk. Their occasional lectures and teas, designed as "entertainments" to raise funds toward a museum, became formalized into a lecture series in 1914, and a "Forum of Debate" in 1915. Musical programs were held, since music was a special interest of Wood's. To stimulate original work in the arts, Wood established a Prize Bureau for annual contests in poetry, drama, and paintings; she gave out the prizes, most of which she had funded herself. Under the flag of the Norfolk Society of Arts, early art competitions led to the establishment of exhibitions each year by the Art Corner, which grew into the Tidewater Artists Association. A Norfolk Society of Arts committee on drama organized the Art Players: from their early stage productions, the Norfolk Little Theater got its start. Most significantly, the pioneering efforts of the Norfolk Society of Arts and the Irene Leache Memorial were directly responsible for the creation of The Chrysler Museum of Art, which opened after great persistence in 1933 as the Norfolk Museum of Arts

and Sciences. And so the influence of two teachers spread steadily beyond the walls of the Leache-Wood Seminary to the establishment of cultural organizations which endure still.

As a writer, Annie Wood got a late start. She first published two novels, just after she and Leache left Norfolk in 1891, when Wood was forty-one years old. They were written under the pseudonym Algernon Ridgeway, her father's first and middle names. *Diana Fontaine*, like many first novels, is highly autobiographical. Published by Lippincott in New York in 1891, the story takes place in Winchester just after the Civil War. It tells the tale of a young orphan from a sophisticated background adjusting to life in rural Virginia, with strong depictions of the customs, speech, and priorities of the Shenandoah Valley. A second novel, *Westover's Ward*, published a year later in London (Richard Bentley and Son) in three volumes, begins in 1878 in Colorado and ends along the James River in southeastern Virginia a year later. The plot is a Pygmalion story with a twist: a poor, naive girl is assisted by a wealthy, idealistic man who sets out to change her in the name of protecting her. The relationship leads to their mutual detriment.

After the death of Irene Leache, in response to her own bereavement, Wood wrote an episodic biography of her friend, *The Story of a Friendship* (New York: Knickerbocker, 1901). In it she writes of Irene Leache's life, tracing in vignettes the time they spent together, from their first meeting in Winchester through almost thirty years of teaching and traveling together. It is this book which was the most respected by her contemporaries. The last section of the book is a mystical study of angels taken directly from Leache's journals. Response was so strong from those who cherished Leache's memory

that Wood was compelled to write a sequel, *Idyls and Impressions of Travel from the Notebooks of Two Friends*. Published in New York by Neale in 1904, it is a glowing travelogue of the adventures of two women as they study and explore together both ancient and modern cultures of the western world. Leache kept a daily journal as well as a travel notebook. Combining these with letters selected from Leache and others, and weaving them together with her own comments, she produced a worthy sequel which makes the reader yearn to have traveled with them.

Three other books by Wood appeared in the mid-1920s, all privately published in Florence. Each was, in all likelihood, designed for the personal use of friends who would have been familiar with the material each contained. Though very different in content, each is similar in format. Distinctively bound in hand-tooled Italian leather and decorated with gold embossing, each begins with an original pen-and-ink drawing pasted in, showing the title written in pencil across an open book. *The Great Opportunity and Other Essays*, dated 1925, brings together Wood's interests in philosophy, psychology, history, sociology, and literature. While living in Norfolk from 1914 to 1921, Wood gave a series of lectures and organized dramatic presentations and readings. Certainly some, if not all, of these essays in *The Great Opportunity* were presented in Norfolk during that World War I period. *Drama Sketches for Parlor Acting or Recitation*, published in 1926, is a stunning series of five dramatic sketches, written in the style and atmosphere of five different times. Wood moves with aplomb from ancient Sumeria to seventeenth-century France in a tour-de-force of dramatic styles and cultural knowledge. One of the pieces, written for a study group she attended, is her strongest attempt at humorous writing. It is

filled with puns, banter, and outrageous affectations, much like Molière. The last book, undated, is called *The Psychology of Crime*. Combining dramatic sketches with short essays, Wood examines a selection of sources in order to illustrate the tragedy of crime and the roles played by fate and psyche. The selections indicate the broad range of her interests: the story of Agamemnon and Electra as seen through the works of three playwrights; several poems of Robert Browning; and a fragment of a play by the Hindu poet and novelist, Rabindranath Tagore. Wood is editor, analyst, and guide. With an eye to illuminating those human frailties most consistent with the haughtiness of ego, she offers these episodes as cautionary tales. The three books represent a remarkable achievement, accomplished when Wood was already in her mid-seventies. In them, her far-ranging intellectual curiosity is on full display.

No less interesting are a number of handwritten albums—sixteen in all—which express the musings of Wood in her sedentary years, now housed in the archives of the Irene Leache Memorial at the Chrysler Museum. Compiled primarily when she was in her seventies and eighties, still living in Florence, these pensées provided her with a means of summarizing her thoughts after a lifetime of reflection. She sent them back to friends in Norfolk, sharing her feelings and sparking comment and correspondence in response. They were a lovely way of conversing with close friends over a long distance, and must have helped to occupy often lonely years. Filled with cards and pictures of famous and not-so-famous works of art which she used as inspiration for her musings, the albums are an intelligent and often provocative evocation of the changes in society which she observed over a lifetime of teaching and learning. They remind the reader of the pro-

found effect which a genuine love of learning can have in shaping one's life toward the highest purposes.

At Annie Wood's death in 1940, a moving editorial in the *Virginian Pilot* cited some of her accomplishments. The unsigned writer, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Louis Jaffé, wrote, "No woman of her day, perhaps no woman in Norfolk's whole history, made a more important personal contribution to the city's cultural estate. . . . The lamp lighted in this city by Miss Wood in the early Seventies of the last century can never go out."⁶ Thus, her original aim—to keep the influence and ideals of Irene Leache alive in perpetuity—was attained.

Annie Wood's accomplishments should speak for themselves. The great influence she has had on the cultural life of Norfolk has been well-documented. Yet very few people know anything about her as a person. This study explores the life of Anna Cogswell Wood: her background, her personality, her interests, her writing, and her accomplishments. It also traces some of the changes in Virginia from the Civil War to World War II: changes in education, in the role of women, in values, and in the cultural arts which elevate our lives. In so doing, it also examines, through the life of one particular woman, the broader contributions women have made in their communities in the last hundred years.

CHAPTER 2

FAMILY MATTERS

The details of Annie Wood's childhood are unknown. She did not keep a journal, wrote very little about children, and no record survives of her early years. Although *Diana Fontaine* was heavily drawn from her family in Winchester, all of her other writings were noticeably devoid of references to parents, grandparents, or cousins. This fact takes on special significance given the great emphasis on family in the nineteenth century, and the even greater weight given to ancestry in Virginia. Who was Annie Wood? What influences helped form her character? What cultural environment helped shape her sentiments and tastes? A look at her forebears helps explain the woman she became.

Annie Wood was born on August 2, 1850, near Winchester, Virginia, a small, non-industrial Southern town. She moved with her parents soon after her birth, probably to New York. Although she returned to Winchester in the summers to visit her father's family there, the South must have seemed like a foreign country to her, judging from her depiction in *Diana Fontaine*, which emphasizes the quaint accents and customs of the simple country people she encountered.

Winchester sits in a pivotal spot at the north end of the Shenandoah Valley. Starting with an early Indian trail leading between gentle mountain ranges, Winchester has been a crossroads for travelers. Those traveling along the wilderness areas in the eighteenth century found the safest, fastest route to be straight through the valley formed

by the Shenandoah River, which flows north to join the Potomac River at the state boundary. North from North Carolina to the ports of Baltimore and Philadelphia, west to Ohio from the mid-Atlantic states, and south towards the Appalachian frontier, early travelers frequented the Great Wagon Road and the Valley Pike near Winchester for more than a hundred years.

The first settlers around Winchester came from the mid-Atlantic coastal states, primarily New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland, in the 1730s. They established a community in the Back Creek Valley area, which probably got its name by being the first reliable source of water “back” of (or beyond) the frontier formed by the North Mountain. A number of springs feed the small lakes scattered throughout the relatively low-lying areas. Quakers from Pennsylvania also came in the 1730s, establishing a thriving settlement.¹ A large number of German settlers from Pennsylvania also followed the Great Wagon Road to the Valley, whose similarity to the Rhine Valley must have held the appeal of the familiar. Later, Hessians came as English mercenaries during the Revolution and stayed on after the war. The German farming influence is still evident in the distinctive “bank barns” of the area, more commonly seen in Pennsylvania. Each has a wide, steep ramp on one side, formed with soil banked against the wall. The ramp was designed to provide easy access by horse-drawn hayrack to the storage loft on the upper level of the building, above the horses and cows housed below.

By 1790, the population of Frederick County had reached nearly 20,000. German, Dutch, Welsh, and Scotch-Irish settlers came from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, bringing with them different religions and customs. The earlier settlers

called those who practiced these new religions “dissenters.” In the 1770s, they settled not only in the Shenandoah Valley, but also in the Piedmont and the Upper James, provoking much curiosity from the predominantly Episcopal Church of England families. Among these “dissenters” were Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, German Baptists (well described in *Diana Fontaine*), and Mennonites.² The diversity of Protestant sects proved noteworthy to Annie Wood, who described some of the varieties of faith espoused by the Pennsylvanian transplants as “Hard Shell, Ironside, Dunkard, Campbellite, and New School.”³ Gradually, settlers of English extraction from the Virginia Tidewater bought land in the county, steadily adding to their holdings over generations.⁴

Both of Annie Wood’s grandparents were part of the Hopewell Meeting, established by Quakers in 1734. Congregants still gather each Sunday morning in the Meeting House built in 1759, the oldest in the Shenandoah Valley. Its name comes from the village of Hopewell in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.⁵ The honey-colored stones and clean, rectangular lines of the Meeting House bespeak order and calm. Its three stone chimneys kept the congregation warm, while light from the over-sized, twenty-four pane windows filled the room with light. The mountains, always close at hand in Winchester, and clearly visible from inside the Meeting House, would serve to inspire the thoughts and prayers of worshipers. The Religious Society of Friends in this place would have found much inspiration to help direct their thoughts toward the divine.

Wood’s grandmother, Margaret Ridgeway Wood, is buried in the large, open cemetery on the east side of the Meeting House. A beautiful wall of stacked rocks.

known variously as either a rock wall or a stone wall, surrounds the site. This wall, like many in the area, still stands from after two hundred years as it was constructed, using no mortar to hold the rocks in place. The entrance to the cemetery is through a white-painted gate near the top of the sloping grounds. The preponderance of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gravestones attests to the size and prominence of the community from its inception.

Fig. 1 Wood Family

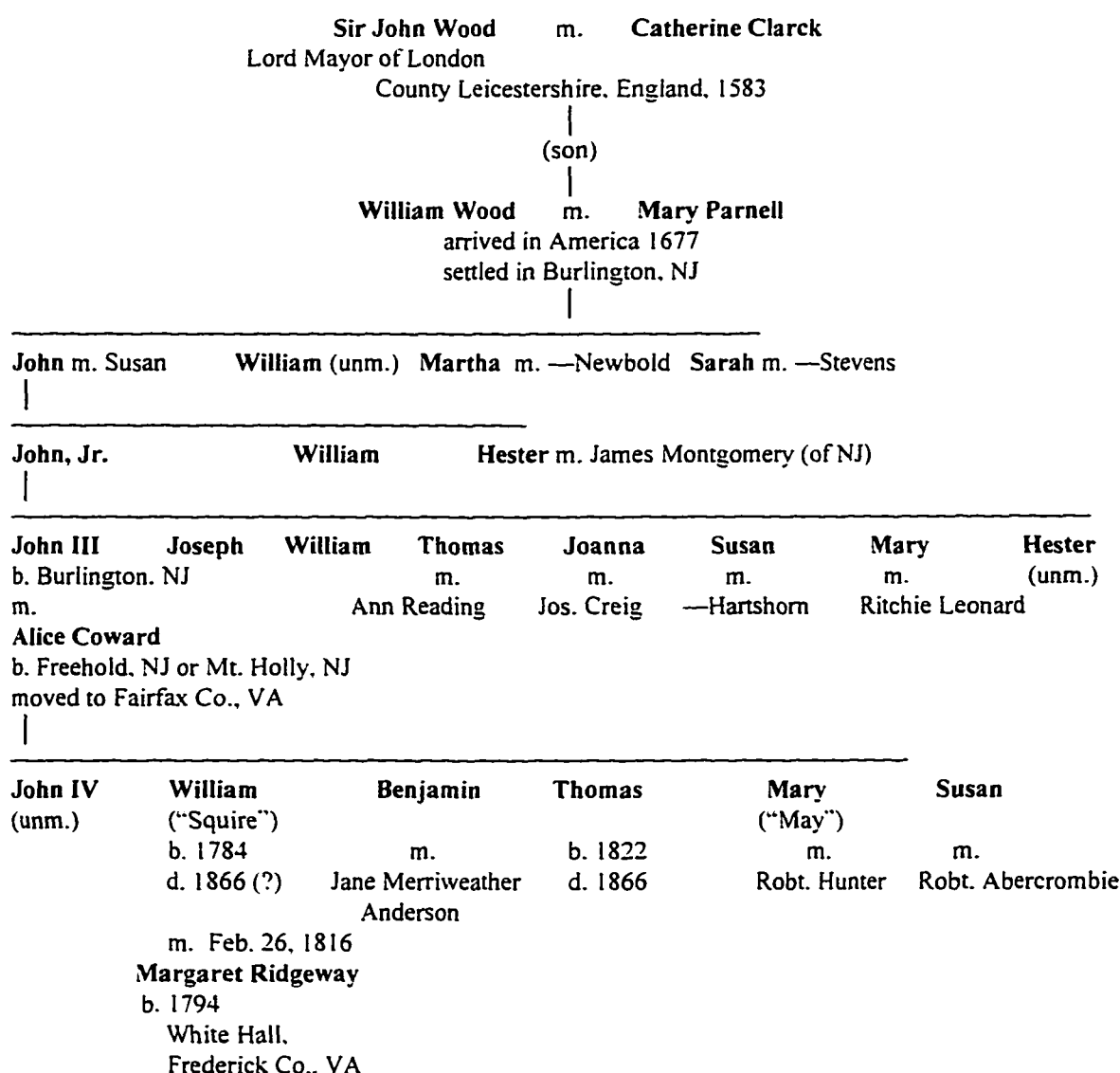
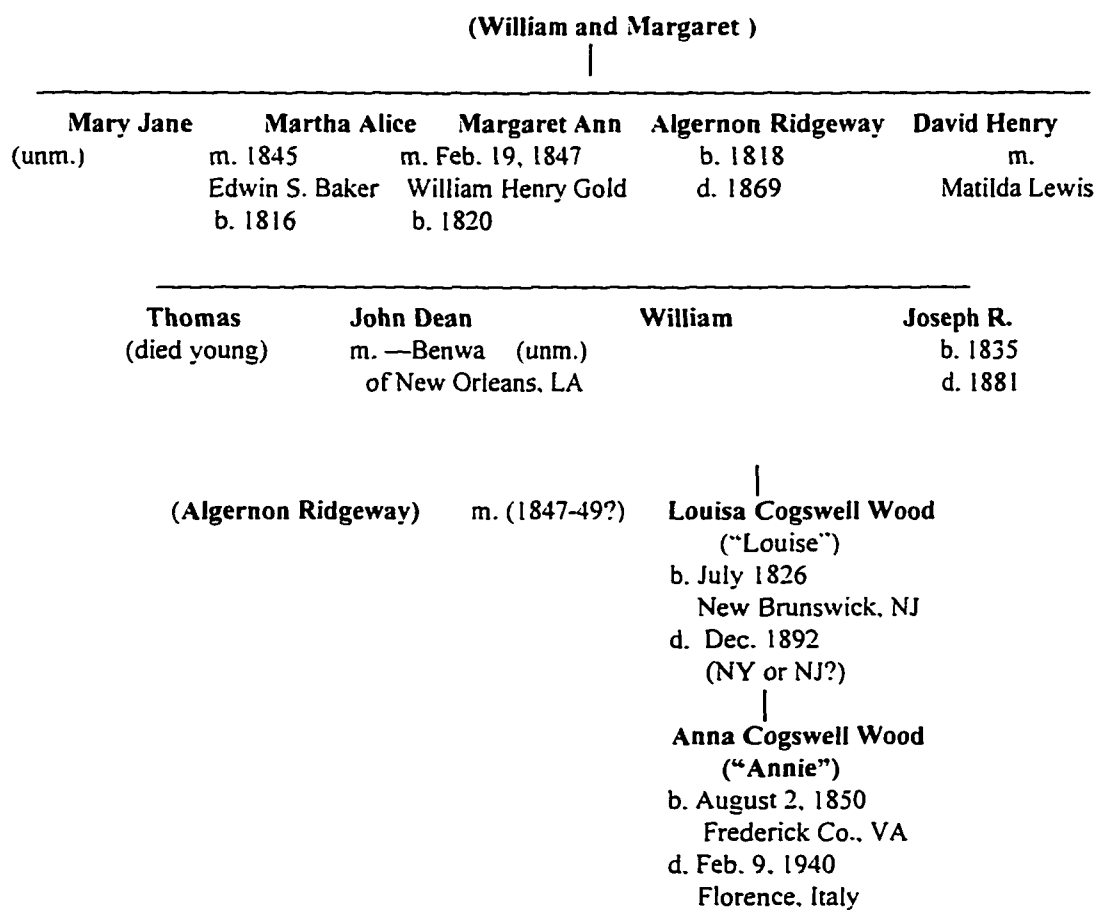


Fig. 1 Wood Family, cont.

The families of Annie Wood's grandparents were neighbors. The Wood family was directly descended from the Lord Mayor of London, Sir John Wood, born in County Leicestershire, England in 1583. Sir John's grandson, William Wood, arrived in America with his wife Mary Parnell Wood in 1677, and settled in Burlington, New Jersey. Annie Wood's paternal great-grandfather, John Wood III, was the third generation of Woods born in that town. He was the oldest son of the oldest son of the oldest son of William Wood of Burlington, New Jersey.⁶

When John Wood III left New Jersey to move to Virginia with his wife, Alice Coward Wood, he settled first in Fairfax County and later in Frederick County. Unrelated to the James Wood who founded Winchester in 1752, John Wood III settled northwest of the town in the area now called Gainesboro. They had four sons followed by two daughters,⁷ and were considered a prominent family in the county, respected as people of substance.

When Annie Wood's great-grandparents moved to Frederick County, Gainesboro was probably called Pughtown,⁸ which is the name she uses in *Diana Fontaine*. Few people would recognize that name today. Located near Back Creek only a few miles from Winchester, on a low ridge between the Great North and the Little North Mountains, it was founded by the son of the original Quaker settlers led by Jesse Pugh and the first town built in the Back Creek area.⁹ The town was once a bustling community ringed with a number of Quaker congregations. Its stores provided goods for workers at the neighboring mills; its inns provided rooms and food for travelers through the Valley. Before the advent of the railroad, the little village thrived on its location "at the

confluence of four turnpike roads," as Wood described it.¹⁰ In antebellum days, Pughtown was "a thriving village, with a prospect"; but by 1891, it was "an elaborate mudpuddle, damned to hopeless insignificance."¹¹ Not far from Pughtown, also in the Back Creek area, is the farm called Willow Shade, where Willa Cather lived as a child between the ages of three and nine, until her family moved to Red Cloud, Nebraska in 1883.¹² If the description of Pughtown is accurate in *Diana Fontaine*, it is easy to see why the Cathers would have wanted to try their luck elsewhere.

Of the children of John and Alice Wood, little is known of the oldest son, John IV, who probably died at an early age. The second son, William Wood, was born in 1784. By adulthood, he had acquired enough land in Frederick County to be known as "Squire" Wood. He served as a Delegate to the Virginia General Assembly for nine sessions, from 1830 to 1832, again in 1838, and from 1840 to 1844.¹³ He was well-known in the community and became first a justice and then, as Senior Justice, was named High Sheriff of the county.¹⁴

When he married Margaret Ridgeway on February 26, 1816, he was marrying a neighbor and fellow Quaker from the community of White Hall, just over Hunting Ridge from Gainesboro. White Hall today is primarily a crossroads, but still contains a number of orchards, homes, and churches, which look down across the open fields from Apple Pie Ridge. The community of Ridgeway lies several miles from White Hall; Ridgeways still live in the area.

Another Wood son, Benjamin, married Jane Merriweather Anderson, a niece of Merriweather Lewis of the Lewis and Clark expedition. The youngest Wood son,

Thomas. was born in 1822 and served as a major in the Confederate Army. Both daughters married: Mary ("May") to Robert Hunter. and Susan to Robert Abercrombie.

Margaret Ridgeway, born in 1794. was twenty-two when she married "Squire" Wood, ten years her senior. They were married for fifty years before both died in 1866. Family documents and court records indicate that nine children were born to the couple. though the record is scanty for the youngest siblings. The three oldest children were girls. the next six boys. The first, Mary Jane. married Captain Pugh of Hampshire County,¹⁵ which is now part of West Virginia but was originally part of Frederick County.¹⁶ Capt. Pugh was probably related to the namesake family of Pughtown, though living in a different part of the original county.¹⁷

The other two sisters are mentioned by name in *Diana Fontaine*, and Wood would have been in their homes during her summer visits as a child. Both married prominent men and raised families in Frederick County. Martha Alice's husband, Edwin S. Baker, served in the House of Delegates in 1852. and was Wood's guardian after the death of her father. Margaret Ann married William Henry Gold in 1847, with whom she had six children. They lived on Apple Pie Ridge in a house called "Rock Hill," an unpretentious, simple Valley home. whose oldest section was built about the time of the Revolution by William Lupton¹⁸ and bought by William H. Gold's father from Joseph Lupton in 1843.¹⁹

Annie Wood imaginatively described Rock Hill as a "hip-roofed farmhouse, no less than three cottages joined to each other, like three little sisters, all wearing white aprons, holding hands and squatting down"²⁰ Though she left Winchester when she was very young, Rock Hill was probably her base on subsequent summer visits to her

father's family. Referring to Rock Hill as "the Valley Farm," she makes it clear that this was a simple house, born of "meagreness" and "utilitarian primness," a "rocky nest among the pine barrens of Frederick."²¹

The house would surprise her today. Standing at the top of the knoll of Gold's Hill Road, across from the omnipresent apple orchards, the three sections of Rock Hill remain distinct. The longest section, and the oldest, consists of four log walls covered with white wood siding on the exterior. Though now the walls are covered with plaster, the open beamed ceilings attest to the strength of the simple architecture. Part of the original log wall is still visible inside, where a recent addition onto the back of this section protects it. A long, low, narrow porch supported by four thin columns across the front still stands, where it is easy to imagine her grandfather, Billy Wood, sitting (as she describes Billy Fontaine) "with feet raised to the top of the porch-rails, and tobacco in mouth . . . for the period of half a century."²²

Three stone walls were added on the west side in the late 1700s, with particularly large windows set deeply into the walls. They are framed with wide white bands, which provide sharp relief against the dark gray stones of the exterior. Many original panes remain, and striations are clearly visible in the glass, a reminder of the old process of creating glass by rolling out the panes when hot. On the east side, three post-and-beam walls form the kitchen, which dates from about the same period. An enormous gray stone fireplace dominates this end of the house, inside and out. It is the heat from this fireplace, rising to the second floor through a clever wooden grate in the ceiling, which made the

small bedroom directly above it an ideal place for a nursery. It is in that bedroom where Annie Wood was most likely born, directly above the warm kitchen.²³

A two-story spring house sits in ruins just down the slope, at Babb's stream, no longer needed to keep butter, cheese and crocks of milk cold. But several dependencies close to the house have been fully restored, and an herb garden lies just outside the kitchen door, much as it must have when Annie Wood's family lived there. A gnarled and truncated old mulberry tree dominates the side facing the road, its seed pods generously cast about the yard. The trees of the Blue Ridge are ever-visible in the distance, and the small, carefully pruned apple trees of neighboring orchards lie close at hand. Gold's Hill Road remains today a simple country lane; the paving stops just after Rock Hill and a dirt extension leads down the slope toward the next gap between the mountains. Family stories say that George Washington himself travelled on this same road, heading west beyond the Blue Ridge.²⁴

Even now, it is not hard to imagine traveling by spring-wagon or on horseback, and it is easy to visualize the old wagon traffic along Apple Pie Ridge in the early 1800s. Wood explains that charming name with a delightful story in *Diana Fontaine*, as told by a native of Winchester:

Before the days of steam [the railroad], the people about here used to haul their produce to Baltimore in wagons. The wagoners stopped often to rest and feed upon this ridge; and, it being a famous apple-country, they fared upon apple-pies. These were praised by the travelers, until there arose a rivalry among the housekeepers of the country-side, each striving to make a better and a larger pie than her neighbor. One woman, a widow, succeeded in getting her pies so large that a whimsical wagoner once stopped the wheel of his cart with it, saying that it would do better for scotching than chewing. (212)

Annie Wood's father, Algernon Ridgeway Wood, was the fourth child and oldest son of "Squire" and Margaret Wood. Born in 1818, he was probably raised in Pughtown, in the Quaker faith: he is buried there in the old Quaker cemetery. His gravestone gives only his name, "d. 1869, age 51 years." and this poignant inscription: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."²⁵ The cemetery looks down on what remains of the town, only a few modest houses closely lining a meandering street for about three blocks, located still just off the highway through the Valley. Gainesboro lies geographically and metaphorically across the tracks from the more worldly community of Winchester.

Very little is known about Algernon Ridgeway Wood. He served in the General Assembly, like his father, as a member of the House of Delegates for four terms, from 1847 to 1850. County records show that he bought a house on a corner lot in Pughtown from his parents in March 1840, for which he paid \$5.00.²⁶ He sold half of this house to his brother John in 1847, for the sum of \$1.00.²⁷ Family stories relate that he was educated in New Jersey, where he would have read for the law while apprenticing with a practicing attorney. He probably still had cousins in New Jersey, for his grandfather, John Wood III, was one of eight children raised in Burlington, New Jersey. It is reasonable to assume that is where Algernon met his wife, Louisa Cogswell, also of New Jersey.

Algernon Ridgeway Wood left Winchester in 1850, when Annie was a baby, to move with his wife and child to New York. City directories of the period list his Manhattan residence as 33 E. 30th Street. His law office moved a number of times: 140

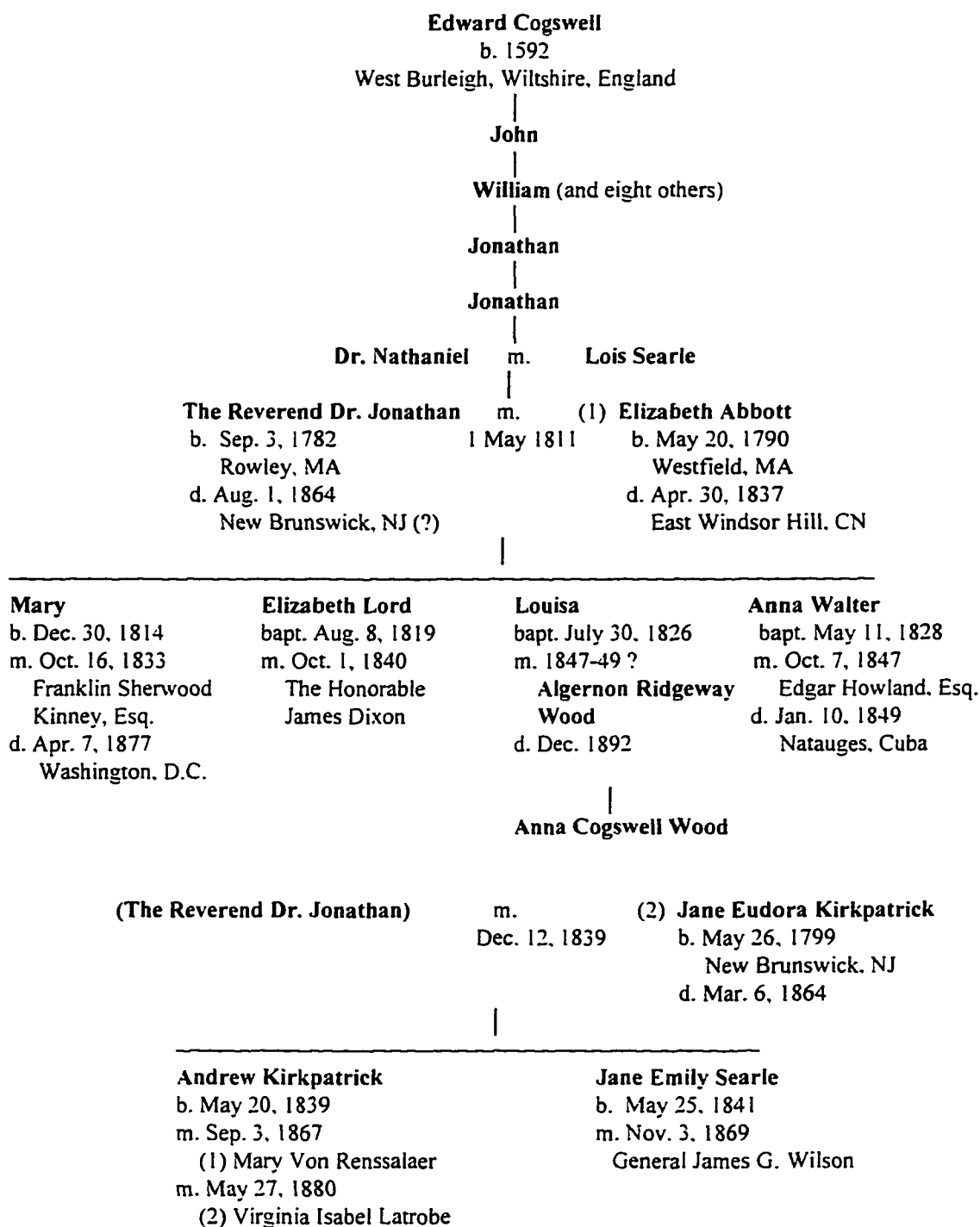
Broadway, 17 Nassau Street, 59 William Street, and 25 Pine Street. According to a handwritten notation in a family copy of *The Story of a Friendship*, he later became “Judge Wood of S. Court of N.Y.”²⁸ The “S.” could only stand for Supreme Court, which are trial courts in New York state, equivalent to Circuit Courts in Virginia. (Today, the state is divided into twelve districts, served by close to 600 Supreme Court judges.) There is no evidence that he practiced in Virginia after 1850, or returned to live there.

Algernon Ridgeway Wood came from a large and prominent family of property and position. He was the oldest son, and had five younger brothers, three of whom were prominent: David Henry married Matilda Lewis, John Dean married a “Miss Benwa of Louisiana” before he lost his life at Shiloh, and Joseph R., born in 1835, achieved the rank of captain in the Confederate army, and died in 1881.²⁹ In a time when sons stayed close to home, it is surprising that the oldest surviving son and heir apparent would have left his family and position to move north. Why did he leave?

Family stories indicate that the answer may lie with his wife, Louisa Cogswell. Born in 1826, she was the daughter of a Congregationalist minister, the Reverend Dr. Jonathan Cogswell, and his first wife, Elizabeth Abbott. Louisa, referred to in family records as Louise, was the third of four daughters born before her mother died at the age of 46. The Reverend Dr. Cogswell remarried within eight months, to the daughter of the Chief Justice of New Jersey, Jane Eudora Kirkpatrick, with whom he had a son and daughter. They, like the Wood grandparents, died within a few months of each other, in 1864.³⁰

Fig. 2 Cogswell Family

Extrapolated from *The Cogswells in America*. E. O. Jameson (Boston: Alfred Mudge. 1884) 1-9, 24-26, 35-37, 74-75, 150-153.



The Cogswell were an illustrious New England family, prominent from Colonial times, and among the original settlers of Essex, Massachusetts. John Cogswell arrived from England with his wife and eight children in 1635, after selling all his mills and other holdings.³¹ After a difficult crossing that included a disastrous storm off the coast of Maine, they made their way to Ipswich, Massachusetts, and began to acquire land.³² A gentleman, he was remembered as someone whose “comparative wealth, intelligence, and piety gave him an acknowledged prominence in the town and church.”³³ Much the same could be said of succeeding generations, down to Louisa’s father, the fifth generation of Cogswells in America.

A close look at her father may shed light on Louisa herself. The Reverend Dr. Jonathan Cogswell, named after his own grandfather and great-grandfather, was the youngest of fourteen children. He graduated from Harvard College in 1806 among the top in his class, taught at Bowdoin for two years (1807-9), and received a graduate degree in the first class of Andover Theological Seminary (in 1810). He was ordained as a Congregationalist minister (then a branch of the Presbyterian Church), and served at two prominent congregations in Maine and Connecticut. When he took his first post, the respected minister Dr. Paul Coffin gave a noteworthy installation sermon, which was later published. Jonathan Cogswell later held the chair of Ecclesiastical History at the Theological Institute of Connecticut, where he taught for ten years. His education continued with a degree from the University of New York in 1836. He published a number of essays and sermons, including *A Volume of Ten Discourses, Intended as a*

Keepsake for the Family and Friends. In 1844, he left public life and moved to New Brunswick, New Jersey, to serve as “appointed executor of a large estate.”³⁴

The Reverend Dr. Cogswell was known as a magnanimous, scholarly, and devout gentleman. He taught at the Theological Institute without pay, contributed his valuable private library to the school, and continued his generous philanthropy in New Brunswick, especially toward the building, maintenance, and continued staffing of the Second Presbyterian Church there. In addition, he endowed scholarships at Rutgers College and the College of New Jersey as well as serving as a director of a number of charitable and religious organizations.³⁵ Like his outspoken granddaughter, Annie Wood, “timidity in expressing what he believed was unknown to him.”³⁶ Perhaps it was the influence of this man, who died when she was fourteen, which guided her in her own philanthropic endeavor, founding, nurturing, and financially securing the Irene Leache Memorial.

When Louisa Cogswell married Algernon Ridgeway Wood, she came to Pughtown from a background of wealth, education, and sophistication. All three of her sisters also married attorneys, one being a judge. Although the date of her marriage is not known, the dates of her sisters’ marriages are recorded as 1833, 1840, and 1847.³⁷ Since she was 24 years old when Annie was born, it is likely that she was the last to marry, probably between 1847 and 1849. It was not a happy marriage. Discord, perhaps over the differences between their family backgrounds, perhaps over growing tensions between the North and the South, may have compelled them to move closer to Louisa’s family in or near New York. They left Winchester not long after Annie’s birth at Rock

Hill. And then, in a consequence that must have been unthinkable at the time, they divorced.³⁸

Divorce was almost unheard of in the nineteenth century. Although laws varied from state to state, it was viewed harshly everywhere, and “virtually unknown in the countryside.”³⁹ Divorce left a woman totally outside polite society, placing her beyond what could be even understood, much less condoned. No matter how difficult the marriage, “the legal consequences of divorce [i.e., a legally sanctioned separation] were not adequate to cope with the social consequences.”⁴⁰ As Edith Wharton clearly illustrates in her 1920 novel, *The Age of Innocence*, New York society, of which the Cogswells may be considered at least a peripheral part, would have offered little compassion to any divorced woman. How shocking it must have been for the daughter of an eminent clergyman, philanthropist, and scholar to return to New York, divorce her husband, and raise a daughter alone. What a stigma a divorce would be for a sitting judge.

It is reasonable, therefore, to assume extreme extenuating circumstances existed. Although it is possible that they lived separately but did not actually divorce, the consistent use of the word “divorce” among those who knew Annie Wood argues against only a separation. Divorce records were not retained or indexed in the mid-nineteenth century, so it is impossible to know for certain. However, Annie Wood herself has left us a few clues.

Earlier sources accept that Wood was raised in New York, where she was educated first with tutors and later in “private schools.”⁴¹ Elizabeth Engle, a fine amateur historian and distant cousin of the Wood family, notes that Annie Wood “was given every

advantage by her mother's family, being taken to art museums and symphony concerts at an early age."⁴² She was known to have traveled abroad in her youth as well.⁴³ In *Diana Fontaine*, Wood writes that Diana, her alterego, "spent a winter in Paris with her father, as a child, and had been his intelligent companion everywhere."⁴⁴ These suppositions are substantiated by Annie Wood's sophisticated tastes and the extensive knowledge of art, music, classical studies, and literature evident in her writing. It would seem that she was raised with the comfort of financial security and the opportunity for direct access to cultural activities and venues.

Just before her father died in 1869, Annie Wood enrolled as a boarding student at a school in Winchester, where she had come in previous summers. All biographical materials on Annie Wood assume that her mother pre-deceased her father, for why else would she return to Winchester to attend a small girls seminary? Her Cogswell relations had been well-educated, many having attended the finest New England schools. If her mother had been alive in 1869, surely Annie would have remained in New York, and attended school there or in Europe, rather than coming to Pughtown just after the Civil War, then in, as she described it, "Pughtown's degenerate days."⁴⁵ As further evidence, *Diana Fontaine* begins with the words, "Diana Fontaine was an orphan."⁴⁶

And yet a newly-discovered letter written by one of Annie Wood's closest surviving friends in Norfolk, Emma C. Shepherd, offers a different view. Mrs. Shepherd was a fellow teacher at the Leache-Wood Seminary and kept a box of notebooks and photographs left in her care (and also that of her sister-in-law and fellow teacher, Sallie

Shepherd) by Annie Wood in 1921. The letter, postmarked July 10, 1940, contains this passage:

I have always understood that Mr. Wood began his practise [*sic*] in Winchester, but Mrs. Wood who was a New Yorker insisted that he go to New York to practise which he did and he died there evidently but I have never heard when -- nor seen any allusion to his death. I found a letter from Mr. George Morris, who was Miss Wood's lawyer in New York, telling her of her mother's death in Dec. 1892. I know that Mrs. Wood survived her husband many years. Where or when Mr. Wood became Judge I do not know, but I am quite sure he must have died in New York and I suppose he must have been buried there.⁴⁷

How curious to be informed of the death of one's mother by one's attorney. How curious that it was widely assumed in Norfolk that Wood was an orphan. How curious that Wood makes only one reference to her mother in any of her writings, an oddly negative musing by Diana about her mother being "devoted to artificial perfumes.-- distillations, essences, extracts, powders . . . I cannot endure such perfumes; but I love the natural ones."⁴⁸ How curious that she left Norfolk in 1891 and lived abroad continuously for almost fifty years, except for the years surrounding World War I, thereby leaving behind her closest relative and only immediate family.

Might Louisa Cogswell Wood have been incapacitated in some way, perhaps mentally ill? Could both the move from Winchester and the divorce have been precipitated by a serious problem, like mental illness? A debilitating physical illness, though not commonly discussed, would have been at least publically acknowledged; yet everyone associated with Wood during her lifetime understood her mother to be dead. So it seems fair to assume that Louisa was not an active participant in her daughter's life and

that there was little or no contact between them, especially after her father's death. The reason, though open to informed speculation, remains ultimately unknown.

Yet, why else would Annie Wood have returned, with little money, to Winchester in 1868? Disbursements from her father's estate begin in May 1869; his will left Annie only \$633.15. She may have received additional income from the estate of her grandmother, Margaret Ridgeway Wood, from which disbursements were made to her heirs until 1871.⁴⁹ But how did she support herself after she and Irene Leache left Leache-Wood Seminary in 1891? There is no question that Annie Wood provided financial support for Irene Leache until her death in 1900, for Leache's previously wealthy family had no assets left after the Civil War. Leache's only income came from the money she earned by teaching. Two possible sources seem likely: Wood may have received income from her mother's estate after 1892; or she may have inherited some income from a Cogswell cousin, for which there is only circumstantial evidence. In *Diana Fontaine*, the orphaned heroine is offered the opportunity to live with, and be supported by, an older cousin, which she readily accepts. Diana's benefactor's name is Cynthia Curzewell.⁵⁰

Annie Wood was not quite nineteen when her father died, leaving her bereft of parents (and siblings) at a relatively young age. Had she, in fact, been raised more by her father than her mother, as she hints? A close relationship with her father may be assumed by her use of his name as her *nom de plume*. If she were raised in New York by her father, perhaps she would have had freer access to his library, more opportunity for intellectual pursuits, and more exposure to the cultural arts than might otherwise have

been part of her life. Unlike other girls in the nineteenth century, she would not have been trained by a mother to concentrate solely on domestic responsibilities, to devote her life to familial duties, and to consider marriage as a woman's ultimate and true goal. Early separation from her mother would account, at least in part, for Annie Wood's strong streak of independence, unusual in her time.

Even if she was raised by her father, her mother's family may still have been part of her life. With the Cogswells living just outside New York City in New Brunswick, New Jersey, there would have been ample opportunity for the benefits and blessings of their influence and involvement. The sophisticated company Wood kept in New York (and Newport in *Diana Fontaine*) would have been through the Cogswells in all likelihood. In spite of the lack of direct maternal references in her writings, a strong and sympathetic character in *Diana Fontaine*, similar to Melanie in *Gone With the Wind*, is named Louisy.

What prompted the inscription on Algernon Rideway Wood's grave, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes"? Was it a common benediction, or an expression of genuine emotion based on great sadness? How did Annie Wood support herself for almost fifty years after she left the Leache-Wood Seminary? What was the reason for her parent's divorce? What happened to her mother? The answers remain hauntingly unverifiable.

CHAPTER 3

WINCHESTER

The Civil War came hard to Winchester. Between 1861 and 1865, control of the town shifted between troops of the North and South seventy-two times, more than any other locality in any state.¹ Its strategic location at the head of the Valley placed it in a pivotal position, and thus directly in harm's way. Three battles were fought in the town, two others just outside the city limits. The battlegrounds are still clearly visible, and clearly marked, lest anyone forget the terrible sacrifices made by those on both sides of the War Between the States. History is always current in Virginia, and memories of the Civil War are still fresh in Winchester. A new thoroughfare was recently named for General Jubal Early, who brought back to the town the spoils of his successful forays in Frederick, Maryland. Stonewall Jackson, especially prominent in Winchester history, is remembered for standing so firm in battle that he was like the rock walls still standing throughout the area. Robert E. Lee and J. E. B. Stuart were widely considered Southern royalty, their portraits proudly hung in houses of every description. But special pride and deep love was held in Winchester for Brigadier General Turner Ashby, whose famous, brazen troops, known officially as Ashby's Cavalry and locally as Ashby's Raiders, achieved the impossible in the winter of 1862. Annie Wood writes of him at length in *Diana Fontaine*. To better understand Ashby is to better understand the Winchester to which Wood returned in 1869.

President Lincoln described his 1862 plan for taking control of the Shenandoah Valley, and thereby control of the supply artery provided by the Valley Pike and the railroad lines, as “a circle whose circumference shall pass through Harper’s Ferry, Front Royal, and Strasburg, and whose center shall be a little northeast of Winchester.”² The Union forces gathered around the periphery of the circle, with Generals James Shields, Nathaniel Banks, Irvin McDowell, and John C. Frémont moving to tighten their hold and trap the Confederate forces under Stonewall Jackson and Richard Ewell. Jackson was staying in Winchester in January 1862, after retreating from the winter campaign in the Valley. By March 7, Shields had joined Banks just north of the town, and Jackson, outnumbered more than three-to-one, was forced to order the evacuation of Winchester, leaving Ashby to hold out as long as he could to secure their escape.³

Ashby stayed until the first Union troops entered Winchester. An oft-repeated story relates that two Union soldiers thought to trap Ashby on a side street to block his escape. Ashby bravely rode right between them, shot one dead, and grabbed the other by the throat, dragged him off his horse, and hauled him all the way to the Confederate lines. Against great odds, he then saved Jackson’s troops by preventing the Federals from taking control of the Valley Pike, keeping the escape route open.⁴ He bought time for Jackson again and again, often using Massanutten range as a screen. He was commissioned Brig. General in Winchester on May 30, 1862, the special hero of a town looking for a savior.

When Ashby was killed in a small skirmish with Frémont near Harrisonburg the next month, the stoic Jackson received the news with unusual emotion. He dismissed his

visitor. “locked himself in the bedroom and spent the next few hours privately mourning his slain cavalry commander.”⁵ He reported to Robert E. Lee that “as a partisan officer I never knew his superior; his daring was proverbial; his powers of endurance almost incredible; his tone of character heroic, and his sagacity almost intuitive in divining the movements and purposes of the enemy.”⁶

Yet, Ashby’s troops were singularly undisciplined and unruly. He chose to make valor and inspiration substitute for training and drill. He was more Cavalier than soldier, and his troops were more accurately raiders than cavalry. They looted, drank frequently, and conducted themselves as “freewheeling troopers,” “dashing raiders” who would “strike at the enemy in whatever style suited their whim.”⁷ The independent Valley partisans responded most strongly to this recalcitrant Cavalier. And so it is not surprising that Ashby was remembered by his contemporaries as a legendary hero whose undisciplined style was a source of pride.

Shelby Foote writes that Ashby “had established a reputation for personal bravery that was never outdone by any man in either army.”⁸ When Wood describes this period in *Diana Fontaine*, she writes movingly of the heroism of Jackson and Ashby, and the effect of Ashby’s death: “. . . the world will never know the grief which overswept the troops, depressed Virginia, overwhelmed the Valley, when Ashby—their hero—was killed, in the darkest hour of the war. When his veterans looked upon him dead, ‘the mother in them rose’; armies sobbed.”⁹ Though she probably did not visit her father’s family during the Civil War years, the deep impression those times made upon her family and friends in the Valley is evident in her writing.

In *Diana Fontaine*, Capt. McElroy explains that “before the war we were dreamers, here at the South; life meant being, not doing.”¹⁰ A similar thought is expressed in *The Story of a Friendship*: “the young aunts . . . slipping through their lives of silken leisure as people did in those times before the war, when leisure was a part of breeding.”¹¹ When the survivors returned home, families were dispersed, houses and farms destroyed, and many were left “without a home, without a purpose, without means to get [one’s] daily bread.”¹² A British traveler to Winchester in July 1863, after Lee’s retreat from Gettysburg, wrote:

I understand that it used to be a most agreeable little town and its society extremely pleasant. Many of its houses are now destroyed or converted into hospitals. The rest look miserable and dilapidated. Its female inhabitants (for the able-bodied males are all absent in the army) are familiar with the bloody realities of war. As many as 5,000 wounded have been accommodated here at one time. All the ladies are accustomed to the bursting of shells and the sight of fighting, and all are turned into hospital nurses or cooks.¹³

Conditions grew more desperate in Winchester in the last winter of the war. General Philip Sheridan destroyed more than 2,000 barns and more than seventy mills,¹⁴ leaving no food, no crops, and no linen or cotton save that which could be used for binding the wounds of soldiers. One of the women in *Diana Fontaine* unravels Union tent canvas to use the “stout thread” as yarn to knit socks for her father and stockings for herself.¹⁵ A contemporary observer noted that the utter economic devastation brought by the Civil War was not understood by many outside the Confederacy; the war brought to an end almost all private fortunes in the South.¹⁶

And yet, the Civil War emancipated not only the slave but poor whites as well.

The feudalism of the antebellum South supported no real middle class. only the striated social order of landowners and those who worked for them. A contemporary observer noted that the South was "more strongly dominated by obstinate laws of caste" than England, and much less modified by immigration than the North.¹⁷ In the decentralized, rural Southern states, identification with one's community was "usually defined by geographic proximity and reinforced by ties of wealth, kin, church, and race."¹⁸ The Civil War overthrew the aristocratic, class-based society and gave all citizens access to education for the first time. After the war, when public schools were gradually established, the "isolated and sharply divided" white Southern population came together for the first time off the battlefield.¹⁹

Also for the first time in the South, the door opened for women to step outside the narrow bounds of submission and domesticity. As all men who were able to fight left home, women rose to take care of their families and their land, asserting a newfound "personal independence, varied executive ability, and supreme responsibility."²⁰ Emerging from the cocoon of home and family, some women performed the clerical jobs and government service that men had to leave behind; after the war, many kept these positions, especially when commerce increased and the typewriter came into common use. Nursing, an unpaid domestic duty prior to the war, became an unskilled job as women were pressed by necessity to help care for the wounded. After the war, nursing became a professional, and primarily female, occupation.²¹ Wood writes poignantly of the women in Winchester, in the "Debatable Land" at the northern border of the South, as "the generation which engendered fortitude."²²

For the Woods of Winchester, the Civil War was about states' rights. Like Robert E. Lee, they thought of Virginia as their country. In 1860, less than one-quarter of the white population of the fifteen Southern states were slaveholders.²³ In *Westover's Ward*, the character of Col. Westover, an old Southern aristocrat, explains that

Virginia was an empire in her own right [before the Revolutionary War], and passed into the Constitution of the Union the prohibition of slavery from the very first: but the decision was reversed out of compliment to the North. . . . [The Union was] an arrangement made for convenience, and from which any of the States could withdraw at pleasure. . . . States rights is the cornerstone of the Union...defended in the past by the pen of Jefferson, the tongue of Henry, the sword of Washington, the heart of Lee.²⁴

In *Diana Fontaine*, Billy Fontaine (who represents William "Squire" Wood, Annie Wood's grandfather) expresses the same sentiment, saying that he "would rather have seen the Union fly into a million pieces than see State independence injured by one jot or tittle."²⁵ Though she was raised in New York, Wood was consistently sympathetic to these arguments in her writing, believing that a "federation of independent States [should] be united only in those points which relate to general benefit."²⁶ A loose federation represents the best form of government because it supports both "individualism and liberty," the character explains. On the other hand, a strong federal government opens one to "the foolish freak of the sensation-loving populace,"²⁷ to the extent that it provokes politicians into demagoguery as they seek to win votes through empty promises. True democracy, she later wrote, was "a half-way house to socialism."²⁸ Toward the end of her life, living in Italy under Mussolini, this abiding faith in what she saw as the strength of the individual who is unaffected by the will of the crowd inclined her to support Italian fascism, at least privately. She wrote then, with the surety of an aristocrat, that good government

could never accrue from what she called the “majority mind,” the “mob-soul,” and the “collective unit.”²⁹ Rather than an expression of bigotry or virulence, these sentiments seem to hark back to the skepticism of the old Southern aristocracy when faced with the demise of their fortunes and the broadening opportunities for an emerging middle class which opened after the Civil War.

In 1868, Annie Wood enrolled as a boarding student at the Valley Female Seminary in Winchester. Her father may have been ill, for he died the next year, and may have wanted her closer to his roots, or he may have returned to Winchester with her. Had her mother been capable of providing for her, it is doubtful she would have left the advantages of New York to attend a small school in the war-ravaged South. What remained of her Winchester family had been shattered by the war, grandparents on both sides were dead, and she must have felt lonely indeed. She was eighteen years old.

The Valley Female Institute was located on West Piccadilly Street, at the edge of Winchester, on the old county road called the Frederick Turnpike, which led north out of town. Nearby is “Glen Burnie,” built in 1794 by Robert Wood, the son of the founder of Winchester. The school was commonly referred to by the name of the building which housed it, Angerona, which had been built in 1793 to house the indigent and insane. The name comes from the Roman “goddess of silence or suppressed grief.”³⁰ In 1821, when the Poor House was built farther out of town, Angerona became the home for a series of four different schools for girls. Winchester was a center for education for the area in the nineteenth century, and a number of schools were clustered within a few blocks of Angerona.

While Wood was a student, Annie Tucker McGill owned the school, which probably offered a curriculum concentrating on the classics: Latin, French, mathematics, literature, poetry, music, geography, history, and perhaps Greek and Bible studies (though the school was nonsectarian from its inception).³¹ Wood describes other courses, at an unnamed “girls’ seminary in Winchester,” disparagingly in *Diana Fontaine* as “lessons in wax-work, feather jewelry, leather-flower making, and the pettifoggies of art.”³²

It was here that the most pivotal moment of her life took place, for it was at Angerona that she met Irene Leache, who had just joined the faculty. From the beginning, she was enthralled and inspired by her. From the beginning, they were soulmates. The friendship they forged defined Wood’s life in quite remarkable and unforeseen ways, giving her direction and focus, inspiring her life’s work, and providing her with her greatest joy. As she writes in the opening paragraph of *The Story of a Friendship*, Leache was “that rare woman whose influence was thenceforward to dominate my life and develop in my character all that it should possess of significance.”³³

In the beautiful garden behind Angerona, filled with “a profusion of flowering shrubs and trees,” she and Leache spent much time reading aloud, doing needlework, and becoming acquainted.³⁴ It was in the garden, Wood tells us, where she heard the details of Leache’s childhood and stories of the war, and where she grew to understand and love Irene Leache.

As Wood relates in *The Story of a Friendship*,³⁵ Irene Kirke Leache was born in Fauquier County on a red-clay farm called Wood Park near Warrenton, Virginia. Although Wood never mentions Leache’s age, cemetery records indicate that Leache was

born in 1839, which makes her eleven years older than Wood.³⁶ Nearby was the Valley Farm (a name Wood uses affectionately in *Diana Fontaine*), a plantation owned by Judge Charles Hunton, her grandfather. Her parents, Jane Hunton Leache and Jesse Willett Leache, a physician, had nine children, of which Irene was the third. Her parents were conscientious about the education of their children. Wood describes the inviolable rite of “morning readings in the sitting-room at Wood Park, under the supervision of an intellectual mother.”³⁷ Her father had a fine library³⁸ and, in a departure from the norm of the period, encouraged his daughters to explore its contents. A love of learning was greatly valued within the family, and creativity nurtured. Wood cites the story of a poem written “at an early age” and secretly submitted by Leache’s oldest sister, Lizzie, to the Richmond *Enquirer*. Much to the family’s surprise, it was published there and also in the Hartford *Gazette*.³⁹ In a memorable example of Leache’s intellectual ability, Wood cites how Leache taught herself to read German from only two sources: Lizzie’s German grammar and a copy of Schiller’s play, *Wilhelm Tell*.⁴⁰ Though Lizzie attended a nearby seminary, Irene was self-educated.

In 1860, she left home to serve as governess to a family named Carter at a large plantation in Westmoreland County on the banks of the Potomac. Tutoring was especially common in the South, where community schools would have been difficult to establish, given the distances between farms and plantations.⁴¹ Inveterate anglophiles, Virginians of means since Colonial times followed the at-home educational protocol prevalent in England.

Usually, a tutor’s duties would include teaching young children “the three Rs.”

running the nursery, and in some families, educating the servants. Tutors who knew Latin, French, Spanish, or Italian were especially prized; lessons in drawing, painting, and musical instruments might also be included. In addition to the academics and arts, all manner of domestic occupations might be taught, including “woodworking, lacework, waxwork, letter-writing, and hymn-singing.”⁴² A tutor or governess frequently became an integral part of the family.

But Mr. Carter was a uncommunicative man whose wife was totally deaf, and Leache had charge of their two unruly children. She did her best to manage to engage them and win their affection. She taught Bible to the young slaves on the plantation, where she listened in turn to the hymns they sang and the ghost tales they told. With compassion and patience, she nursed those of her young charges who fell ill. She left the Carters only when war threatened, to return home to Warrenton. Wood Park soon became a soldier’s hospital as the war began its calamitous course.⁴³

Each year of her life, Leache remembered the anniversary of the first battle of Manassas (referred to as Bull Run by the Union). The small junction of Manassas, located thirty miles southwest of Washington, D.C., marked the convergence of railroad lines from the south and west. Control of the railroad equaled control of northern Virginia.⁴⁴ And so the battle line was drawn, encompassing the Leache farm. Union soldiers set up their tents before the battle within the grounds of Wood Park, freshly claimed by the North, and used the house as their headquarters. A cousin, caught behind the Union line, lay hidden in an upstairs bedroom. In a daring gambit, with her young brothers and sisters to protect from harm, Leache enticed the Union general to play chess with her

in the parlor. As Wood tells the story, Leache so distracted him with her chess skills, she was able to stealthily intercept a note delivered in the course of the game by a cavalryman giving the general that evening's password. She successfully hid the note, let the general win, and took the note to her hidden cousin. He got safely through the lines.

The war gave its fair share of anguish to Wood Park, as to Winchester. The beautiful, rolling horse country around Warrenton, best known previously for farming and foxhunting, was the scene of the killing, wounding, or capture of about 4,500 soldiers on both sides at the battle of Manassas.⁴⁵ Leache learned to nurse men and tend the abandoned fields. Surrounded by war, the house was often "shaken by the thunder of cannon."⁴⁶ She cared for her mother during a "slow decline and death,"⁴⁷ watched over her siblings (the oldest only twenty), and tried to keep the family together. But after the Union troops left, and her mother was buried, the family was forced to leave, as their neighbors had before them. There was nothing left to eat. Everything had been gleaned from the fields and taken from barns by soldiers. They never again lived together as a family.

Yet Leache never abandoned the life of the intellect. With the same aplomb she used to occupy the Union general, she traded homegrown cucumbers with Federal troops in exchange for "the choicest books and reviews which Northern cities afforded."⁴⁸ Using the best means she had to support herself, she took a job at a school for "sturdy mountain girls" in Luray, Virginia, run by Mr. Herndon.⁴⁹ When the war ended, she returned that summer of 1865 to a home in ruins, "stripped of windows and doors . . . no furniture . . . no cooking utensils."⁵⁰ It is thought that her father remarried within a year to a much younger woman, leaving Leache to care for her siblings.⁵¹ By fall, the family was

scattered again. Leache took Jessie and Willett to Charlestown, in Jefferson County, where she labored to support and educate them for the next four years.⁵² Jessie, the youngest sister, married and lived in Jefferson County; Willett left Virginia to work elsewhere. The youngest son, Eugene, moved to Texas. Her goal accomplished, Leache accepted a position as a teacher at Angerona. And so both women arrived at the small school in Winchester, the older friend self-taught and worldly-wise, the younger woman intellectually sophisticated, raised in privileged circumstances, and now alone.

Even though their childhood experiences had been quite different, the two women found they had much in common. They quickly discovered a shared love of music and art, to which Leache added a depth of understanding which belied her limited experience. Her lucid mind always sought to "get to the root of things,"⁵³ a predilection which made her an exceptional teacher. She was particularly adept at mathematics, and learned geometry, trigonometry, and calculus on her own initiative.⁵⁴ A former student at Leache-Wood describes her as having "a master mind"⁵⁵ which is well substantiated by her extraordinary ability to teach herself such a broad range of complex subjects. She was equally adept at literature and psychology,⁵⁶ both of which Wood was also interested in. The enormous range of subjects with which she was familiar, so rare for that time and place, would have had tremendous attraction for Wood.

Yet it was not only intellect but a gentle spirit and ethereal nature which so strongly captivated Wood. As she describes it, a "keystone of . . . Miss Leache was the earnest desire to stretch a helping hand to her fellows, sisters, brothers, strangers."⁵⁷ Wood was in need of such a friend at Angerona. Kind to the core, serene, Leache was an

anchor for the younger woman, whose life had been set adrift by her father's death.

Their first meeting was "magnetic," according to a close friend, and they quickly became fast friends beyond the teacher-student relationship.⁵⁸ From Angerona on, they were inseparable. Leache was mentor, idol, companion, and passionate friend. She was the light which guided Wood's life and the sculptor who shaped her sensitivities. Wood writes that their friendship produced "an eternity of love,"⁵⁹ a love "patterned upon the affection of angels," a friendship which (quoting Kant) was "love offset with reverence."⁶⁰

The opening lines of *The Story of a Friendship* are startling to the modern reader, as Wood defines her relationship with Irene Leache in terms of abiding passion. She starts with the Bible: "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." She also writes, "In Achilles we see a man . . . whose best inspiration lay in the might of a great friendship," and of Pylades and Orestes that ". . . not to live together was worse to them than death." And taking from Balzac, she says, "The noblest privilege conferred on us by reason is that we may dedicate our virtues to the being who made us happy and whose happiness we made, not out of self-interest, nor from sense of duty, but from involuntary inexhaustible affection."⁶¹ Who would now express such romantic thoughts about a friend? A modern reader would be inclined to see a sexual relationship, for what late-twentieth century alliance of this intensity between two women would not have a sexual context? The question must be asked: what was the nature of their relationship?

The answer resides in an understanding of the times, and some background in the social history of the nineteenth century is necessary to place in context not only the relationship between Wood and Leache but between men and woman in general. Their relationship had a great deal to do with the expectations and opportunities available to them, especially the role of women, the dearth of men, and the changes in society after the Civil War.

Victorian social mores were based on a society sharply divided by sex. Men and women had distinct functions, specific roles in society which were rarely breached in the nineteenth century. The metaphor of "separate spheres" of influence—men for work and women for home—was very apt, for the lives of men and women overlapped very little.⁶²

It should be remembered that prior to the Industrial Revolution, most women *and* men worked at home.⁶³ As work became increasingly removed from the home, the distinction between public and private grew, and men and women gradually grew more distant from one another both physically and psychologically. Labor became divided by gender as the American economy changed "from subsistence to cash."⁶⁴ As this division by gender deepened, it "came to be regarded as a divine law—not a product of social conditions."⁶⁵ As Wood states in an essay, "Civilization has been working for countless ages to develop the individual as apart from the tribe, to make of woman not only a fellow-worker with man but his inspirer."⁶⁶

For the Victorians, men and women were almost universally viewed as complimentary parts of a whole, where each had an equally important role to play. Women's greatest virtues were piety and propriety, for it was up to them to tend to the higher stan-

dards of life. The men, busy with the coarse business of upgrading their financial circumstances, relied on their unsullied wives to provide the spiritual foundation, to raise the children properly, and to add refinement to the life of the family.⁶⁷ For these roles, they were truly valued, their opinions and demands taken seriously.⁶⁸ Separation was not an odious condition.⁶⁹ Women, as wives and mothers, managed the domestic domain, and defined the values of the home.⁷⁰ Men tended to business, politics, and the world in general; women tended to “the emotional and physical maintenance of the home, the care of the children, the nurturing of the husband, and serving as the ethical and spiritual guardian of the family.”⁷¹

In fact, the position of woman was elevated and idealized in order to inspire. Common nineteenth-century terms refer to this key function as the “Cult of Domesticity,” the “Cult of the Home,” the “Cult of True Womanhood”; all describe woman as the “conservator of beauty, order, and morals.”⁷² Her success was increasingly judged by the accomplishments of her children and husband, and home became a retreat from the materialistic world faced by men.⁷³ Wood believed wholeheartedly in this model; she wrote in one of her albums that “He is the throne. She is the power behind the throne. The more she is a woman, the more she can inspire.”⁷⁴ Her power came at least in part from her charm and beauty, and the extent to which she might influence her husband and children. Women were viewed as “both fragile and powerful,” superior to men on a moral plain but inferior in terms of autonomy.⁷⁵

A woman’s virtue was greatly praised, for she was the keeper of the nation’s morals, the “angel in the house.”⁷⁶ Women were expected to be expressive and emo-

tional.⁷⁷ and sentimental language was not only acceptable but appreciated. Victorian writing is known for its purple patches and literary sentimentalism: "Victorian" has come to be used pejoratively for what is now seen as overwrought phrasing and hyperbole. As ardent as Wood's expressions seem today, they were in fact typical of the period, falling well within standard practice.

As for marriage, eligible young men were scarce after the Civil War. For those who survived, the war fostered a new mobility. Like Leache's brother Willett, many men left to seek their fortunes elsewhere, leaving behind the destruction and pain of the war. Opportunities opened in the West, like the mining interests in the Rockies which drew the two Virginians depicted in *Westover's Ward*. One observer estimates that perhaps one million young men left the South from 1864 to 1890 to go west of the Mississippi, to the southwest, the Pacific northwest, and the border states.⁷⁸ Those who remained close to their homes tended to marry later, giving themselves time to reestablish their lives and save money to better provide for a family. The number of unmarried women increased accordingly, and "became a serious topic of discussion in drawing rooms and in the press."⁷⁹ Between 1860 and 1900, the number of women in the home increased as women married at an older age, and the percentage of women who never married was the highest in the history of the United States. In the South, adult women "significantly outnumbered adult men."⁸⁰

So it is not surprising that close friendships between women were common and encouraged. They were simply not viewed in the same terms as heterosexual associations, which centered on marriage and children. Close relationships between sisters and

female cousins were routine.⁸¹ Affectionate friendships between women were a “notable, publicly sanctioned feature of middle-class women’s culture,” and held no sexual connotation. Notably, women enjoyed “a cultural license to express passionate longings for emotional, spiritual, and physical love [meaning affection] in a same-sex relationship,” where sentimental language was the normal mode of expression.⁸² As one historian notes, “Such friendships between women were not regarded as being in any way sinister or ‘deviant’ until the 1920s . . . intense female networks and support systems [were] taken for granted by nineteenth-century women”⁸³

It is well to remember that Victorians “disapproved of sex in general”⁸⁴ and the topic was almost nonexistent in conversation or literature. In regard to a physical relationship, it was thought that women were aroused only through a desire to procreate. The earliest study of sexuality was published by Richard von Krafft-Ebing in 1886. Based on his forensic search for degeneracy in English sexual offenders, he observed what he called a women’s “sexual inversion” or “contrary sexual impulse.” Havelock Ellis expanded on Krafft-Ebing’s studies in 1897, defining the modern concept of lesbianism.⁸⁵ The rare women who did live together as lovers were tolerated by society primarily because the attraction was so little understood.⁸⁶ Whatever sexual feelings middle-class women might have felt for each other in the nineteenth century were thoroughly sublimated by Victorian mores and a total lack of knowledge of sexology.

Both Leache and Wood valued chastity and praised the virtue of the pure, as Victorian women had been trained to do. In *Westover’s Ward*, Wood writes respectfully of a man who “had formed the habit of separating, in his mind, the promptings of the flesh

from the intention of the will. He was so conscious of this duality of nature, that he recognized just how much he was obeying the one or encouraging the other.”⁸⁷ In 1926, she wrote: “Freud’s insistence upon sex instinct as the chief aspect of libido is . . . an error . . . based upon . . . pathological cases. Libido being a wild creature must be tamed, must be controlled, must be shaped to finer uses and that it is the business of all of us so to shape it.”

Moreover, both Leache and Wood wrote at length of the satisfaction of a life lived on a higher level. In *Answers of the Ages*, Leache quotes Socrates on the importance of setting aside thoughts of earthly pleasures to better “care for your soul that it may attain to the highest virtue”⁸⁸ They shared an abiding interest in angels and Madonna figures, in mysticism and reincarnation, and expressed little interest in earthly gratification, particularly of a physical nature; they truly lived for the gifts of the mind and the spirit.

For them, one of the most satisfying aspects of life was found in living for another. Like other Victorians, they embraced the concept of “the individual who sacrifices self [in order to receive] his own reward in his growth to maturity as a human being.”⁸⁹ After the death of her friend, Wood wrote: “Our purest human affections make up a large part of the pieties of life and we should count it one of our greatest privileges to say to the person we have most loved and revered: ‘To you I owe the growth of the soul, as well as the sweetness of my life, and this must be an enduring bond.’”⁹⁰

It would be difficult to read the passionate expressions of love written by Wood and Leache, and the descriptions from their contemporaries of their profound feelings for one another, and fail to raise the question of their sexuality. But they were thoroughly

Victorian women, who accepted and valued the strict mores of their time. They had neither the concept of, nor the terms for, a lesbian relationship. Therefore, when put into historical context, it is misleading and insupportable to conclude any but the purest alliance. In many ways, Leache was a surrogate mother for the younger woman, who cared for her later with the tender mercy of a daughter. Their friendship was forged at a vulnerable time in Wood's life. More than sisters, they were celibate lovers, earnest guardians, timeless soulmates.

CHAPTER 4

NORFOLK

When Irene Leache and Annie Wood arrived in Norfolk in 1871, an objective observer would have thought them ill-equipped to establish a successful school. They had no training in pedagogy, no school supplies or materials, no money, and few friends.¹ Although Leache had been teaching for several years, she was entirely self-trained. Wood had no experience as either teacher or administrator; indeed, no working experience at all. She was a young woman of twenty-one, culturally aware but naïve and inexperienced in the lessons of life. Leache was about thirty-two,² frail in body but wise with experience, intellect, and common sense. Wood confides that they arrived that August with “purses light as air.”³ full of ideas but totally lacking in financial resources. What encouraged them to make their home in Norfolk, to stake their future on a debatable proposition that the town would support a school for girls? What led them to believe that they would be able to create such a school? What had happened in Norfolk to make the venture a justifiable risk?

In the decades before the Civil War, Norfolk’s economy was tied to the Northern ports of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, which dominated trade. Despite an outstanding natural harbor, Norfolk’s maritime prospects dimmed as trade and immigration flowed to the Northern industrialized cities.⁴ Growth was also stymied by isolation from the rest of Virginia. Rail lines from the Valley and the Piedmont, which previously ended in Petersburg and Richmond, became linked to Norfolk only in the

summer of 1858 with the opening of the Norfolk and Petersburg line.⁵ In 1859, the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal connected Norfolk to northeastern North Carolina, and a western rail line opened the port to the cotton of central North Carolina. Hope was rising for real progress as trade in cotton, flour, corn, and lumber began to move through the port.⁶ Although it seems impossible in retrospect, the possibility of war seemed remote in 1860.⁷

Norfolk representatives to a Virginia convention, meeting in Richmond on February 4, 1861, to consider secession, voted with the majority of delegates to remain with the Union. But by April, the winds of war had swept through Norfolk, and her representative, General George Blow, was instructed to vote in favor of secession. Five days after shots were fired on Ft. Sumter, on April 20, 1861, Virginia seceded from the Union.⁸ Three days later, Federal troops destroyed the Gosport Navy Yard, "entailing immense loss of property,"⁹ and retreated to the Peninsula.¹⁰ The *Day-Book*, the last newspaper to publish in 1861, noted "an almost total cessation of business."¹¹ As the blockade took hold, prices rose steeply, goods disappeared, and the port was inundated with often-unruly Confederate troops.¹²

On March 9, 1862, the Merrimac and the Monitor fought off Craney Island, the first battle between ironclad ships. Thousands of people watched the four-hour fight from the shores of Hampton Roads.¹³ Within two months, the Confederate commander had evacuated the city "after destroying all the public property that could not be carried away."¹⁴ Mayor William W. Lamb met the Federal delegation on Princess Anne Road to surrender the city to General John E. Wool. President Lincoln himself rode through

Norfolk on May 11 to survey the damage and destruction left by the departing Rebel troops, who had destroyed the Navy Yard, mined the drydock, burned buildings, scuttled boats, and sank tobacco.¹⁵

Norfolk was under military rule for most of the war, save one year.¹⁶ During that difficult period, Norfolk became “a city of paupers.”¹⁷ As many as a third of the residents fled the town, for the Union blockade of the Chesapeake Bay continued even when under Federal control, “almost as it were still a bastion of the Confederacy.” Even though the blockade was modified in late 1862 to let in goods needed by the military, conditions were so bad that even Union supporters disparaged army rule.¹⁸ As former slaves arrived from nearby North Carolina and Virginia counties seeking freedom and safety, the city became “mostly destitute,” and provisions were “scarce and expensive.”¹⁹ Two or three women and children died each day from starvation.²⁰

Conditions improved in 1863-64 as the blockade eased. New residents came from the North seeking skilled work, ship repairs resumed at Gosport, and the Union began to provide welfare, jobs, and housing for the needy. General Butler, who took command of Norfolk in October 1863, kept the streets cleared of brawling sailors, renovated the fire department, repaved the streets, reopened the gas company, impounded stray animals, and levied taxes on liquor dealers and tavern owners to help pay for these much-needed improvements.²¹ But an 1864 visitor reported a fourth of the houses deserted and the majority of the rest in disrepair or ruin. The people were mostly “sullen,” he found, the city full of “sadness and gloom if not despair,” and the town distinguished by “general dilapidation.”²²

After the war ended in 1865, sullenness gave way to "urban mayhem" as Norfolk became a "roistering, carousing, gun-slinging, mining camp of a town" for a few months.²³ The city was in ruins and the old rules no longer applied: civilian and military, black and white, Union and Confederate, merchant and sailor eyed each other with suspicion. With commerce at an ebb, the rail lines damaged, and the citizens impoverished, it seemed to some "like wandering amid the ruins of a lost city."²⁴

Norfolk had grown very slowly since its founding almost two centuries before the Civil War. The population in 1860, half that of Richmond, was 14,620, of which about two-thirds were white and one-third black. By 1870 the black population had doubled, while the white population remained the same, for a total increase of twenty-four percent. From the dismal conditions of 1866, Norfolk recovered rapidly over the next four years. With no money in the city treasury in 1868, and the burden of a two million dollar debt, Norfolk yet began to rebuild. Repaired, consolidated rail lines from North Carolina and Tennessee opened trade again. By 1870, Norfolk was a big cotton port and the world's biggest coal port.²⁵ Reconstruction ended early in the year when Federal troops withdrew.²⁶

Between 1870 and 1910, Norfolk's population almost tripled, fed primarily by newcomers from North Carolina, Maryland, and southside Virginia.²⁷ From its pre-war size of only one and one-third square miles, the city expanded beyond its original boundary. Families began to build homes in Brambleton, Atlantic City, Huntersville, and along Stockley Gardens. The wharves began to bustle, as "tar, turpentine, rosin, shingles, and lumber" joined with cotton, tobacco, and coal to fuel a resurgence of activity.

Peanuts, formerly considered a “humble slave food,” became popular with Union troops. After the war, businesses processing and shipping peanuts opened in Norfolk to meet the new demand.²⁸ Between 1875 and 1885, almost five hundred businesses operated in Norfolk, including twenty-six restaurants and saloons, and eleven banks.²⁹ The 1872 City Directory listed as many oyster dealers as doctors.³⁰

As the port activity increased, so did public-spiritedness. The 1870s brought significant and lasting change to Norfolk. New people came to live there, with new expectations.³¹ Cisterns and wells were replaced with a new water supply, which had long been a priority;³² but pipes were laid slowly, and by 1874, fewer than two hundred houses had connected to the city water system; as late as 1893, cisterns were still used.³³ A horse-drawn trolley line down Main Street to the wharves began the month Wood and Leache arrived. The original five cars quickly expanded to serve Church Street, Granby Street, and the new residential areas.

By 1875, many influential and prominent citizens had moved west of Granby Street to a section called Smith’s Point. Middle-class whites lived in the central part of town, bounded by Brewer, Bank, and Cumberland Streets, with a “small but important” Jewish community at the eastern end of Main Street. Poor whites and a few blacks lived in tenements along the alleys south of Main Street, with most of the black citizens housed in the northeast quadrant, along Church Street.³⁴ The older streets remained in disrepair until the 1887, when the appalling mud streets were gradually paved with cobblestones. But the process went very slowly, and by 1896, Norfolk had thirty-two miles of streets, of which only eighteen were paved.³⁵

Street drainage was a great problem, since Norfolk was close to sea level and entirely flat; rainwater, combined with the runoff from faucets, collected in vacant lots, carrying the very real threat of Yellow Fever. The city laid twenty-eight miles of “iron, stone, and terra cotta pipes” in the 1870s, drained marshes, dammed creeks, and worked hard with limited funds to remedy what one historian described as a “pestiferous, noisome, odorous, odious, and unsightly” situation.³⁶

The typical older home was simple, usually brick with steep steps, covered by a small portico, leading down to the street, with the dining room and kitchen in the basement. The townhouse style prevailed, with a hallway and stairs on one side of the entry, leading to two rooms each on the second and third floors. Many houses boasted carefully-tended gardens, which a newspaper article from 1865 glowingly described as “filled with the rarest, most fragrant, and many colored flowers.”³⁷ Wood writes of crepe myrtle and magnolia, and tall shade trees.³⁸ But the homes had no window screens, no central heat, no bathrooms, no gas pipes, electricity, or telephones, for all of these conveniences became common only in the 1890s or later.³⁹

Norfolk was making steady progress toward creating a new center for commerce in southeastern Virginia. The increasing economic activity supported improvements in the quality of life for the town. As leaders began to successfully address the material changes, the need for less tangible improvements became evident. Education, ignored during the war years by necessity, became a priority. Young men of the area might attend the venerable Norfolk Academy, a respected school for boys established in 1728. Yet no school of the same caliber existed for girls. One minister, with the support of his

congregation, determined to establish such a school. He had just the people in mind to do it.

The Reverend Dr. George D. Armstrong led the First Presbyterian Church for forty years, retiring the same year Wood and Leache left for Europe, 1891.⁴⁰ He taught chemistry at Washington College (later Washington and Lee) before coming to Norfolk in 1851. His congregation, located on Church Street near Holt Street,⁴¹ supported his efforts to approach Leache and Wood about opening a school for girls.⁴² He apparently assured the women that the daughters of his congregants would enroll and the members would advance them the funds and credit necessary to establish the school.

It is probable that he had heard of Leache and Wood through the Tucker family in Norfolk, who were related to Annie Tucker McGill, the owner of the Valley Female Seminary at Angerona. One son, The Reverend Dr. Beverley Tucker, taught French there when Wood was a student. The Reverend Dr. Tucker (later Bishop) served as rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Norfolk beginning in 1882. He used to tease his wife that he once fell in love with Wood at Angerona.⁴³ The Beverley Tuckers raised four daughters and nine sons, the oldest of which, St. George Tucker, became the national Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. A contemporary recounted that they were "an amazing family: thirteen children; happy; all of them well-educated; not a failure in the lot. They graced the fields of the church, medicine, law and business."⁴⁴

When Wood and Leache came to Norfolk, they would have probably traveled by train south through the Shenandoah Valley, taking the B&O (Baltimore and Ohio) railroad to Buena Vista, connecting to the Shenandoah Railroad to Roanoke, and to the

AM&O (Atlantic, Missouri, and Ohio) line east to Norfolk. A more direct route did not exist, and restoration was continuing on many lines destroyed during the Civil War.⁴⁵ They would have come directly into downtown Norfolk, where they stayed at the Old Purcell House on the corner of Church and Main Streets in the oldest part of Norfolk.⁴⁶ A line of farmer's carts would have greeted them, frequently blocking Main Street with their wares.⁴⁷ From their room, Wood vividly recalled her first, almost hopeless impression of Norfolk: "The air was filled with tastes of dust and with a heat that seemed to buzz. Instead of passers-by, there were stragglers, negroes mostly. The pavements were blistered with empty grape skins. A watermelon rind lay in the gutter where it had been flung by a vagrant. There was a sordid smell, united to an atmosphere of stagnation."⁴⁸

Not long after, Dr. Armstrong arrived to escort them to his home for a meal of spot, figs, and scuppernong grapes, a feast of local favorites. His cordiality extended beyond the dining room: he had obtained lines of credit for the women with their new landlady, as well as with the appropriate "tradesmen, doctor, [and] coal merchant," all of whom were members of the good minister's congregation. The doors of the Leache-Wood Seminary opened that fall in a small house downtown.

Within two months, smallpox struck the school and forced them to shut down temporarily. On November 2, "a dreamy, fragrant morning" (Wood tells us), they struggled to find someone willing to help them move desks, supplies, and belongings to the Presbyterian Church, where the school resumed in "prayer-meeting rooms" and the study until January 1872.⁴⁹ The school moved several more times, including to a house

at 62 Brewer Street near Charlotte Street,⁵⁰ then to 235 Freemason Street, between Cumberland and Church.⁵¹ settling eventually at 138 Granby Street at the corner of Freemason Street. As the number of students grew, the need for a space designed especially as a school became increasingly evident. In 1880, a benefactor described only as Mr. R—— stepped in, possibly the attorney W. D. Reynolds, a stockholder, parent, and president of the board.⁵² The Directors purchased a large lot just behind the Granby Street house, facing onto Freemason Street, from Dr. Samuel Browne.⁵³ Using Mr. R——'s design, a spacious, thirty-room building was completed over the summer, at a cost of \$4000, by Norfolk contractors Keeling and Fletcher.⁵⁴ This addition to the school was a great success. The complex included “a fine calisthenic hall, spacious play-ground, numerous and well-ventilated recitation rooms, piazzas, cloakrooms, etc.”⁵⁵ Students entered directly from 131 Freemason Street; the house facing Granby Street became Wood's and Leache's residence and a gathering place for cultural events.

The house facing Granby was square and open, with a steep flight of steps set tight against the wooden boards of the exterior. A covered portico supported by four columns sheltered the second-floor entrance. Six large windows looked out from each side of the dignified house, each mounted with large louvered shutters to provide relief from the summer sun and protection from severe weather. It looked like many of the houses still standing in Old Town Portsmouth, a straight-forward, comfortable dwelling.⁵⁶ The Freemason Street extension looked cool and almost mysterious in comparison. The only remaining photograph, taken long after the summer of 1880, shows a large, rectangular brick building covered with a profusion of ivy and sheltered

by overgrown trees. A canopy covers the wide, low entrance.⁵⁷ It looks like a welcoming, comfortable place to go about the business of learning.

The Leache-Wood Seminary was not the first school for girls in Norfolk, nor was it the only one. As early as 1761, a female seminary was in operation.⁵⁸ Of the sixteen schools in Norfolk prior to 1849, at least three served girls: The Norfolk Female Institute, run by the Reverends A. S. Smith and L. L. Smith; Miss Catherine Baylor's School; and the Female Seminary, Joseph C. Addington, Principal.⁵⁹ These schools catered to the economically advantaged: very little if anything outside the home was available for the poor. Education was "conditioned by [a girl's] social standing."⁶⁰ More important than good teaching was good breeding, and "what teaching there was concentrated on practical knowledge, etiquette, social graces, and the art of self-presentation." Primarily finishing schools, the curriculum was designed to sustain women as wives, mothers, and housekeepers.⁶¹

In the United States, education for women from Colonial times consisted of practical education for the home. Instruction began alike for boys and girls at the "dame schools" that prevailed from the 1600s to the Civil War. A few pre-primary age students would gather in the kitchens and parlors of those women willing to teach basic reading and listen to lessons while they continued with household chores.⁶² Students might learn the alphabet and "rudimentary spelling and reading," using the hornbook and primer as guides.⁶³ Girls might continue at a "ciphering school," which evolved into the grammar school.⁶⁴ Boys from families of means attended grammar schools based on the classics: they were taught Latin and Greek, oratory and rhetoric, and

trained in penmanship to prepare them for jobs as ministers, lawyers, clerks, and journalists.⁶⁵ A significant number of Virginia boys attended New England boarding schools, which followed the English tradition.

Beginning in the early 1700s, these classic schools began to add courses in science, higher math, and modern languages, evolving into an academy format. By 1850, seven thousand academies and seminaries were open in the United States; almost all of them focused on practical subjects with a foundation in the classics.⁶⁶ The experience at the schools for girls was notably “separate and inferior.”⁶⁷ Generally, until 1870, seminaries were characterized as “few . . . temporary, overcrowded, and poorly equipped with books and laboratories, in addition to untrained teachers.”⁶⁸ Very few academies were coed, since it was almost universally held that women needed a separate education to prepare them for the separate domain they would occupy in the adult world.⁶⁹

Until the Civil War, women’s education was “conceived in terms of a woman’s social role.” After the war, and until the turn of the century, educational opportunities slowly opened for women to pursue secondary and higher education and occupational training.⁷⁰ Many of the seminaries in the South listed an impressive array of courses, rivaling the well-established schools in New England, but the faculty was so small, and the facilities so limited, that it “appears doubtful that all of the subjects listed could possibly have been taught.”⁷¹ Indeed, most schools prior to 1870 concentrated on those domestic skills which a married woman would need for everyday living. These

included reading because a mother was responsible for the early education of her children.

Until 1900, most Americans debated the value of education for girls beyond domestic needs. It was argued that "rigorous intellectual training strained a girl's mental capacity, had deleterious effects upon her physical and emotional health, and conflicted with her innate femininity."⁷² One authority, a prominent Harvard physician, circulated a tract in 1873 which warned Americans of the danger of educating women: ". . . improper methods of study and a disregard of the reproductive apparatus and its functions [may cause educated women to become] permanently disabled, so as to excite the *gravest alarm*, and to demand the serious attention of the community." He continued with the prediction that educated women would not be able to bear children, forcing America, "like the old story of unwed Rome and the Sabines," to recruit wives from abroad.⁷³

Girls were therefore most likely to be taught patience, self-abnegation, self-discipline, and "the virtues of obedience."⁷⁴ skills far more crucial to their adult lives than history, mathematics, or chemistry. This 1860 statement of the Wadawanuck Female College in Stonington, Connecticut, expresses well the almost universal attitude toward women's education in the Victorian era:

As teacher, wife, mother, and guide of the house, woman exercises a power over the very elements of society while in the forming and growing state, which determines in a great degree the moral and intellectual character, and the physical well-being of the entire community. While therefore her active powers have less range than those of man, her influence is ever wider and more pervading. Of this influence, character is the most essential element; what woman can *do*, is included in and depends upon what she *is*.⁷⁵

Schools like Angerona were designed “to bring groups of girls into a safe, social, and intellectually appropriate world which they would share while becoming women.”⁷⁶

Yet even those opportunities were rare. Across the United States, prior to the Civil War only about seven out of a thousand girls received the equivalent of a high school education. In 1870, the number had grown to only twenty per thousand.⁷⁷

When Leache-Wood opened in Norfolk, one source states that “for the girls [of Norfolk], there was nothing worthy to be called a school.”⁷⁸ Furthermore, regional underdevelopment and poverty left the South as the “least educated region” in America,⁷⁹ though Virginia led the South in secondary and higher education.⁸⁰ Wood comments pointedly in *Westover’s Ward* that “the South possessed only social and religious standards, but no intellectual ones.”⁸¹ A total of thirteen schools for girls existed in Norfolk in 1871,⁸² but little is known of any of them except Leache-Wood and the Norfolk Collegiate Institute. It is reasonable to presume that the rest were small, home-based schools of modest pretensions geared to the elementary level.

Potentially in the same league as Leache-Wood, however, was the Norfolk Collegiate Institute for Young Ladies, which opened in 1868 with an ambitious high school program. The Reverend Robert M. Saunders, a Methodist minister, served as principal, with his wife, Mary Jane Toomer Saunders, teaching literature and languages: French, Italian, Spanish, and German were offered for an additional fee. The first students graduated in 1870. By 1876, enrollment was up to 116 girls, primarily from the immediate area, but also including more than a dozen boarding students from neighboring states. Courses included “mental and moral philosophy,” physics, botany,

geology, astronomy, architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and a post-graduate course in pedagogy.⁸³ Located on Freemason Street, just east of Granby and within a block of Leache-Wood, the school closed in 1880 for unknown reasons.

What of public schools? Since Thomas Jefferson, government funding for education had been discussed in Virginia, with poor results until Reconstruction. Jefferson called for districts to be established across the Commonwealth, each headed by a supervisor appointed by an elected local board. Each supervisor would hire teachers, set the curriculum, evaluate pupils, and generally oversee education. Jefferson's proposal was modest: three years of free education—at state expense—for both boys and girls. Later, high schools could be established in each district as boarding schools, partially funded by the Commonwealth. Although he urged the emancipation and industrial training of blacks, free public primary schools were for white children only.⁸⁴ His most ardent hope was for a state university for boys, offering “training in letters, professions, arts, and arms,” the only part of his proposal to become reality before his death, with the founding of the University of Virginia in 1819.⁸⁵

Modest funds had been set aside “for the schooling of poor children” as early as 1810, when the Literary Fund was conceived to provide for public education without taxation.⁸⁶ Although the General Assembly passed an act authorizing public primary schools in 1850, little progress was made anywhere in the state. Norfolk made a modest attempt in 1857, when Major R. G. Banks was hired as superintendent and opened a school on Fenchurch Street.⁸⁷ But public support for tax-supported schools “ran against a long tradition of private control over educational purse strings.”⁸⁸ A stratified

social system, which concentrated power and opportunity in a small percentage of the population, coupled with rural isolation, worked against public schools in the South.⁸⁹ More importantly, the Jeffersonian concept of education as the cornerstone of democracy, that citizens cannot be both ignorant and free, was not widely held or adopted — especially for females, blacks and the poor.

Only in 1870 under Federal mandate did public education begin in earnest, and then with the greatest resistance. Community leaders in the South who had had property were destitute, disenfranchised, and obstinately resistant to the changes instigated and enforced by the Union right after the war.⁹⁰ For many, public schools seemed arbitrarily imposed, a “symbol of the tyranny of Reconstruction.”⁹¹ Virginians had just fought a war over the issue of the rights of states to govern themselves and were antagonistic to any form of federal control. Many simply resisted the idea of taxation for schools their own children would be loathe to attend.⁹²

In Norfolk, six public schools at the primary level opened in 1872 under superintendent W. W. Lamb, four white and two black. Of 6,182 children between the ages of five and twenty-one eligible to attend, fewer than one thousand enrolled. Conditions were dreadful: in the white schools 16 teachers had charge of 526 pupils, in the black school 8 teachers for 359 students, an average of 56 per teacher. Buildings were inadequate, classrooms grossly overcrowded, facilities poor.⁹³ Underfunded and struggling, some schools were forced to offer morning and afternoon shifts.⁹⁴ Even as late as 1878, the public was so unenthused for public education that only the lack of enough private schools available to meet the demand kept public schools open. Norfolk

had the lowest percentage of children attending school in the state: only a little more than half.⁹⁵ Not until the 1890s were public schools well-established in the cities of the commonwealth.⁹⁶

It is noteworthy that a relative of Annie Wood was instrumental in winning support for public education in Winchester. William Henry Gold, married to Wood's aunt and the owner of Rock Hill, served with distinction for seven years as superintendent of the Frederick County Schools. His predecessor, the first to hold the position, lasted only five months. Gold graciously accepted a difficult and thankless job out of a feeling of community need. He is given great credit for gaining acceptance for public education in that county.⁹⁷

In 1892, the United States Ministry of Education published an extraordinary report on the state of education in the South. It was written by Amory Dwight Mayo, an educator who visited hundreds of schools between 1880 and 1900, from Virginia to Texas. He was a Unitarian minister, born in Warwick, Massachusetts, and he had a Jeffersonian zeal to use education as the cornerstone of democracy. He ardently believed that "education should seek to develop the 'ability and natural endowments' of every single child, allowing no place 'for caste or class' in American society."⁹⁸ His comments help put into context the accomplishments of the Leache-Wood Seminary, since they reflect not only broad experience but insightful observation.

Southern schools either closed or operated under a severe strain from 1860 to 1870. Norfolk Academy, for instance, was taken over by Federal troops to use as a hospital until 1865.⁹⁹ Of the one hundred academies and seminaries in operation in

Virginia between 1840 and 1860, only a handful remained open during the war.¹⁰⁰ Most girls raised in this period had only the education learned at home, which varied greatly by circumstances; boys had even less, since they were either fighting or preparing to fight. But a growing demand for education for women before the war led to the early establishment of seminaries after Reconstruction. Mayo notes a number of schools of "especial value, semiprivate, generally [with] a small number of select students grouped around a teacher of rare ability and notable womanhood."¹⁰¹ Like Robert E. Lee and many others who went into teaching after the war to help prepare the next generation of Southern leaders, the educated women of the best families in the South turned to teaching. Mayo describes them as "hundreds of the most cultivated and distinguished women," frequently the daughters, widows, and sisters of prominent leaders in civic and military life.¹⁰²

Few seminaries were under the entire control of women. Most were directed or organized by Protestant clergy, but were established as "free schools," meaning no restrictions on admittance with respect to denomination or religion.¹⁰³ Leache-Wood was managed by a board of ten directors, all male save the two principals, and non-denominational. The 1880 school catalog lists fifteen stockholders (including the directors), thirteen from Norfolk and two from Portsmouth. W. D. Reynolds served as President, Leache as Treasurer, Wood as Secretary. The male directors were judges and lawyers primarily, plus one physician and three businessmen.¹⁰⁴

Within the first five years of the school, courses covered a broad range and reflected the interests and achievements of the principals. The 1875 diploma of Isabella

McIntosh (Mrs. Richard Baylor), one of the first two graduates.¹⁰⁵ lists the successful completion of the following courses:¹⁰⁶

The English Language: Its Grammar and Etymology
 History: Ancient, Medieval and Modern
 Literature: Classical, Medieval and Modern
 Mathematics: Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, and the
 Calculi (*sic*)
 Aesthetics: Logic and the Physical Sciences
 One Ancient Language: Latin
 Two Modern Languages: French and German

To confirm their teaching standards, Leache wrote to the University of Virginia requesting a copy of one of its math tests. McIntosh, according to her daughter, Lucy Gordon (Mrs. John D.), “passed with a high grade.”¹⁰⁷

Isabella McIntosh was a gifted student, who received a gold medal for scholarship when she graduated, inscribed *Palma Non Sine Pulvere* (“No palm without dust,” i.e. no reward without effort).¹⁰⁸ Two other medals were awarded in 1875, but the practice was discontinued a few years later. According to Lucy Gordon, a Leache-Wood graduate herself, one student’s distress over not winning a medal caused the principals to abandon the awards.¹⁰⁹ Reports of a student’s progress were written on lavender paper, and a roll of honor was posted in colored chalk on a large blackboard every two weeks, to celebrate the accomplishments of students. Exemplary compositions would be read by students or Leache in front of the student body.¹¹⁰

By 1880, twenty-eight girls had graduated from the school,¹¹¹ which was on solid financial footing soon after it opened. Wood relates with pride that, much as they hated to begin in debt, the risk proved supportable. Within the first year, Wood writes, “the school was firmly rooted, its debts were paid, and a sum . . . set apart for one less

fortunate than ourselves. . . .”¹¹² Tuition was payable quarterly, but students had to be enrolled for the whole year.¹¹³ A few boarding students, “limited to that of a pleasant family,” were added after the first few years.¹¹⁴ Leache’s own younger sisters became students; her sister Sallie Leache joined the faculty and remained in Norfolk, where she lived with one of the first graduates, Mary Ghiselin. With pride, Irene Leache educated the oldest daughters of each of her siblings, continuing the high priority held by her parents to nurture a love of learning.

In addition to the courses listed above, the 1880 catalog offers courses in Belles-Lettres, composition, differential and integral calculus, and bookkeeping. Natural sciences and laboratory experiments were taught by Reverend Armstrong, and included chemistry and mineralogy. Professor Ainsworth gave lessons in piano and organ, as well as voice; Mrs. Carr taught instrumental music, and the catalog notes that “Every possible advantage and every facility for practicing will be offered the pupils under the care of these teachers. . . . Efforts will be made to cultivate taste and to perfect execution. . . .”¹¹⁵ Wood was always especially interested in art, and classes in drawing, watercolor, and oils were given their due. The school was well-known for its emphasis on the fine arts, and offered classes in art and music, as well as foreign languages, to interested students in the community.¹¹⁶

Leache-Wood was considered a “fashionable school,”¹¹⁷ whose students were “the daughters of many of our leading citizens,” and who in turn sent their own daughters to the school.¹¹⁸ In addition to primary, junior, and senior grades, Leache and Wood started a kindergarten in 1880, when the Freemason Street building opened, for

children ages three to eight, which was a new concept at the time. The catalog devotes a full page to explain its validity as an integral part of a educational program, pointing out that “it awakens observation and attention, and these are the bases of true education.”¹¹⁹ The kindergarten hours were shorter, from ten to one o’clock, rather than nine to three. (Boys schools, like Norfolk Academy, were in session for much longer hours, however, sometimes from early morning to five o’clock.¹²⁰) The principals announced their intention of selecting a teacher “trained . . . in Northern schools, and who . . . has nobility of character and gentleness of manner.”¹²¹ Coincidentally, these were precisely the traits most often used to define Irene Leache.

By all accounts, the partners were successful in recruiting and training fine teachers. Leache and Wood balanced each other’s talents and interests, and both were women of eminent character. Leache was a truly gifted teacher, with the ability to impart her considerable knowledge with what Wood called “an instinctive delicacy” for what students might retain; and “she knew how to pique their desire for learning.”¹²² A friend commented to Wood: “[Leache] has a way of making you find out that you know things you did not dream you knew, she makes you say things you could not have said to any one else . . . one can’t help loving to be with her.”¹²³

Leache was a superb administrator as well, making “regular and unscheduled inspections of all classes,” and offering “unceasing supervision of every department.”¹²⁴ The school was known for its challenging curriculum, innovative methods, and what Wood calls the “personal magnetism” of Leache.¹²⁵ Without hesitation, Wood cites the comment of one gentleman to her: “You are the stem, but Miss Leache is the flower.”¹²⁶

Though never as adored as her partner, Wood “had the respect and admiration of her pupils.”¹²⁷ A former student, Fannie Curd, described her as possessing “an understanding soul—for one could always express an opinion, no matter how simple . . . with the knowledge that it would be received with interest and consideration.”¹²⁸ Although Wood lovingly gives credit to her friend for the success of the school, her own influence is clearly visible as well.

Wood is remembered by one student as “a fine and illuminating teacher.”¹²⁹ Another wrote that she “possessed the enviable gift of encouraging others to express their thoughts, thereby developing the best that was in them.”¹³⁰ She was full of enthusiasm and zeal for pursuing the best approaches to teaching, and wrote that “the history of a school is a history of reforms.”¹³¹ It was she who urged Leache to travel, in order to broaden their experience, refresh their perspective, and improve their minds. It is likely to have been Wood who urged their attendance at summer institutes in New England, where they went to take classes, hone their pedagogical skills, and recruit teachers for the school.¹³² One such program, a series of lectures in philosophy, was organized by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Louisa May Alcott in Concord, Massachusetts.¹³³ It was surely Wood who added courses in psychology and the history of art to the school’s curriculum, rare at the time.¹³⁴ Drama performances, field trips to places of historic and cultural interest, and promoting an enduring love of the arts were all hallmarks of Wood’s influence.

The two women believed that social and cultural development was an intrinsic part of personal growth. For their own enjoyment and to enhance the school, they

began to invite friends to come over on Saturday evenings. Very soon, twenty or thirty visitors would drop in for a social gathering. Men and women of all ages would stop by for evenings featuring poetry, lectures, dramatic recitations, debates, "parlor comedies," philosophical discussions, dancing, and musical performances, all clearly Wood's idea of enjoyable activities.¹³⁵

Norfolk had very few cultural choices at the time. Traveling musicians and theater troops would come occasionally after the war, but the main recreational events were meetings of fraternal organizations, sailing excursions, horseracing, and baseball.¹³⁶ Dr. Samuel Selden organized the Norfolk Library Association in 1870, with a collection of books housed at Norfolk Academy and open to the public.¹³⁷ Whatever other cultural activities existed have gone unrecorded. It is commonly thought that, as one commentator expressed it, the arts were "almost at a famine stage."¹³⁸ Leache-Wood planted the seeds of personal growth and development which were to have a profound effect on the future of Norfolk. It was "the oasis of culture" in Norfolk in its time.¹³⁹

In 1886, Leache and Wood formed the Fireside Club, composed of fewer than twenty close friends who met weekly for conversation and reading. The name comes from their habit of gathering in front of the fireplace in the upstairs parlor at 138 Granby Street.¹⁴⁰ The group was originally almost equally divided by gender and included several Leache-Wood directors, former students, and Leache's sister Sallie, who taught at the school for a while. For women particularly, the Fireside Club served as a bridge from the narrow sphere of home to an interest in the wider world. Although social

conventions forbade involvement in public life. groups like this allowed women to learn and grow within a broader but still private realm.¹⁴¹ It fostered “intellectual independence” in that they took their studies seriously and were taken seriously in turn by the members.¹⁴² Equally important, the Fireside Club lessened the isolation Wood undoubtedly felt from the cultural mainstreams of America and Europe.

For an unmarried woman, moreover, study groups were a socially acceptable way to meet in mixed groups for meaningful conversation. Wood joined a study group wherever she lived, even as a temporary resident in various European cities. She mentions, for instance, being invited to join three clubs while staying in Rome in the 1890s, respectively exploring the history of the primitive church, theosophy, and Dante.¹⁴³ Study groups provided a venue for continuing education in the subjects she loved: art, music, history, drama, literature, philosophy, and psychology. She always had a high regard for the value of conversation, holding that “knowledge is distributive” and the opportunity to learn from any intelligent discussion should not be missed.¹⁴⁴

Wood felt strongly that the highest purpose of education is to teach one how to discriminate, to train students to use judgment.¹⁴⁵ Holding to the highest standards of integrity and character, Wood and Leache taught by example as much as by lecture. The ambitious curriculum was supported by high standards of quality and self-discipline. At a time when it was widely thought that the study of analytical subjects, like math and science, would impair a girl’s health by straining her too far mentally and physically,¹⁴⁶ Leache-Wood endeavored to set a girl’s mind free. In an era when the connection between physical and mental activities was little regarded, Leache and

Wood required regular calisthenics as an integral part of the curriculum. They treated students with respect and loving attention, with a focus on continual self-improvement. The school offered courses far beyond the practical lessons thought appropriate for girls in the past. By promoting education for its own sake, they opened new doors for women and thereby helped to change the expectations of both sexes.

In addition, the Saturday evening programs, and the courses in music and languages open to non-students, drew in a broad range of people, profoundly influencing a community hungry for such options. In many ways, it set the standard for a generation of men and women. The schools which followed Leache-Wood modeled themselves on the Leache-Wood protocols when they introduced physical activities, foreign languages, science, math, and an emphasis on the arts. The activities started by Wood and Leache provided the intellectual stimulation long missing in Norfolk. Because they were based on a premise of life-long learning, the programs they introduced gave that generation an enduring love of the arts which has been carried forward to this day.

CHAPTER 5

TRAVELS

In 1891, Irene Leache's health began to fail. She had been frail even as a child. Wood noticed, from their first meeting at Angerona, that "the slim nervous hand lying on her muslin lap was of the frailness of a bird's claw."¹ She was slight and delicate, and to Wood "her body seemed translucent; you could almost see the inner through the outer self."² Only three likenesses of Irene Leache remain, in addition to the marble bust commissioned by the Irene Leache Memorial and sculpted after her death. The bust now stands on a tall marble pedestal in The Chrysler Museum of Art, just to the side of the main entrance. It was carved by Luigi Guglielmi (1834-1907), a sculptor selected by Wood when she lived in Florence. It is a beautiful work of art, idealized and timeless.

Two identical small leather photograph cases, inset with a band of silver, are housed in a glass case across from the marble bust. They contain two pictures each of Leache and Wood. Leache's case holds a small oval picture of a girl, probably in her teens, directly facing the camera. Her dark eyes stare intently at the observer. A sense of purpose, coupled with unusual serenity, compels the viewer's attention.

Both of the later photographs show a small, mature woman with sharp features, narrow shoulders, and unmistakable intensity. Her hair is parted in the middle and pulled back severely into a tight bun at the nape of her neck. Wood describes her as having "sensitive features," a narrow chin, wide forehead, dull hair, "agate-hued eyes," with the crown of her head highly arched.³ The "flash of mischief"⁴ that so delighted Wood is not

evident in the photographs. In contrast to the gentleness of the young girl, the face of the adult is stern, the lips tightly set: it is not hard to imagine her in discomfort if not pain.

Wood, on the other hand, was a large-boned, robust woman. The leather case contains the picture of a very young child, perhaps six or eight years old. She is saucy, her mouth set with determination, a slight tilt to the head. The opposite picture is presumably Annie Wood with her mother. The child is draped across her mother's lap in a long white christening gown. The mother looks anxious; she glances up to her right, away from the camera.

In addition, three photographs remain of Wood as an adult. The earliest one, dated 1876, shows a spunky, stylish young woman of 26, with a long, thin face and pale, piercing eyes. She looks ready to take on the world and eager to get to it. The hint of a smile playfully threatens to burst forth into a grin. Her hair appears to be light brown, pulled into a high knot back from her forehead, with a tight braid of hair circling it like a crown. A large oval pin anchors the high collar of her dress, which is layered with diagonal bands of lace. Elongated tear-drop earrings dangle almost to her chin. The sense of style she became known for is already clear. She rather resembles Wood's description of Diana Fontaine, someone not pretty but "interesting . . . she had striking points You always wanted to see what she was going to do next."⁵

Another picture, taken when she was in her late 60s, shows little diminution of that girlish spunk. The eyes are still piercing, the gaze honest and direct. She is wearing the heavy black wig for which she is remembered by those who knew her in Norfolk during World War I, adopted perhaps to hide gray hair or out of convenience. She had a

small streak of vanity, to be sure. The last picture, a large portrait, was made in Italy about 1930. It depicts a formidable woman of accomplishment and authority. She is wearing a timeless costume of rich marine-blue velvet, of obvious European design; the jacket's wide sleeves are decorated with gold threads and ornate frog closures. She wears an overabundance of jewelry. Her silk blouse is fastened with a jeweled circle pin from which hang five short strands of beads and pearls; she wears a long necklace with a delicate chain from which hangs a filigreed medallion set with tiny stones; and two rings grace her right hand, one a plain pearl and the other an ornate diamond-shaped dinner ring set with jewels. Incongruously, she wears a sentimental black ribbon at her throat, with a circle pin centered under her chin, a seemingly girlish adornment. Perhaps the effect works, for she looks surprisingly young for a woman of seventy. Her light blue eyes are sharp and clear, her soft brown hair gently curling.

If this outfit seems overdone, it is well to note that it was not out of character at all. She was famous for her "outlandish costumes," and was "inclined to arty velvet gowns, and quantities of beads and other gee-gaws." A former student recalled her "extraordinary" outfits, especially "a pair of very fancy high laced gray suede shoes which so distracted her pupils that finally she exclaimed in exasperation, 'Now children, if you have looked your fill at my shoes, we will get on with the lesson.' " However, as odd as her clothes may have seemed to the citizens of Norfolk, she was too respected to be the brunt of jokes. "People may smile at her, but they never laughed at her."⁶

When Irene Leache became ill, Annie Wood thought an extended holiday might restore her friend's vitality. It is likely that Leache was simply exhausted, for the strength

of her mind was a poor match for the weakness of her body. The two women had traveled before, journeying each summer to some new locality in order to study other cultures, to engage their minds lest they fail to “keep their temperaments fluid.” With a characteristic lack of understatement, here is Wood’s rationale for the importance of travel:

No less than lecture and club, is travel a factor in development. . . . The mind, being an etheric body, has full power to spread from country to country, from century to century, gathering into one current the experience of the world, and bringing it home for daily use. It is man’s fault if he consents to lie down in a groove which is marked off by hard and fast lines, so that where he lay at twenty-five he finds himself still lying at fifty, his ideals turned to crystals, his theories overhanging him like a row of stalactites, the man himself an image of a human being which only death can disintegrate.⁷

One of their summer excursions was to Prince Edward Island, to visit the French and Spanish Indians and study their folklore. Another trip was an “expedition to the Rio Grande Valley” where they stayed several days “in the fascinating pueblo of San Juan.”⁸ Later summer trips, especially in the 1880s, were taken with small groups of friends to Europe. Wood refers to these trips as “stepping stone[s] in the pathway of development . . . It is in comparing sections, peoples, races, one with another, that we come to understand our own section, our own people and ourselves.”⁹ She kept that fervor until the very end of her life, writing when she was in her 80s that “the best form of mental gymnastics . . . is the power to precipitate yourself from your own century into another; or, from the midst of your own people into the environment of an alien race.”¹⁰

Once they decided to travel in Europe through the next term, the two women leased the school to their senior teacher for four years, Agnes Douglas West, who served as “Acting Principal.”¹¹ It is probable that Wood expected to be able to restore the health

of her friend through travel and rest, with the intention of returning to Norfolk in a year to continue directing the school. Instead, they spent the next nine years traveling across Europe and then through the Middle East, exploring and absorbing as much history and culture as they could, and resting when Leache's health demanded it.. They did not visit Norfolk once during this period, returning only a few weeks before Leache's death. West purchased the school in 1898, after serving as principal through seven terms.¹² In 1900, she purchased five lots on the south side of Fairfax Avenue for \$14,200 from the Ghent Company. She built a large and imposing school building, with a wide porch facing a broad back lawn, where students could study and read when weather permitted.¹³ She continued to operate under the Leache-Wood name, which had great value in the community, until the school closed in 1917.¹⁴

Several new schools for girls opened in Norfolk in response to the city's steady expansion after 1871, following decades of no growth. The city's aspirations were set on becoming a major port and commercial hub. Business thrived with the continued growth of trade in cotton and coal. Produce from nearby truck farms made its way through the port and nearly five hundred oyster boats worked its waters.¹⁵ In the twenty years that Leache and Wood ran their school, Norfolk's population increased 55%.¹⁶ The city annexed 2470 acres between 1879 and 1888.¹⁷ The face of the city changed: apartment buildings sprouted in Ghent and West Ghent, streets were paved with cobblestones formerly used as ship ballast, development started in Ocean View, electric lights began to replace gas lights, and electric trolley cars replaced the horse-drawn trolleys.¹⁸

Foremost among the new schools was the Norfolk College for Young Ladies,

referred to most often as “the Roper school” after its founder, John L. Roper, a successful lumberman. Housed in a handsome, three-story building on Granby Street designed especially as a school, it opened in 1880 only one block from Leache-Wood. It boasted a number of innovative building enhancements and graduated more than three hundred young women before closing in 1899. Reverend and Mrs. Saunders, formerly of the Norfolk Collegiate Institute (which closed in 1880), served as principals. The curriculum offered preparatory, intermediate, and senior work, as well as some postgraduate classes. The faculty and staff were well-respected, and its loyal alumnae continued to meet for many years. In a number of ways, the schools complimented each other, and each is lovingly remembered.¹⁹

The Phillips and West School opened about the same time, in 1892. Like Leache-Wood, the curriculum combined a strong academic grounding with an emphasis on fine arts and music. The principals, Florence Phillips and Sarah K. West, came from Staunton, Virginia, and bought the school from a prior owner.²⁰ It enjoyed a fine reputation. Some of the Leache-Wood graduates sent their daughters to Phillips and West, for there may have been some dissatisfaction with Agnes Douglas West after a few years.²¹ Interestingly, when the school closed in 1913, Sarah West moved to Florence to spend time with Annie Wood.²²

A third school, Mary Washington College, opened nearby in the late 1880s, at Granby and Freemason Streets. It catered to both boarding and day students, serving an average of seventy-five “young ladies” each year. The principal, Virginia Reynolds, was from a prominent Norfolk family. She innovatively featured physical education in a large

room furnished with climbing ropes, dumbbells, basketballs, and something called an Indian club. Academically, the school advertised that most of their teachers held degrees “from the finest northern colleges.” The number of students began to decline in 1906, and the school closed in 1910.²³

Clearly, Leache-Wood had a positive impact on the educational opportunities for girls in Norfolk. As late as 1900, most schools in Virginia consisted of only one-room and stopped at the fourth grade.²⁴ Agnes Douglas West had been trained by Leache and Wood, and she endeavored to maintain their high standards. Under her direction, Leache-Wood “prided itself on having well-qualified teachers and in college preparation.”²⁵ To meet the demand for women’s education after the Civil War, according to Dr. McCoy, educated women from the North came south to teach, since “teaching was almost the only place where an educated woman could earn her bread.” By the 1880s, women held 50% of the teaching positions in the South, and 60% in the North.²⁶

A number of Leache-Wood teachers continued after the founders left, notably Emma Cartwright Shepherd, who had met another Leache-Wood teacher, Agnes Douglas West, at a summer course at Harvard, and agreed to move from Nantucket to Norfolk to join the Leache-Wood faculty. She shared a room in the school with Sallie Shepherd at one time, when faculty was housed in upstairs rooms.²⁷ Sallie Shepherd had been the first boarding student at Leache-Wood, became a fellow teacher, and eventually Emma’s sister-in-law. In an 1893 letter, Emma Cartwright Shepherd warmly describes the new faculty hired by Agnes Douglas West. The French teacher came from France; the Music teacher had studied in New York and Boston; the Literature teacher was from New York

and a Smith graduate: and the kindergarten teacher was “a cultivated Bostonian.”²⁸

Louise Collier Willcox, an earlier New England recruit of Wood and Leache’s, was a well-known writer, editor, and translator. She was educated in Europe by private tutors, spoke French and German fluently, and taught languages at Leache-Wood. She and Leache co-authored a book of inspirational quotations called *Answers of the Ages*. Published in Chicago, Willcox’s home town, in 1900 (the year of Leache’s death), the book curiously gives only the initials of the authors, never acknowledging them by name. It is a small, leather-bound volume printed in red and black ink. Each chapter addresses one of the eternal questions: What is God? Man? Soul? Right Living? Heaven? Fascinating in scope, it represents, according to the Foreword, quotes “gathered from the note-books of two friends,” which were “chosen for their rarity” and are “offered to those who feel a yearning to enlarge the boundaries of faith.”²⁹

The selections explore wide varieties of faith indeed, quoting most often from Swedenborg, Plato, Maeterlinck, the Kabbala, Porphyry, Récéjàc, the Upanishads, Schurré, the Bhagavad-Gita, Pythagorus, Hermes Trismegistus, Pistis Sophia, and Kant. That covers a lot of spiritual ground. Yet the book could have as easily been compiled by Wood, because these same sources emerge again and again throughout her life in her own writing. She was interested in and familiar with European theologians, neoplatonists, Hindu writings, Gnostic teachings, Belgian poets, and occult Hermetic writings from ancient Egypt. It is a clear reflection of the breadth and depth of education Leache and Wood gained through travel.

Trying to reconstruct their travels is a frustrating exercise. Wood ostensibly recounts their journeys in both *Story of a Friendship* and *Idyls and Impressions of Travel: From the Notebooks of Two Friends*, but neither book is arranged chronologically. She gives few references to specific dates or even years, preferring the Victorian device of the ellipsis, i.e. "188–," which she maddeningly applies equally to names as well as dates. Both books are, as the title of *Idyls* indicates, taken primarily from Leache's notebooks and letters. They are therefore highly anecdotal and convey more of Leache's impressions than those of Wood. Still, Wood was too irrepressible to hide her own perceptions and memories. It is well to remember though that she wrote *Story* out of grief, and that *Idyls* arose from bereavement also, in that it grew from the encouragement of those who knew Leache and begged Wood to continue the story. She addresses those friends in her foreword, writing that she hopes the book will evoke "the echo of a voice which still speaks to us from out of the vast silences of death and life."³⁰ Both books are her attempt to relive and experience anew the happiest years she knew.

Wood was not interested in a Grand Tour. That concept began late in the seventeenth century as wealthy young men discovered Europe. It became increasingly popular at the end of the nineteenth century with the newly rich businessmen of the Industrial Age, who went for a year of "finishing" after college, or took their wives once they had the means. Unlike the Grand Tour, these ladies traveled not to see the highlights but rather to settle in.

Before 1850, very few people traveled for pleasure, especially to Europe. Only in the last decades of the century did American women begin to travel, years before their

European counterparts. As late as 1890, it was noteworthy when a woman ventured to Europe. It was extraordinarily rare to go to even more exotic places, like Morocco and Turkey, as Leache and Wood did. Doctors commonly advised against travel for women because they feared that the roughness of the means of transportation might cause harm to a woman's delicate internal organs. And women were usually burdened with trunks and paraphernalia, and were less likely to take on "worries about timetables, sickness, and unsavory encounters."³¹ Finding a suitable place to stay was an absorbing task. Most resorts carefully segregated men and women; some hotels refused to offer rooms to women traveling without men, lest they be encouraging prostitution.³²

Somehow, these two determined ladies managed to explore most of the Western world. In the same way that they brought a new kind of education to Norfolk, they set a new standard among their peers for travel in 1890. And like the school, they were ahead of their time. By 1900, girls began to spend time in Europe as a last year of "finishing" one's education.³³ Women began to travel in pairs or small groups. But Leache and Wood were pioneers in regard to travel.

Moreover, where they traveled seems less significant than *how* they traveled. Partially to accommodate Leache's health, and partially to gain the most from each experience, the two women tended to rent rooms for several weeks or months in each destination. They made a great effort to learn about the daily lives of the people in each locality, for they wholeheartedly wanted to become a part of each place. So they tried to learn the language, eat the foods, master the dances, study the clothing, pick up local sayings, and collect folk-lore. With the curiosity of scholars, they toured remote sights,

studied odd customs, and sought out distinctive flowers and trees. No opportunity for conversation should be lost, they felt, and Leache wrote often in her letters of encounters with those they met. She described familiarly meetings with German composers, and quotes from conversations with writers and playwrights from England, Italy, and Norway. In one memorable reference, she related that they traveled to Christiania to meet with Henrik Ibsen. She wrote, "A— [Wood] asked him if he knew how popular *The Doll's House* was in England. His reply was a merry twinkle of the eye."³⁴

Wood especially sought out strangers, believing that "conversations with one's fellow creatures of every shade and grade" are always instructive if "intellectually directed."³⁵ And she also just genuinely liked to meet people. Although they spent uncountable hours in the great museums of Europe, and as many hours in cathedrals and palaces, the remembrances which most intrigued them were away from those temples of high culture. They explored the famous and commonplace with the same sense of wonder and interest. Wood expresses this well as "the times when we were off by ourselves in places far removed from our own kind, when our susceptibilities were on the stretch for impressions, when our ears were strained to catch the echoes to history . . . [seeking] the great pulsation of life."³⁶ Wood was especially keen for adventure, and always the more aggressive of the two. In typical fashion, they spent six weeks in "the High Pyrenees," living in a remote Basque village. One illustrative story relates how they befriended an old woman who happened to pass by when they sat resting on a steep mountainside. They followed her, Leache on a donkey and Wood characteristically walking at her side, to a tiny village of seven sheep-herding families. There they shared a

memorable tea with the peasant families. learning from one another.³⁷ The story is one of many that relate similar incidents. Such stories fill two books of memories.

They began in Italy, in the city of Florence. Wood writes that a total of seven ladies set up housekeeping together that first winter in 1891 in "a roomy palazzo on the Via Montebello." At first, they attempted housekeeping chores on a rotating basis, alternating kitchen duty and preparing familiar foods from home. Italian hominy substituted poorly for grits, however, and they soon gave the kitchen over to the Italian cook, Maria, with stupendous results. Wood was always an enthusiastic eater, and often describes local specialties in her books. They later ate "reindeer broth with raw egg floating on the top" in Norway, for example, and "cheese which looks like a huge loaf of brown Windsor soap."³⁸

The group of seven women is identified only as "each having a special taste: one for violin, one for singing, one for language lessons, one for writing, one for teaching, all for sightseeing."³⁹ Perhaps Louise Collier Willcox was one of these friends, since Leache's letters refer several times to "L——." They spent their days in galleries and their nights "reading aloud and getting rid of the illusions of ignorance."⁴⁰ They eschewed the social life to which they were invited, thereby evading stiff receptions, and immersed themselves in as much of the intellectual life of Italy as they could absorb.⁴¹

Wood immediately set out to learn Italian. She had a real gift for languages and a keen interest in etymology. Wherever they went, she tried to learn the language; it was important to her not only for its obvious practical value but also because it opened a window into the soul of the country. For example, Leache wrote in a letter, "A— is

collecting Sicilian legends and trying to acquire a practical knowledge of the dialect."⁴² She was also interested in etymology, and had a good grasp of Latin. She loved tracing a word or expression back to its earliest meaning. In her albums, which were the primary occupation of her old age, Wood frequently cites the core meaning of a common term. Ever the teacher, she herself never stopped trying to get to the root of things, as she wrote of her friend, Irene Leache.

Florence remained their base, and it was in her most-beloved Florence that Wood eventually made her home. They lived in the Albergo Raffaello, overlooking the Piazza della Trinita in the heart of the city. Looking out from her room she could see, perfectly framed, the porphyry statue of Justice in the square.⁴³ The hotel was housed in a late fifteenth-century palace reputedly designed by Raphael, with "walls so thick as to be impervious to the fiercest heat of summer." Painted ceilings complimented walls frescoed with stories from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Also of great appeal to Wood were the "secret staircases, spacious hallways, [and] doorknobs of old brass shaped like butterflies."⁴⁴

The two women enjoyed mounting photographs and inexpensive prints into leather-covered albums, often writing comments on what they had seen and studied. Some of these albums read like a course in art history, filled with a scholarly depth of information. Others focus on specific interests, such as collecting and studying angels or madonnas in art works. Several albums from this period, including two by Leache, are part of the archives of the Irene Leache Memorial.⁴⁵ Many evenings were spent practicing the Bargello stitch, the traditional flame-like needlework pattern, a sample of

which graces the cover of one of the Albums.⁴⁶ They read biographies of the great Italian Renaissance figures, like Lorenzo de Medici, whose poems they examined for what they might divulge of his ambitions. They searched the faces of each master portrait for what they revealed of character and personality, and recorded their comments in the albums.

From Italy, the two women sent letters and cards from Arezzo, San Gimignano, Ravenna, Naples, La Cava, San Marino, Venice, Frascati, Castelli Romani, Nuífa, Norba, Subiaco, Olevano, Casa Baldi, Orvieto, Vallombrosa, Cortona, Gubbio, Viterbo, Terni, Bergamo, Milan, Parma, and Brescia. They watched the Palio in Sienna, which Leache described as “Carpaccio’s canvasses . . . come to life.”⁴⁷ In Lucca, they spent a whole day exploring the life of Zita, a thirteenth-century saint extolled by Dante, whose life is conveyed in such detail by Leache that it seems more the accomplishment of a month of study than of a day.⁴⁸ They spent three months in Rome over the winter of 1886, and seven weeks in Porto d’Anzio in 1898, both times to escape the damp weather in Florence.

In a letter to Sallie Shepherd from Rome, Wood writes that they attended a festive reception at the home of the American ambassador, festooned with flags and banners and huge portraits of American patriots. She describes the dresses of the ladies at a party given by an Englishwoman, adding, “Miss Irene wore a brown broché [brocaded] dress, I a black crépon [a heavy crêpe].” She writes of tutoring two pupils: “a young Baron who understands English but wishes to appreciate poetry” and “a Swede who does not know a word of English so all the instruction must be acted.”⁴⁹

Etruscan frescoes drew them to the tombs of Corneto. Virgil was the inspiration for a trip to the Lake of Avernus to see the oracle he described, where they read Virgil aloud “on the spot.”⁵⁰ They watched Vesuvius come to life, and walked (in Leache’s words) to “the brink of the crater, and looked, for one single moment, into the fearful abyss below. Boiling masses eddied upward in a fury as if they longed to suck us in.”⁵¹ What a grand luxury for the mind and spirit their travels were. Leache noted in a letter that Wood had “a taste for adventure that will crop out occasionally,” adding in Wood’s words: “I must pursue the mystery.”⁵²

Each country received the same attentive, respectful approach. In Germany, Leache and Wood studied theater and opera, and spent a whole winter in Dresden to attend the entire cycle of the Wagnerian operas.⁵³ In France, they attended lectures at the Sorbonne (1897) and spent “autumn afternoons in the forest [of] Fontainebleau, Mendon, St. Germain.”⁵⁴ They reveled in the glory of Monet’s art, attended gatherings at the palace of the Duchess of Pomard, studied remote ethnic groups like the outcast Christian sect called Cagots, retreated for weeks at a time to monasteries in the Loire Valley and mountain inns of the Tyrol, and lingered over the prehistoric stones in Carnac and at Stonehenge in England.⁵⁵ They spent an afternoon in Arles at the milliner’s, where Wood got fitted for a hat, for (as Leache writes) “photographs no longer content A—; she must realize this most captivating of costumes in her own person.”⁵⁶ Though the tone remains remarkably upbeat, and few complaints are aired, occasional problems occurred. In Munich, for instance, Leache relates an almost singular moment of discomfort for Wood, when she was forced to give up her spot on the streetcar. A German man “lifted her up in

his arms and set her down in another place while he took cool possession of her seat.” She held her own when a Frenchman tried to take her cab in Italy, refusing to be intimidated. They ended up sharing the cab for a few blocks, until the Frenchman asked her to tell the driver to stop so that he could get out, since the driving was too fast for his taste.⁵⁷

Prior to 1900, most of the places they visited were as isolated from the modern world as they had been for several centuries. Each section of each country kept its own traditions, folklore, costumes, and dialects, which were endlessly fascinating to the two travelers. For someone as interested in clothing and jewelry as Wood, the distinctively quaint dress of each group—like the fanciful Dutch hats, Bedouin robes, Norwegian men’s pantaloons, Tyrolean peasant costumes, and the great variety of Algerian attire for women—no doubt held her enthralled.

The two women stayed active. In Greece they re-enacted short dramas based on Greek scholarship when they visited Delphi, Olympia, Ephesus (now Turkey), and Epidaurvros.⁵⁸ They took up sketching in Holland, music in Vienna, and folklore in Norway, where they stayed at a parsonage one summer.⁵⁹ In Malaga, where they stayed for several months, they were the “paying guests” of a family. Each day, Wood took dancing lessons “held in a stone-paved room furnished with wooden settees and lighted from a dingy court,” taught by a husband and wife team. The students wore black mantillas. As an example of the thoroughness with which they approached each new opportunity, Leache cites seventy-two different Andalusian dances which use castanets—another set of lessons Wood took with enthusiasm.⁶⁰

Both women seemed to have had a working knowledge of Spanish, French, German, and Italian; they attempted Hebrew, Arabic, and Basque, and picked up enough Russian during stays in Moscow and St. Petersburg to get around without too much mishap. Ever the most enthusiastic traveler, Wood was so excited on her first trip to Russia that she "sat up nearly all night to compose an idyl [*sic*]." An ex-patriot Russian friend, Countess Helene Apraxine, gave them letters of introduction to ease their way in Moscow.⁶¹ It took them thirty-six hours to travel from Norway to St. Petersburg.⁶²

Perhaps most fascinating of all was their time in the Middle East, traveling slowly through Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, the Holy Land, Lebanon, and Syria. An album of pictures gathered along the way shows extraordinary photographs of Sudanese musicians, camel drivers standing knee-deep in the waters of the Nile, a Besharean tribesman, Christian maidens of Mt. Carmel, pyramids, and individual portraits of women from Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Some date from 1889, possibly from a summer trip before they left Norfolk.⁶³ It is hard to tell if they made more than one trip to the Middle East; another reference, in *Story*, gives the date 1893.⁶⁴

Leache describes an episode delightfully characteristic of Wood in a letter quoted in *Story of a Friendship*. One afternoon Wood, down with a headache, was resting quietly on the sofa. Ahmed Mohammed, their driver in Cairo, wanted to stir her into action so he would have work that day. So he began to play on "her rage for couleur locale" by describing the "Niam-Niams," a tribe of cannibals from the African interior. He claimed that they worshipped and idolized a photograph of a young Englishwoman, which had been discovered in the coat pocket of an Englishman they had captured and

killed. Annie Wood became increasingly interested, forgot her headache, and “proposed that we should start out at once on a hunt for a real live Niam-Niam, if haply there should be one in the midst of the civilization of Cairo.”⁶⁵

The Damascus bazaar, which Leache called “a roofed-over labyrinth of enchantment,” provided an afternoon’s shopping escapade. Their purchases are illuminating for their lack of practicality. They bought these items, as described by Leache:⁶⁶

- a white camel’s hair harness, embroidered with beads and gay worsteds
- a baldric [a belt worn diagonally from shoulder to hip, used to support a sword or horn], studded with gold scales and turquoises
- receptacles of various kinds, made of the most beautifully prepared leather
- a silk scarf, as light as a film of spider web, that will pass through a ring, and that a breath will blow to pieces

Jerusalem and Bethlehem captivated them. Only two roads suitable for wheels existed in Palestine in 1893, running from Jerusalem to Jaffa and Hebron. Lepers, Leache wrote, “sun themselves at the entrance of the Jaffa gate, and hold out for alms hands that are half eaten off by their disease.”⁶⁷ The women and their guides ventured to Baalbec to explore the ruins of Temple of the Sun, having made acquaintances along the way “among as many as sixty different nationalities.”⁶⁸

Many years later, Wood wrote in an album that one of the true joys of travel was the unexpected epiphanies along the way, like learning about nature from an Indian chief, or cooking methods demonstrated by “a peasant-woman of the Roman Campagne.” She later learned old Gothic woodcarving from a Bavarian peasant, and how to play the harp-

zither in the Tyrol.⁶⁹ Wood advised that to speak freely for even five minutes with some one with an open mind “will, in all probability, give you a helpful idea of some kind.”⁷⁰ Surely these adventurous journeys were as important as breathing to her. She continued to travel until she was no longer able to care for herself, well into her eighties.

In the fall of 1894, Irene Leache was looking up at the facade of an old palace in Genoa. A man bumped into her, hard, entirely by accident. From that unfortunate occurrence, Leache’s health began to seriously decline. Wood speculates that the accident caused “bruised tissues near the base of the lung,” which “created an almost phenomenal susceptibility to congestive colds, which convulsed her whole frame with coughing, filling her eyes with blood, and keeping her a prisoner in the house for weeks.” They were forced to forego those activities which had made their lives so rich: teas in the artists’ studios, afternoon symphonies, musical masses in the church, plays, galleries. Each foray into the world outside their rooms brought Leache weeks of isolation in slow recovery.⁷¹

When her friend was no longer able to walk up hills or stairs, Wood hired a donkey, fitted with a special saddle, and walked by Leache’s side.⁷² Bouts of sciatica and influenza alternated with the horrible, incapacitating cough. What most distressed her, however, was the failing eyesight which robbed her of the ability to read or do needlework. She had always had such busy hands, never sitting idly; activity was eclipsed by a painful adjustment. Wood hired people to read to her, encouraged guests to their rooms, and valiantly stayed by her side as caretaker, guardian, and nurse.⁷³

They tried the various cures popular at the time. They spent weeks at spas in Austria and Switzerland, trying the grape cure in the South Tyrol, the whey-cure in Gruyère, heart treatments at Bad-Neuheim, and whatever non-invasive folk remedies were suggested to them.⁷⁴ By the summer of 1898, Leache wrote to a friend, "I cannot walk a hundred yards without pain." The nights were difficult, and she often put herself to sleep by reciting long poems she had memorized.⁷⁵ As her illness progressed, Leache looked more inward, became more absorbed with spiritual matters; the tenor of her letters changed from culture and occurrences to the trials of illness and the sad effect it had on both of them. By April 1899, when she began coughing blood and it was clear that the end was near, they decided to begin the arduous journey home to Norfolk.

Throughout this slow decline, Annie Wood hurt along with her friend. Leache writes repeatedly to friends in this regard: "I have a distressing cough which grieves A— so deeply that I sometimes go into another room to spare her from hearing it; to sadden those you love, is there anything more pitiful? . . . I am trying to keep a brave front and I still have power to enjoy." From another letter: It is A— who keeps me out of the grave; she fights bravely for my life; sometimes she reminds me of a Vestal feeding and nursing the sacred flame."⁷⁶ In April 1899, she wrote Sallie Shepherd, asking for her protection for Annie Wood: "This morning, a day dropped out of heaven, I feel better which makes Annie so happy that she has taken out her zither, but she looks thin and sallow. Dear S—, if you hear of my death at any time, or of the possibility of my not living to get home, will you guard and love her? You understand her delicate oversensitive nature, and that she lives by sympathy, needing it as daily food . . ."

To gather the strength for the trip to Norfolk, they spent weeks in Paris, waiting for the steamer to sail to New York. When they left from Cherbourg on September 16, 1900, the weather turned brutal. The four-day crossing was so rough that Wood despised sea travel thereafter.⁷⁷ To be fair, it was not a physical trial only. It was there that, too sick herself to assertively care for Leache, she first thought about life alone. She writes, "I realized the weight of empty years ahead, and fell back upon my pillow in an anguish of grief."⁷⁸ After about three weeks recuperating in New York, they arrived in Norfolk to face the end among dear friends. In six weeks, Leache was gone.

It comes as no surprise that Wood was inconsolable. She had sublimated the unbearable thought of life without Leache, who had been mother, sister, partner, and soulmate. She writes movingly of "the readjustment of life to a world become gray, cold and dull. . . . Our beautiful life together is ended."⁷⁹ She despairs over her inability to bear the pain on behalf of her friend, to suffer in her stead. A friend wrote her, "I sometimes smiled at your tender guardianship, and deplored your passionate desire to share her every pain."⁸⁰

They had been inseparable for thirty-two years. It is often difficult to tell whose voice is speaking in *Idyls*, for their interests were remarkably interwoven. So entwined were they that forty years later, at Wood's memorial service, a former student and dear friend noted that Annie Wood was still inseparable from Irene Leache: everything she had accomplished since 1900 was done in Leache's name.⁸¹

Irene Leache died on December 2, 1900, at 182 Granby Street, only a few doors away from the school she founded. She was buried in the Shepherd family plot in

Elmwood Cemetery in downtown Norfolk. Elmwood's records give the cause of death as "carcinoma (breast)," but "breast" may have had the more generic meaning of "chest," since her symptoms would seem more indicative of lung cancer or tuberculosis. She was 61 years old. Her grave is marked with a Celtic cross of stone, mounted on a rusticated base. The inscription reads, "The thought of her past years doth to us breed perpetual benediction." For Annie Wood, thoughts of her friend guided her life for seventy years, inspiring, consoling, stirring her to strive for the best within her. Leache taught that saucy young girl at Angerona how "to draw beauty out of the commonplace, and to make others do it too." Their life together brought Annie Wood intense joy; their friendship granted her a life she never would have known. After a year of intense bereavement, Wood had decided to return to Europe to be closer to the places they had shared, and so to begin the long, slow task of creating a life alone.

CHAPTER 6

MEMORIALS

From the deepest sadness, a well of good sometimes emerges. As she began to adjust to the profound loss of her friend, Annie Wood's first thoughts focused on a way to keep alive the memory of Irene Leache. Sometime in those first weeks after Leache's death, in that winter of 1900-01, she thought to establish a library offering cultural programs in Norfolk. Her idea was that it should be open to the public and managed by a small group closely associated with the Leache-Wood Seminary when it was under Leache's direction. She moved quickly. The corporate charter was granted on April 17, 1901, only a little more than four months after Irene Leache died. The founding members gathered on the evening of May 23, 1901, for the first official meeting. Only five members were present: Annie Wood, Sallie Shepherd, C. Whittle Sams, Mrs. William H. Sargeant, and Mrs. J. W. Willcox. They created a joint stock corporation, capitalized at \$500 divided into shares of \$5.00 each.

The original charter called for establishing a library with the noble goal of "having for its aim all true illumination." Much more than a repository for books, its purpose was "to provide lectures, concerts, oratorios and other forms of intellectual and musical instruction. To gather and preserve works of art, statuary, rare books especially those of an essentially spiritual nature."¹ The charter also specifies that the corporation has the right to

. . . employ librarians and others in connection with the conduct of the business of the library. To build and conduct lecture and concert halls.

engage lecturers, singers and other artists and literary persons; to establish rules and regulations for the management of the said Library and the said Lecture and concert halls; to establish an art gallery and a museum, and to aid and encourage the fine arts and literature, and the study of mystic science. . . .

What better way to honor the memory of Irene Leache than to provide for others the opportunity to enjoy those cultural activities so important to her? What better way to contribute to the community that had welcomed them wholeheartedly, that had responded to their initiatives with enthusiasm and appreciation? Open to the public, the library Wood envisioned would be a resource for scholarship and study in a community with no museum or university. It would provide a gathering place for discussion. It would furnish a venue for lectures of significance and for performances of singers, musicians, and actors. It would bring to Norfolk books on the great religions of the world, and encourage their exploration through related programming. In short, the library she proposed was designed to build on the strengths of the Leache-Wood Seminary. It was an inspired idea, and a perfect reflection of the interests of Irene Leache. It was to be a living memorial to the one she could not bear to think of as gone.

The five men and women meeting that night also adopted a Constitution and By-Laws to cover the operation of the library and the organization of the Board. Wood was clear in her charge, as she was consistent in her life, to always aim high:

It is the wish of the founder of this Corporation that its governing body shall keep the intellectual and the artistic activities of the memorial at the highest possible level, never popularizing them to suit a majority or an industrial element, the object of this Memorial being not reform but culture.²

To establish this center for cultural activities, she pledged all her assets and her efforts, stipulating in the Constitution of the Irene Leache Library that "Provision is made in the will of the founder whereby the annual income derived from her estate" is to be used solely to advance the goals of the group.³

The original Bylaws established four standing committees: Library, Music, Lecture, and Art. The scope of her concept becomes clearer with the charge to each committee. The music committee was to organize "a society for the study of oratorio, mass and plain-song, and . . . shall attend to all matters connective with furnishing instruction and supplying the musical literature necessary for this end." The Lecture Committee would seek "lecturers drawn from all schools of thought, protestant, catholic, jew, Hindoo or otherwise, but fitted to illuminate those subjects with which this Library is especially concerned." The Art Committee would "recommend the purchase of works of art in harmony with the general aim of this Library."

With equal parts optimism and ambition, the By-Laws continued with a detailed description of the rules for borrowing books, the duties of the librarian, and eligibility requirements for use of the rooms. They encouraged members to come after regular hours "for the purpose of discussing any line of thought suggested by the books of the Library or subjects cognate thereto." The seal of "The Irene Leache Library: April 17, 1901" is affixed over the signatures of Annie Cogswell Wood, President, and C. Whittle Sams, Secretary. Apparently, Wood had already made up her mind to return to Italy; the documents list her address as "Rome, Italy," and "in care of Brown, Shipley & Co." It is reasonable to assume that she left not long after the papers were signed.

The next minutes date from almost a year later, on March 6, 1902, but it is clear that the small board had been meeting informally. The sole action at the second meeting was to request Wood to commission "a marble bust of Miss Irene Leache, in whose honor and for the perpetuation of whose memory our Library was organized." The next month, to address an obvious oversight, they met again to commission a pedestal for the bust, made of marble as well. But with the exception of meeting twice to authorize C. Whittle Sams to do whatever needed to be done to accept Wood's packages from Italy, the tiny board failed to meet its quorum of three at annual meetings from 1908-13, but, of course, the president was living in Italy during this period. It was a passive group, established to receive and store, but little else. Yet.

In the winter of 1902, the directors approached the Norfolk Public Library about housing the nascent collection of art objects. Norfolk's library, established in 1870 by Dr. Samuel Selden, began as a reading room at the Norfolk Academy and had moved from place to place until 1901, when Andrew Carnegie approached the city with an offer of \$50,000 in exchange for a guarantee to provide a site and maintain the building. Dr. William Selden's family donated the land on Freemason Street and the cornerstone for the building was laid in 1903.⁴ Carnegie's timing fit Wood's plan perfectly. She wrote to the public library board on May 22, 1903, explaining her intentions:

I hereby make a formal application . . . for wall space, or other accommodation, to hold reproductions of classical, medaeval [*sic*], and in some cases modern art, which I am now, and will be for some time, collecting for the benefit of The Irene Leache Art Gallery. It is not my purpose to present these works of art to The Norfolk Public Library, but to let them have the use of the same, in the ornamentation of its walls, until the institution which I intend to endow shall have been brought into active operation.

It is my intention to endow an institution by my will which will perpetuate the name and memory of Miss Irene Leache, formerly of this city...by means of a public art gallery named for her, and until the collection which I shall make shall have assumed such proportions as to justify its separate existence, I ask the hospitality of an institution sufficiently closely akin. . . .⁵

The public library responded enthusiastically, and upon completion of the new building on Freemason Street, the collection had a home. A room in the basement of the building was designated the "Irene K. Leache Memorial Room."⁶

Between 1902 and 1914, Wood continued to send objects for the future art museum, which were housed in the Memorial room of Freemason Street library. Primarily reproductions of famous works, pieces of interesting folk art, or exemplary objects of the decorative arts, few items were valuable or would now be considered "museum quality." However, Norfolk had nothing to rival it at the time; few American towns its size had a museum, and fewer still in the South.⁷ This little collection brought the world of art to Norfolk and provided a public cultural center for the first time in its long history.

It is probable that Wood decided to lay the foundation for the memorial before she left Norfolk and gradually work toward a permanent home when the collection she would gather warranted it. It is reasonable to assume that, from its inception, she intended to increase the size of the original five-member Irene Leache Library Board. To that end, early in 1905 she wrote to a graduate, May Bell White Starke (Mrs. Lucian Starke) to ask if there might be interest in forming an alumnae group to support the project. The response was strong: forty-five alumnae gathered on June 5, 1905, in the Irene K. Leache Memorial Room to enthusiastically embrace the concept. At that meeting, the Leache-

Wood Alumnae Association was formed. They elected officers—Mrs. Lucian Starke, President; Mrs. R. DeJarnette, Vice-President; Mrs. F. F. Ferguson, Secretary; and Miss Grace Jones, Treasurer—and proceeded post haste to provide the wider base necessary to establish the Memorial library/gallery.

The first action of the association must have pleased Annie Wood very much. Miss Fanny Sams moved that “each member of the Association should make a voluntary offering to buy a piece of statuary to add to the collection,” which would be accumulated before October 1, 1905, and sent to Wood “to expend on some beautiful work of art.” The “old girls” came through in style.

They determined that membership in the Association would be open only to those girls who had attended between 1871-91, that is, under Leache and Wood’s tutelage. The Fireside Club, the study group formed in 1886 by Leache and Wood, enthusiastically offered to house its research papers in the Memorial Room, and members of that club were made honorary members of the Alumnae Association.⁸ Leache-Wood teachers were not overlooked: in January 1906, they too were offered honorary memberships, including two of Irene Leache’s family, Sallie and Julia Leache.⁹ An appointed committee quickly drew up a constitution and bylaws. The group established monthly meetings and determined to open the room to the public each Thursday afternoon from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. for a month, to test the response.¹⁰ So excited were these graduates with the prospects for the memorial that the executive committee met four times that June, and continued to meet monthly for several years, excepting July, August, and September.

Although she was living abroad, Wood's influence dominated the group. Letters from her were read aloud and shared at many of the monthly meetings.

Within a year, membership had increased to eighty-three.¹¹ Annual dues, set at \$1.00, provided the seed money, though the minutes show that some members requested a reduction to \$.50. To address their top priority, raising funds for a memorial gift, they formed a separate "Memorial Fund." The modest balance in the Treasury at the end of each year was deceptive, since most funds were routinely swept into the Memorial Fund. Significantly, as a sure indication of their deep feelings for their beloved teacher, they soon formed a committee "to place flowers on the grave of Miss Leache on each anniversary of her death." One current member of the Irene Leache Memorial, Clara Wolcott, continues this practice almost one hundred years later.

The Alumnae Association actively promoted and supported the Memorial. To raise money for the Memorial Fund, they sponsored lectures, readings, and "Musical Teas," publicizing the Memorial as they gained funds. The first lecturer was a distinguished Leache-Wood graduate, Georgiana King, then teaching at Bryn Mawr to great acclaim.¹² It is likely that she was visiting Norfolk at the time she offered to speak, for the members had little time to plan. At a called meeting on December 28, 1905, members decided to pay King a fee of \$25.00, sell tickets for \$.50, notify the alumnae, and invite as many people as they could for a lecture the next Saturday to be held in Mrs. Starke's living room. King spoke on Leonardo da Vinci.¹³ Though the planning was rushed, the event was very successful. This first lecture encouraged them to plan other

lectures or to offer programs where members might read papers on topics of cultural interest. By 1914, the Association numbered 105.

In addition, they kept the room maintained, repainting and cleaning as necessary; they worked on framing, hanging, and displaying art donations; they improved the lighting and wrote a catalogue explaining the collection; members served as docents when the room was open to the public each Thursday afternoon; and they continued to solicit and collect funds. The first minutes cite three pieces of especial value in the collection to date: the Parian marble bust of Irene Leache commissioned by the Library Board and a gift of Annie Wood, *The Crouching Venus* presented by Mr. And Mrs. Albert Berry of St. Louis (Mrs. Berry was an alumna), and "some rare photographs collected by Miss Wood and framed by Mrs. Willcox."¹⁴ They were hard at work to procure more art works and to keep the room open to the public each Thursday afternoon. Interest increased along with the number of pieces on display, and word-of-mouth brought in growing numbers of the young, a primary target. It is fair to say that at the earliest stages, Norfolk's art museum made a special effort to introduce art to young people.

Wood chose representative pieces for the collection, although she was able to purchase few originals. The earliest pieces were copies of famous works, including one of Houdon's *Voltaire*, as well as a facsimile of an eleventh-century German reliquary, a copy of a sacrificial basin from the Temple of Isis, a "portfolio of photogravures" from Germany, and five wood-cuts. Several items were bequeathed by Irene Leache, items she collected on their travels together, and also collections of pictures and photographs.

From Damascus, she left a Koran holder; from Moscow, a Russian enamel bowl. The collection contained a number of curios, rare books, wall hangings and fine embroidery, and reproductions of famous paintings and sculptures. The Fireside club contributed *Madonna of the Breast*, an original oil painting by a seventeenth-century Flemish master.¹⁵ Although most of the items would now be considered more souvenirs than art, at that time they represented an opening onto a much wider world and a real stimulus to learning.

With the funds donated by members of the Alumnae Association for their Memorial gift, Wood chose carefully. She selected a fine copy of Myron's statue of the *Discobolus*, sculpted in 1900 of Carrara marble by Trilli of Florence, which had recently been "awarded a prize at the St. Louis Exposition by a tribunal of international judges." It would soon stand in the Memorial room, against a background of authentic seventeenth-century brocade she had purchased, "such as used to be placed upon the walls of salons in the old palaces."¹⁶ At the unveiling on May 1, 1913, one hundred and fifty people gathered to celebrate and admire this work of art.

From a modest first-year balance of \$56.02 in 1906, the Alumnae Association had paid for *The Discobolus* (at a cost of \$833.65), maintained the room, sponsored the kinds of cultural events Wood had envisioned, and continued to accumulate funds for future purchases. After a great deal of earnest effort, the small group was firmly established. The first years, with Wood guiding from afar, effectively set the foundation for the future. Sallie Shepherd's report to the Association concludes by acknowledging Wood's role: "Miss Wood's constant thought of us is a great incentive to this work."¹⁷

In 1914, with war in Europe, Annie Wood came home. Norfolk had changed in her absence. Throughout the last two decades of the nineteenth century, in spite of real progress in education and increasing opportunities for its citizens, Norfolk was known more for its bars than for its cultural life. The number of liquor dealers almost doubled in the 1880s, an estimated eighty-one brothels clustered near the water by 1894, and the *New York Voice* warned its readers about Norfolk's "Hell's Half-Acre" of bars, saloons, brothels, gambling parlors, policy shops, and "variety theaters." New York's *Town Topics* called Norfolk "the wickedest city in the United States."¹⁸

City leaders seized the opportunity offered by the 1907 Jamestown Exposition to counteract Norfolk's reputation and build toward a brighter future. The Jamestown Exposition was the biggest project Norfolk had taken on, and the town promoted it aggressively. New hotels and theaters opened in expectation of the burst of visitors they hoped would come. The city continued to grow. The business center moved from the docks along Main and Market Streets to Granby and Tazewell Streets, as far as City Hall Avenue.¹⁹ By 1910, the population of Norfolk reached an all-time high of 67,000.

But World War I swelled the port to a staggering 130,000 people by 1917, when the city became headquarters for the Fifth Naval District. Norfolk had known only a small military presence before, the all-but-abandoned Fort Norfolk and a minor training area in Berkeley, St. Helena's. In response to the Jamestown Exposition, the channel had been deepened, the Navy Yard's drydock expanded, and Cape Henry slated for fortification.²⁰ But the town was ill-prepared for the demands of the war. One historian described conditions pointedly: "a creaky nineteenth-century administrative system,

fossilized Victorian institutions, lingering river-town perspective. [with a] scanty and outmoded service economy.”²¹ Even with the augmented 1907 facilities from the Jamestown Exposition, Norfolk was short of housing, short of habitable land, and short of resources, especially an adequate water supply. The strain on the small town is clear in the growth in port activity: from 1914 to 1915 the city’s exports doubled, and doubled again the next year. Activity in the port was robust. The historic staples—peanuts, produce, lumber and cotton—were augmented with the job of shipping 132,000 horses to France and of absorbing the burgeoning shipbuilding needs of a country at war. By 1913, 360 manufacturers, “mostly tiny shops and mills specializing in some hand-crafted item or line,” lined the downtown streets.²² And still, more than half the streets of the city were unpaved dirt or oyster shell roads.

When Wood returned to Norfolk in the fall of 1914, probably in late September or early October, the Alumnae Association hosted a reception in her honor on October 27, with great fanfare. She immediately threw herself into the work of the group. She offered to organize weekly lectures in the Memorial Room, the first of which was given by Alethea Serpell on “The Madonnas in Art” on November 12. Wood spoke the following week on “The Angels in Art,” and the series was launched. Dr. Frank Pratt, Rabbi Louis D. Mendoza, Louise Collier Willcox, Georgiana King, and others spoke on various topics covering a broad range of subjects: Wood on Nietzsche and “The Women of Ancient Legends,” Serpell on Japanese Art, Mendoza on the poetry of Robert Browning, King on Spanish cathedrals, and Pratt on Raphael and Titian, to cite a few examples. For the annual meeting in May, Wood “read an original drama giving her

interpretation of Maeterlinck's *Monna Fauna*." Wood had an abiding interest in the Belgium dramatist, poet, and essayist, who was her contemporary.

Early in 1915, the Association joined the American Federation of Art, a national group designed to foster education in the arts. Thereafter, the Association sent a delegate to each national meeting in Washington, D.C. and enthusiastically embraced the Federation's programs. Prepared papers and illustrated lectures from the national group became a regular feature of the lecture series. For example, the 1916 lecture series included the Federation's illustrative lectures on modern art, which was capped by an exhibit on Modern American Paintings attended by 1300 people.²³

The first large "Art Exhibition" was held in March 1915, and many others were to follow with increasing popularity and acceptance by the public. As the Association assumed a higher profile in the community, interest in securing a building of their own, "a permanent home for our Art Collection,"²⁴ began to grow within the group. They had approached the Norfolk Public Library Board, then planning the first branch library, Van Wyck, with the hope of moving into a larger space when the building was completed. But that board, citing insufficient funds, proposed to the Memorial an offer they could not possibly accept. The board gave them only the opportunity to build a room "no larger than 25 feet by 45 feet" on land behind the new building, which would be joined to and the property of the library. Their tenancy would be "subject to the demands of the Library Board," and the money must be raised within sixty days. This rather insulting proposal stimulated them to redouble their efforts for a home of their own.²⁵ To raise more money, they needed more support—and more members.

As early as February 1914, eight months before Wood's return, the question of expanding the membership was discussed at the monthly meetings. Agnes Douglas West, who bought the school from Leache and Wood, had asked if her graduates might not become associate members, and the Alumnae Association wrote to Wood for her advice. She suggested that anyone interested in art and the growth of the Association might become an Associate member. The group concurred, adding that new members must be nominated by a current member and elected by a majority of the board.²⁶ Delinquent dues had been a recurring problem, and a few members were dropped from the rolls. Within a year, the need to expand their base demanded a less exclusionary name, and they became the Irene Leache Art Association. The original five-member Irene Leache Library Board continued.

Wood herself suggested the name change. To alleviate concern that the Alumnae distinction might be lost, a notice explaining the change was sent to each member of the Association, which assured that the original group would neither "lose identity by the change, not do they lose control, they simply gain the support and active help of many who are interested in the same broad subject of art and its development in Norfolk."²⁷ The new constitution established three categories of membership: Active members were alumnae of Leache and Wood; Associate and Sustaining members were proposed by a member and duly elected by a majority of the executive board. However, only the Active/alumnae members could vote or hold office. Associate members could participate in business meetings, though Sustaining members could not. Annual dues were set at \$1.00 for Active and Associate members, \$5.00 for Sustaining members.²⁸ But

significant growth would come only with a more inclusive structure, and the stage was set for yet another change.

Surprisingly, it came upon the suggestion of Douglas Volk, a New York portrait artist who came to Norfolk to give a lecture and an acquaintance of Florence Sloane (Mrs. William Sloane),²⁹ who would prove to be instrumental in establishing the museum. Although Wood was out of town at the time, she wrote to the Art Association in early December 1916:

Mr. Volk has been an inspiration . . . I believe in using the name Mr. Volk suggested—Norfolk Society of Arts—and I believe in merging all personal sentiment in the success of the enterprise. Whatever name should be used can never detract from the real intrinsic value of an influence and the genuineness of its guiding spirit [meaning Leache].³⁰

Two of the original and influential members of the Alumnae Association, Belle Irvine and Sallie Shepherd, urged the Board the next month to discontinue the alumnae stipulation, thereby broadening their base and focusing their efforts on gaining an independent site for an art museum. On January 16, 1917, the Irene Leache Art Association met to consider the proposed name. Another advisor, Mr. Rydensvard, pointed out that a broader name would carry more weight in the art world, since “little attention is paid to private associations.” To further the argument, Sallie Shepherd urged the members to ask the city for a site for a museum on the reclaimed land in Lee Park (where the Museum now stands), and it was thought that “the city would not be willing to give us any assistance if the art movement came from a private association.” The name was enthusiastically changed to the Norfolk Society of Arts, the constitution amended to make all who joined fully vested as either active or sustaining members, subject to

proposal by a member and election by a majority of the executive committee. The new organization "assumes the care and the housing of the collection of the Irene Leache Library."³¹ With a stroke, they went public.

Losing no time, they set to work to relay to the members the progress in the arts enjoyed by other cities and to lobby the city for an Art Commission. They appointed a committee to ask for a commitment from the city for a site for a museum on "the unclaimed land on Smith's Creek which the city proposes to fill in and make solid ground."³² Belle Irvine led the lobbying efforts, talking to community leaders and members of the city government. One of those leaders, Florence Sloane, responded with a generous offer in March: she owned a piece of property on Mowbray Arch, not far from the Freemason Street library, which she would be willing to loan to the Association for a period of six years as a temporary location for the art collection. At the annual meeting in May 1917, the offer was accepted. They also decided to continue to apply to the city for a building site.³³ On October 2, 1917, the Common [City] Council of Norfolk agreed to set aside land "in the vicinity of Lee Park and west of Duke Street" for the future museum. But they needed a building soon.

With only \$244.61 in the bank, they understandably hesitated to commit themselves to build a museum estimated by the architect, Finlay Ferguson, to cost \$5000. In June they determined to continue to prepare for the building, but to postpone actual construction until the cost would be more favorable. By November, Mrs. Sloane proposed that the Society of Arts build the museum, which she suggested should be available as a club for enlisted men for the duration of the war. Although the motion

passed. in January 1918. she came back to the board with the offer to build the building herself. She required few stipulations. only that the collection would be insured, that the Norfolk Society of Arts would provide whatever furniture they required. and “to act as hostesses of the building, so as to assist her in the patriotic work she has undertaken.” They accepted “with the heartiest thanks . . . the very generous offer of Mrs. Wm. Sloane.”³⁴ They had their own home. at last.

At the same time, Annie Wood had been having second thoughts about the structure of the organization she had founded. In June 1917, just five months after she had endorsed changing from the Irene Leache Art Association to the Norfolk Society of Arts. she asked the board to consider reestablishing the “cultural branch of the society” as “the Irene Leache Library branch of the Norfolk Society of Arts.” Although she recognized the need for a more public-sounding name, and the need for a broader base of support, she was concerned that the memorial feature would be lost. Her motivation was to perpetuate Irene Leache’s name and memory. At the meeting on January 15, 1918. both Mrs. Sloane’s generous offer of a building and Wood’s proposal to reinstate the memorial aspect were approved. The exact wording, which has been the source of much confusion to members of these organizations, reads:

The purposes of this organization [Norfolk Society of Arts] are

1st To establish an Art Museum in Norfolk and conduct all activities ordinarily undertaken by such societies.

2nd To cooperate with the Irene Leache Library in presenting yearly lectures on literature, history, interpretive drama. music, art and philosophical science and to care for the books, pictures and other objects of art that the Irene Leache Library will from time to time add to their memorial collection—placing this collection when a permanent museum shall have been erected in a room to be known as the Irene Leache Memorial Room.³⁵

On May 30, 1918, the Irene Leache Library was rechartered as the Irene Leache Memorial. Wood continued as president, and two other original directors held office. Sallie Shepherd and C. Whittle Sams. Fannie Curd and Helen Rogers became officers, and the board was expanded to a total of sixteen, including four men. The corporate charter lists the purpose of the corporation in wording much like that of the 1901 Irene Leache Library charter:

to aid and encourage literary, cultural and artistic advancement . . . to aid and encourage appreciation of the fine arts and the study of mystic science; to acquire, by loan, gift or purchase . . . art of a high standard, as a memorial to Irene Leache, a woman of exceptional attainments and constructive force, whose influence in the field of art and letters it is the purpose of this corporation to emphasize and perpetuate.³⁶

The new By-Laws established a board of twenty directors appointed to serve until death or resignation, a practice still maintained by the Memorial. The three committees called for in the By-Laws express the role of the Memorial: a Lecture Committee to continue the series of free lectures; a Literary Contest Committee, to organize and manage a literary contest each year and to take charge of the Winter and Spring Festivals; and an Art Committee, to continue "the care and arrangements" of the Art Room and "investigate" and recommend pieces for acquisition.³⁷ With the addition of a committee to oversee the Art Contest, the Irene Leache Memorial has held to this format.

The following fall, in October 1918, the Norfolk Society of Arts held its first meeting in the building erected by Mrs. Sloane at Mowbray Arch and Fairfax Avenue. The building was known as the Service Man's Club until after the war, when it was changed to the Society of Arts Building in January 1920. As promised, members of the

group served as hostesses to the servicemen stationed in Norfolk and welcomed their families as honorary members of the Norfolk Society of Arts. They sponsored teas, lectures, and dances throughout the war years. After the war, at a private dance at the Service Club in 1924, the beloved *Discobolus* was accidentally knocked over, causing great alarm. One arm broke and was later repaired, through the help of Florence Sloane.³⁸

The Society of Arts never stopped pressing the city to fulfill its commitment to give them land for a museum. A building fund was started in 1923, followed by a specific proposal to City Council to erect a building for not less than \$125,000.³⁹ The small organization that was afraid to commit to a \$5000 building only six years earlier had grown strong. Almost all the money was raised by May 1928, when Mrs. Sloane sold the Arts building.

It is noteworthy that, although women had conceived the idea for an art museum, built the demand through exemplary programs, and worked steadily through community pressure and commitment toward that end—still, when the Board of Trustees formed in January 1926, it was all male.⁴⁰ Three members were appointed by City Council and six elected by the Society of Arts. Under agreement with the city and the Society of Arts early in 1926, the art collection was to be retained by the Memorial but housed in the Museum in a designated room. Should the trustees and the directors of the Memorial disagree on which objects should be displayed, the Memorial could withdraw entirely and all obligations of the Museum toward the Memorial would end.⁴¹ The Society of Arts officially named the new Museum the Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences in June

1926, and defined its management structure. When the Depression hit, city funding all but vanished.

For several years the collection was housed in private homes. The Norfolk Society of Arts and the Irene Leache Memorial continued their meetings, lectures, exhibits, and other activities in the assembly hall of Ohel Sholom Temple in Ghent, only a few blocks from both the old Arts building and the intended site of the new one. The most valuable pieces were held at the Van Wyck Library, including the *Discobolus*.⁴² Finally, with the invaluable and tireless help of Florence Sloane and her husband, William Sloane, the Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences opened to the public on March 5, 1933.⁴³ On that day, President Franklin Roosevelt declared a national bank holiday to prevent a run on bank funds and the Nazi party won an overwhelming victory in the German elections.⁴⁴

Although not an especially auspicious time to open an art museum, the long-awaited event was a considerable success.

The opening exhibit was a revelation for Norfolk. Eight rooms were specially designed to showcase “rare” arts and crafts “of great value” from Spain, Sweden, France, Italy, India, Russian, Korea/China, and Japan. Furniture, wall hangings, paintings, rugs, and decorative arts pieces (Russian icons, hand-painted vases, fine crystal) filled each room, luring 2000 visitors to the three-hour opening.⁴⁵ Members of the Norfolk Society of Arts and the Irene Leache Memorial served as hostesses and docents, showing with pride the culmination of their patient persistence. The Museum vowed to remain free to the public, citing that it would not charge admission now or in the future.⁴⁶ In the depths

of the Depression, with saber-rattling abroad, and little hope of funding from the city or the state, the Museum's supporters rallied. With no money available to hire other than janitorial staff provided through the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.), volunteers were enlisted under Mrs. Sloane's direction to keep the Museum running. It would be open Monday through Friday from noon to 5:00 p.m. and on Sunday afternoon from 2:30 to 5:30, an impressive assignment for a volunteer organization. Annual attendance was soon at 40,000 people.⁴⁷

To landscape the grounds, the Museum board hired unemployed men with funds granted from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. The Norfolk Society of Arts continued to raise money through their cultural programs supplemented with "card parties and other entertainments."⁴⁸ The Memorial collection moved into a temporary location in the building in March 1934,⁴⁹ until the next building phase could be completed as funds became available. It formed "the bulk of the art collection" of the fledgling gallery.⁵⁰

The city gradually participated in funding the Museum and providing salaries for the staff, although Mrs. Sloane remained as unpaid Director for the first twelve years. When economic conditions improved, a federal grant in 1938 enabled the construction of an addition. The Memorial successfully negotiated for more space for its promised home in the new wing than the original plans allocated, and the room was increased to about 24 feet by 34 feet. Ever an integral part of the Museum, the Memorial maintained its independence as well. When Florence Sloane, as director, suggested the *Discobolus* be placed in the center of the new West Gallery, the Memorial demurred.⁵¹ They preferred to keep their beloved gift in the Memorial Room. But at last the collection found a

permanent home when the addition opened on October 1, 1939, fulfilling the original promise of the Irene Leache Library at its inception in 1901. Annie Wood was 89 years old and living in Florence at the time.

When Wood lived in Norfolk from 1914 to 1921, she rented rooms in a house at 626 Botetourt Street for at least part of this period.⁵² A friend remembered Wood's distinctive decorating style, a match for the way she dressed. The rooms were "completely done up in turkey-red hangings. —bedspreads, cushions, chair covers, etc." To this person, entering these rooms was like "invading the infernal region." But Annie Wood, whose favorite color was red, thought the style "so cheerful."⁵³

She left Norfolk periodically, going north each summer and taking shorter trips around the country in the winter. When she returned each fall, she asked Sallie Shepherd to find her a new place to stay, not an easy task in a town which was coping with the task of absorbing double its pre-war population. The two women were very close, calling each other "Sister Sal" and "Sister Anne." Wood sometimes stayed with the Shepherd family until suitable rooms were found. Sallie lived with Emma and her husband Lemuel, and their three children. Wood was then a formidable woman in her mid-sixties, all signs of the thin girl of former Norfolk days long gone. Now stout and wearing the infamous black wig, she was remembered by one of Emma Shepherd's children, Edith Shepherd Brooke, as "something out of a Victorian novel." She continued to dress in the velvets and silks of the Victorian age. In the eyes of a child, she was a real presence, even "a character" for Norfolk, given her predilection for layers of clothing and an abundance of jewelry, her piercing eyes and dramatic flare.

One Christmas, home from her senior year at Randolph-Macon, Edith Shepherd Brooke mentioned to Wood that she was taking a course in Modern Literature. Without hesitation, Wood began discussing Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* in details intimidatingly imposing to the young student. She recalled that Wood "never forgot a plot."

Wood was always an early riser, eager to start the day. Rather than wait for the boarding house to open its kitchen, she would frequently walk to the YWCA around the corner for breakfast and conversation. There she would compare the stories of the sailors with the news in the papers and discuss the happenings around Norfolk. Brooke remembered her as an impressive woman, remarking many years later, "I can't express how brilliant she was."⁵⁴

During these years in Norfolk, Annie Wood began a number of cultural programs. She started a "Forum of Debate" in 1915, a series of presentations on a particular topic. Two of these are recorded as, "'Back to Nature'—a movement of Progressive Retrogression?" and "'Dramatic Form'—does it originate in Primitive Human Instinct, or is it the result of Highly Organized Civilization?"⁵⁵ Both are characteristic of the type of discussion she enjoyed. She belonged to the Fireside Club, the Wednesday Club, and the Monday Club, all study groups which met for stimulating conversation and intellectual gain. The lecture course she started in 1914 "soon became so popular that the small room was taxed beyond its capacity each week."⁵⁶ A superb and entertaining speaker herself, she also engaged the foremost speakers in the area to lecture at the Thursday afternoon programs. Later, university professors and art historians would become a regular part of the series.

To encourage writing and art, Wood established a Prize Bureau in 1918. The Winter and Spring Festivals celebrated winning entries in prose (which included one-act plays), poetry, and the arts, at which times the entries were read aloud and the art works put on view.⁵⁷ Wood bestowed the awards herself for the first few years, funded several awards, and solicited friends to do so as well. This practice continues with the Irene Leache Memorial Literary Contest, though with poetry and prose combined at one presentation in the spring, and the Irene Leache Biennial Art Show. Prizes were given based on the highest standards, and the categories changed according to the quality of the work submitted. If the entries fell short in quality, no prize would be awarded in that particular category, which sometimes occurred. Over the course of the first ten years, literary prizes were given for sonnets, lyric poems, blank verse, short stories, French and English essays, and one-act plays. Outstanding writers and teachers judged the entries, including Robert Frost, who read his own poetry at the Arts Building when he came to Norfolk to judge the Literary Contest.⁵⁸ In art, categories included oil and watercolor painting in landscape and still-life, portraiture, architectural sketches, clay, and modeling. Appropriate entries were purchased to add to the collection. Some years prizes for musical composition and landscape architecture were awarded as well.

Musical performances were a regular part of many of the programs, and the Norfolk Society of Arts formalized this interest with the formation in 1920 of a music committee to arrange regular concerts. Wood had an abiding interest in drama, and many of the programs centered around dramatic interpretations or discussions of plays. As a natural consequence of her early encouragement, the Art Players formed. They were a

small but active group, sponsored by the Norfolk Society of Arts, which staged performances periodically. For many years, a prize was given in Wood's name for outstanding acting in productions of the Art Players.

In addition, the organizations which developed from the Irene Leache Library reached beyond the lecture series and the Art Room. Like the Leache-Wood Seminary, these groups were consistently non-sectarian, even refusing the opportunity to close the Art Room on Holy Thursday.⁵⁹ They offered meeting space to the YWCA and temporarily housed "a collection of curios and historical relics" acquired by a teacher's association in Norfolk.⁶⁰ They repeatedly sold stamps during World War I to help the families of artists sent to the front, a project brought to them by Douglas Volk.⁶¹ They continued to actively support the American Federation of Art, sending a delegate each year to its annual meeting and using its illustrated lectures and exhibits.

Children were a top priority. The Memorial supported art education for students both by promoting youth attendance at the Art Room and by sponsoring, in 1915, an exhibit featuring the original designs of students of the Pratt Institute, the Rhode Island School of Design, the Philadelphia Museum School, and the Boston Museum School.⁶² In 1922, Virginia Reynolds, a Leache-Wood graduate who taught at Maury High School, approached the Memorial with a special request. She proposed that the Memorial offer a scholarship to Boston Tech for a worthy Maury boy, to be known as the Irene Leache Memorial Scholarship. The Memorial supported the idea, deeming it "a very fitting memorial to Miss Leache, who had been such a splendid educator in her day," and funded it at \$150.00 per year.⁶³

In 1925, a group of younger members of the Norfolk Society of Arts formed the Art Corner, meeting bi-weekly for the study of art. They held exhibitions in the Mowbray Arch building, later sponsoring both local and national shows. The group drew together local artists, leading to the formation of the Tidewater Artists Association.⁶⁴

The groups which grew from the Irene Leache Library never flagged in their enthusiasm for the cultural programs Annie Wood presented to them. Although Wood left Norfolk in 1921, the initiatives she began continued and strengthened. The women of the Irene Leache groups persistently lobbied the city to support the arts in many venues. When they urged the city to create an Art Commission, they were also asking the city to recognize the value of the cultural arts for all its citizens.⁶⁵ From the various committees of the Irene Leache Memorial and the Norfolk Society of Arts grew many of the cultural mainstays of the community. From the Music Committee, chaired by Grace Shepherd Ferebee, came the impetus to form the Norfolk Civic Symphony. Now the Virginia Symphony, they gave their first performance in April 1921.⁶⁶ The Norfolk Little Theater (1927) began with the Society's drama committee, called the Art Players in 1920, which presented one-act plays at the Arts Building under the leadership of Louise Collier Willcox, the dear friend of Leache and Wood.⁶⁷ From the Prize Bureau started by Wood in 1918, the Irene Leache Literary Contest and the Irene Leache Biennial Art Show continue to encourage creative talent, attracting fine judges and increasing participation. Norfolk Society of Arts presents a season of lectures and offers periodic musical recitals and programs. True to their original goal of creating an art gallery, but far beyond their expectations, the Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences developed into a substantial.

internationally-known art museum. The Chrysler Museum of Art (1973). No wonder the group Annie Wood founded in 1901 has been called "the fountainhead of Norfolk cultural life."⁶⁸

So many groups, from so modest a beginning. And so much activity from the inspiration of one woman whose heart's desire was only to remember her friend. Although it is impossible to fully assess the importance of cultural opportunities on a community, few would doubt the profound impact. The creative spirit is a determining factor in the life of a city, bringing joy and enlightenment to its citizens. Culture is the distinguishing feature which simply makes one place more desirable, more charming, and more welcoming than another.

Norfolk, with its growing prosperity and increasingly educated middle class, might well have developed an art museum, a symphony, a theater, a lecture series, and other cultural organizations. But the dedication, foresight, patience, and persistence of these impressive women brought them forth much sooner than a town the size and prospect of Norfolk might expect. And those Victorian women, just emerging into public life, did it exceptionally well. It is to the everlasting credit of Irene Leache that her memory so inspired her students. And credit is due also to Annie Wood, whose efforts were directed toward the memory of her friend, by whose light she was guided always.

CHAPTER 7

ITALY

At the age of 71, in 1921, Annie Wood returned to Italy. She was weary. With the Memorial secured, the war in Europe over, and the civil unrest in Italy settled, she wanted to live out her life in Florence, where she had known such happiness. She left behind her closest friends and made her last boat trip across the Atlantic. The next years were spent in repose. In essence, she retired from public life. Although she found the time she sought for quiet reflection, she paid the price with periods of loneliness.

Only a partial picture of her life from 1921 to 1940 is known, through postcards to old friends and through her albums. She traveled a bit, primarily to thermal spas and quiet resorts in northern Italy, Germany, and Switzerland. Friends from Norfolk and former students would call on her when in Florence or Montreux. Two such friends, Isabel Larmour Godwin and her daughter, Margaret Godwin Jenkins, stayed for several weeks in Florence in 1925 and have passed down warm remembrances of Wood from that time.¹ Louise Collier Willcox, a former Leache-Wood teacher who co-authored *Answers of the Ages* with Irene Leache, spent time in Montreux with Wood, continuing their friendship. An old student, Mary L. Simpson, visited in Montreux in August 1926, and wrote to thank Wood for “your peaches and candy and ice cream . . . a meal fit for the gods.”²

One close companion was her first cousin, May Gold of Winchester, who was the youngest child of William Henry Gold, the influential superintendent of public schools in

Frederick County, Virginia. May Gold's mother, Margaret Ann Wood, was Annie Wood's aunt. Born Mary Floyd but always called May, she and Wood became good friends when Gold taught at Leache-Wood. Another member of the family, May Gold's half-sister, Laura Gold, was a boarding student at the school for several years. May Gold and Annie Wood were dear friends, corresponded regularly, and lived near one another in Europe for weeks at a time. No doubt they had much in common: a love of travel and of art, an appreciation of European culture, family ties, careers in teaching, common friends, and, both being unmarried, few entanglements. In addition, as single women they had control over their property and earnings, since restrictive property laws applied only to married women.⁵ May Gold traveled extensively throughout Europe in the 1920s, and on occasion Wood joined her in Montreux, Aix-les-Bains, and Gruyère. Sometimes a younger friend, Sally Lincoln, stayed with them.⁴

From the postcards Wood and Gold sent to family and friends in Virginia, it is possible to piece together a sense of Wood's life after 1921. In the custom of the time, both women used postcards as a way to illustrate their travels and interests. A group of cards would be mailed to the recipient in an envelope, some heavily inscribed and others blank. The cards substituted for photographs and supplied a source of information about European sights, art, and architecture. Wood sometimes wrote on the back of the card in a tight, fine handwriting, the message continuing across two or more cards; at other times just a broad scrawl across the bottom of cards to May Gold signed off: "Your cousin Anna" or "Affly, A."

Wood took up the task of finding rooms for Gold when she visited, and took this job very seriously. She spent hours visiting various pensions and family hotels on Gold's behalf, advising her in advance of the available options. Finances were important to Wood, and in her cards to Gold she was quite clear in her concern to find the best value for her friend. She commented on the inflation after World War I, particularly the poor exchange rate for the Swiss franc, and the difficulties it presented for her and her friends. In regard to accommodations, she discussed quite frankly available options regarding location, view, food, congeniality of the guests, and cost. It is not clear whether her concerns are for Gold's finances or her own. In response to a card from Gold regarding traveling in Great Britain, Wood wrote: "We [she and Leache] used to find Scotland expensive, so I have never been after my first visit." Yet during this period, Wood stayed at larger hotels and resorts than she was choosing for her cousin, more centrally located, with a good kitchen, although still within the moderate range.

To May Gold, Wood confided her frustrations with health problems. She shared the complications and devilments of aging: colds which came with the damp and rain, tiredness, a bout with shingles that left her vision temporarily weakened. Wood was no doubt seeking to ease these ailments when she choose Aix and Montreux, where she could drink the beneficial water, breathe the pure air, and enjoy the tranquil, magnificent scenery. She wrote to Gold: "I am not young enough to experiment. In former years I tried some of the Italian and most of the German baths with no especial benefit but I would like to try Ems or Kissing-en as they are special for catarrh & more for drinking

than for bathing.”⁵ The tone of her correspondence with Gold is amicable, but purposeful and often hurried.

A more intimate tone appears in her cards to the Shepherds. Her friendship with that family continued after she left Norfolk, deepening with regular correspondence. Cards to Sallie Shepherd, the first Leache-Wood boarder and later a teacher, were addressed to “Sweet Sal” and signed “My arms are around you—Loving Sister Anne.” or “Ever Thine with an embrace, Sister Anne.” Although Wood was the titular head of the Irene Leache Memorial for almost forty years, and continued to send objects back to the collection, it was Sallie Shepherd who guided the organization in Norfolk. She held the office of Vice President/Acting President from 1921 to 1940, and served as Lecture Chairman for twelve years; she was devoted to carrying out the legacy of her friends. The two women corresponded regularly and Sallie Shepherd kept Wood informed of the progress of the Memorial and sought her advice. Sallie and Emma Shepherd spent several weeks with Wood in Jungfrau and Interlaken, Switzerland in the summer of 1925. Subsequent visits included a two week stay in May 1928 in Florence and another trip in 1936.⁶

The letters and postcards from Wood to Sallie Shepherd are full of warmth and intimacy. They reveal a tender side of Wood not evident in her public persona, and also an endearing, self-deprecating sense of humor. She writes of buying an acousticon to help her to hear better, in the hopes it would facilitate conversation. She comments, “I cannot at present test it as there is no one to talk to. That seems to be my fate.” Another card says, “Emma will be glad to know that I went downtown in an open cab & am sitting

now with my window wide & that I have walked to the entrance of the Cascine—I call it my stunt.” Though age was taking its toll, she still traveled and wrote about the pleasure of seeing in Geneva “a classic play in the old Roman amphitheater at night by torchlight.”⁷ She tried to walk each day, and suffered when she was confined by heavy rain or bitter cold. She adored walking the streets of Florence and knew its stones well. In a series of postcards to Emma Shepherd’s daughter, Virginia, she gives the young girl an insider’s look at the famous city. Each description is a caress. Through the long, damp Florentine winter, she attended lectures, stopped in at the “Philosophical Rooms,” visited friends, attended study groups, spent time in the public library, and continued to take pleasure from theater presentations. Needlework also remained an enjoyable occupation. Even in her seventies, she writes of “mending the Cluny lace of one of my nightgowns.”⁸ When she was in Florence, her maid and companion, Fiammetta, took care of her.⁹

Her interest in the Norfolk Society of Arts and the Irene Leache Memorial continued to be strong. Cards to Sallie Shepherd reveal the deep gratitude Wood felt toward her friends in Norfolk. From Montecatini, August 10, 1936: “Just a line, Sweet Sal: to thank you for the digest & the articles telling of the noble work you all are doing for our Dear Memorial, that is undying work.” Another, probably from the 1930s: “Sallie dearest—I am sending back the clippings . . . They stir feeling too deep for words—.” When Shepherd visited in May 1936, she brought letters from members of the Memorial, to which Wood responded in writing: “My very dear friends: I was greatly

touched at receiving your letters . . . which have enriched life by the loyal love expressed. for such love is a jewel of the soul.”¹⁰

The annual lecture series reports of the Memorial reveal the members’ continuing tenderness for Wood, and a deep appreciation. At the Spring and Winter festivals, when the winning entries for the Literary Contest were read, the chair would usually express gratitude for Wood’s “splendid vision in forming the free lecture course and prize bureau” and for “the wonderful influence she [has] exerted in our city.”¹¹ Far from forgotten, Wood continued as a presence in Norfolk. At the tenth anniversary of the Prize Bureau in 1928, the Memorial wrote to Wood for permission to expand the eligibility requirements for the contest, and followed her advice. One motion asked Sallie Shepherd to “carry to Miss Wood the love and appreciation of the Memorial.”¹²

Whenever her name appears in the minutes, as it often does, it is invariably evoked with deference and respect. A case in point occurred in 1928 in regard to the Prize Bureau. Some members had expressed concern that the same talented people entered the contest each year, winning awards year after year; resentment seemed to be building. What should be done? they wrote to Wood. She responded with a statement published in the newspaper (at her request), and which “will be enrolled on these minutes as a permanent guide for us”:

Excellence Basis

As President of the Irene Leache Memorial Branch of the Norfolk Society of Arts and as founder of the Prize Bureau connected therewith, I would like to say in explanation to anyone not understanding the purpose of this institution, that it was founded in order to promote culture in Norfolk and its immediate vicinity, by establishing a standard of excellence in the arts generally, and this to be irrespective of persons; therefore as excellence is the main object, competitors are not excluded from the lists no matter how

many times they may have been successful. Every success attained is an acquisition to our beloved city and every contestant is that much more a loyal and honored citizen. he or she is working not for an economic advantage but for the distinction of this city in which he resides.¹³

The same standard applies to the Memorial contests today. Repeat winners have become increasingly rare, however, since the number of entries has grown as the range and prestige of both contests increased. Yet, members of the Memorial were particularly pleased when the first prize for the 1996 Art Biennial was given to a previous winner and local artist, Charles Sibley of Norfolk.

By 1932, a number of the original members had died. With each death, a fellow member would compose an affectionate memorial resolution recognizing the dedication and accomplishments of her peer, to be read at the next meeting and “spread upon the records.” Several resolutions include the high praise that the departed member had been personally chosen or “appointed by Miss Wood,” further evidence of the esteem Wood’s former students had for her.¹⁴ The work so dear to them was continued as daughters and nieces and others committed to the arts were elected to the board.

It was in memory of Helen Wood Rogers, a graduate and early director, that the prize winners were first published by the Memorial. Fannie Rogers Curd, her sister, served as president of the Museum and chairman of the Prize Bureau. Curd offered to publish, at her own expense, an anthology of the winning poems “as a Memorial to Miss Helen Rogers and at the same time as a compliment to Miss Wood.”¹⁵ The book, *Irene Leache Memorial Anthology*, published in 1934 (Kaleidograph Press, Dallas, TX),

contains the winning poems from 1919 to 1933. Virginia Lyne Tunstall, who joined the Irene Leache Memorial when she returned to Norfolk in 1943, contributed ten poems.¹⁶

Wood continued to send copies of art works for the collection and gifts to the Norfolk Society of Arts, in particular an album she prepared in 1923 called "The Golden Book of Donations," which was designed to "enroll the names of all donors to the building fund which the society is starting for an art museum." In typical style, she included "a square of Damask for the book to rest in."¹⁷ From time to time, she sent thematic albums of etchings and photographs of paintings which she had collected, arranged, and annotated. Like the albums she and Leache put together in the 1890s, they provided commentaries on great works of art. Ever the teacher, Wood used the albums to bring the great museums of Europe to her former students in Norfolk. Her annotations reveal an impressive depth and breadth of knowledge.

She later sent eleven albums, composed in the late 1920s, for the members of the Memorial, and more to friends in the mid-1930s. Putting together albums with explanatory comments was common in the nineteenth century,¹⁸ and a delightful way to reflect on one's interests. In Wood's case, this old hobby became a distraction for her later years and provided a means of visiting with distant friends. Although Irene Leache kept a daily journal, Emma Shepherd recalled that Wood never kept notes or a journal though she was "an omnivorous reader."¹⁹ But Wood used these albums to record her musings and reflections. At the opening of the Irene Leache Memorial Room in the new museum in 1934, a number of Wood's albums were displayed, along with those of Irene Leache. The Memorial has a total of sixteen of these *pensées*, gathered from the homes

of friends like Sallie and Emma Shepherd, Alice Jaffé, and Helen Ferguson, where they were stored when no longer on view.

Each album has a similar format: photographs, postcards, prints and other commercial reproductions of famous works pasted onto scrapbook pages, often labeled, and interspersed with handwritten commentaries. They vary in size from five by seven inches to twelve by eighteen inches, but most are about twelve by fourteen inches, a standard scrapbook size. Most are covered in cloth or Italian paper, though two are bound with Florentine leather in distinctive historic designs. Those albums intended as annotated guides to selected master art works reflect her style of teaching, drawing in compelling bits of history (royal relationships, Medici intrigues) and provoking the reader's interest with provocative questions. She shared her thoughts and observations as though she were in the same room with the recipient, commenting freely to a sympathetic audience. Several times, she adopts the form of a Socratic dialogue between the student and the master to illustrate her points.²⁰ In many instances, she uses the tone of a salon hostess of the nineteenth century, asking questions designed to spark discussion. You can almost see her pausing to hear the response.

In old age, Annie Wood most missed conversation. Emma Shepherd described her well, as: "a brilliant conversationalist, one who always gave her listeners something instructive or illuminating because of her wide range of reading and her retentive memory—yet she was always ready by discussion and sympathetic understanding to enable others to express their thoughts on all aspects of a subject."²¹ Increasingly isolated, she yearned for the diversity of contacts she had enjoyed in her travels and

conversations—like the young sailors she met for breakfast at the YWCA during World War I. She believed wholeheartedly in the salutary effects of social intercourse. Though she was an elitist, she hated pomposity and blasted the smugness of “the well-to-do upper Middle Class” who “keep their doors closed” to conversation and new ideas and seem “always to be afraid of being caught.”²² She also complained about those who confined their interests to their own time and their own generation as being “like a person living in a closet with only a transom for admitting light.”²³ She must have been spurned in Europe by those whose company she sought, who shied away from this opinionated old woman who loved to argue about ideas. But she never stopped wanting to experience the broadest range of ages and experiences, hoping to learn and grow from the contributions of each generation. Her own mind was ever capable of assimilating different points of view.

Of those albums which focus on art, probably from the 1920s, most of the illustrations are from Italian Renaissance works, though French, English, Spanish, German, and modern Swiss pictures are also represented. Her comments on selected frescoes from Pompeii, Etruscan sculpture, and mosaics from Ravenna demonstrate the intense interest she had in Italian history. She studied the facial expressions and poses, speculated on the artist’s intention, compared the *Venus* of Titian with the *Venus* of Botticelli, and commented on the symbolism of idealized women (Sybils, madonnas, Aphrodites) and of angels, the role of innocence in the world, the value of chastity. In contrast to the scholarly tone of Leache’s earlier albums, Wood described these as “not academic . . . [but] interpretations . . . opinions of a psychological nature.”²⁴ She asks the

reader to study each “type” of face closely, looking for emotions, character, vanity, intelligence, grace, spirituality, virility, beauty, old age, youth, passion, and strength.²⁵ She sometimes paired Renaissance works with modern images of the same or similar subjects: angels, madonnas, Christ figures, and children, in particular. Her goal was to learn history from “historical biography,” from which she wrote one gained more than “from lists of wars and the acquisition of territory.”²⁶

The albums clearly demonstrate Wood’s interest in understanding a topic thoroughly, and in carefully explaining it to others. Like a philosopher, she meticulously defined the terms she used and distinguished between words commonly used carelessly or interchangeably. She was a good researcher, using many primary sources, examining concepts often taken for granted and tracing them back through the centuries to their roots in ancient Egypt, India, or Greece. These albums are more informative than didactic, not just commentaries but astute lessons on art, history, and philosophy.

Later albums from the 1930s consisted of colored prints and postcards primarily from Switzerland, with many scenes of Lake Lemman, Mont Blanc, and the Matterhorn. The serenity of the mountains was a great source of comfort to Wood, and she returned there again and again. These albums bear inscriptions indicating a more casual intention. For instance, Album 630 begins: “Random Reflections, Haphazard Pictures . . . Merely an innocent form of self-expression—Concerning general ideas & tendencies”; Album 6 is inscribed “little crumbs dropped from a full experience . . . not intended for instruction but only for suggestion.” Album 8 shows her humorous side: “I might call these stray thoughts—Drift-wood—(but not a pun on my name).”

Seen as a group, the albums vary greatly in tone and format. Wood was alternately discursive and pedagogical, didactic and reflective, cohesive and rambling. At times, she became sentimental and romantic, grandmotherly and whimsical, and those albums seem like old-fashioned Valentines. In other albums her tone is stern, as though she is shaking her finger as she bemoaned modern flippancies. Her thoughts are filled with strong Victorian moralizing, reiterating the highest standards of behavior for her former students. And sometimes she is the gentlest of teachers, guiding and questioning, leading the reader to think and analyze. Even though Wood warned the reader that they were written "at long intervals," and therefore are sometimes repetitious, she wrote with great consistency on a number of themes: the modern woman, the role of fate, the stages of life, and the nature of the soul.²⁷ Repeatedly, she stressed the value of taking time to reflect. The albums are worth perusing for what they reveal of a remarkable woman nearing the end of her life.

However, references to specific quotes are difficult since none of the albums is dated or paginated. Moreover, not all are identified by number, and those that are numbered are not in chronological order. Each was written in black ink in a broad hand. Her writing is simple and straightforward, with little slant. The only flamboyance is an exaggerated flourish at the end of words ending in Y or G, similar to a colonial style.

In Album 630, Wood writes in more of an essay format, spreading cohesive, consistent reflections across several pages. Like Leache's *Answers of the Ages*, Wood addressed the core questions of life: What is important? What is heaven? Hell? Eternity? What is the meaning of life? Though she valued self-confidence, she

denigrated self-importance and warned against being too "self-satisfied."²⁸ Her style was always confident, her opinions strongly stated and passionately held: she never equivocated: she saw the world clearly. And she did not always like what she saw.

She was particularly disturbed with emerging feminism. In an ironic twist, she had lived the independent life women of the twenties and thirties were beginning to write about, and yet she regarded the emerging modern woman with Victorian indignation. Like Virginia Wolfe, she had enjoyed "money and a room of one's own." She had welcomed meaningful work at a time when married women worked outside the home only out of extreme necessity. Teaching was important to Wood, and her relationships with her students and fellow teachers proved to be the continuing focus of her life. But married women did not teach by custom in private schools, and were commonly barred by law from teaching in the public schools. Only briefly during World War I was this rule amended in Norfolk, to allow women married to servicemen to teach. But it was quickly reinstated after the war, and stayed in effect until World War II, when necessity again forced change.²⁹ It is surprising that one who had gained so much from her profession would not have more sympathy with women who aspired to do meaningful work, single or not.

In addition, Wood traveled freely when few women ventured very far, and at a time when her contemporaries were constrained by family responsibilities. She lived outside the demands of family that forced other women to sublimate their talents to those of their husbands, or forced them to write clandestinely late at night only after domestic duties were completed. In essence, Wood's celibacy enabled her to pursue an

independent life. She broke out of the traditional "circle of confinement," taking on a public role and encouraging others to do so when women were channeled to look to the family as their total field of action, their entire world.³⁰

Yet, she was very much a Victorian lady. She thought of men and women as complimentary parts of a universal whole, whose roles were dictated by nature. This pervasive view of a natural division of duties and strengths was supported by nineteenth-century science and metaphysics. Charles Darwin held that "natural selection, reinforced by sexual selection, had favored man, who 'became superior to woman.' " He believed inequality to be inherent in the sexes, transmitted by each sex to its same sex; therefore, women would always be behind men.³¹

Another prominent nineteenth-century writer, the influential French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798-1857), for instance, argued that women were angels too pure to be sullied by the material world. Putting the Virgin at the center of Christian practice, he elevated women to represent the ideals of emotional and spiritual purity. The German philosophers Georg F. W. Hegel (1770-1831) and Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854) also supported a duality of roles by sex as essential and intrinsic to nature, a "unity of opposites."³² Wood was particularly interested in the views of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), whose work dealt extensively with sexual differences, and quoted them repeatedly. She agreed with Nietzsche's view of woman as the essential complimentary part to man, the arbiter of truth within the family, since (in Nietzsche's words) "women have great power in morality and custom." Although Nietzsche thought that women were capable of intellectual education, that through

education they could “be made into anything, even into men.” he wrote that parity between the sexes would result in “society in full dissolution.”³³ Wood concurred.

Wood’s Virginia background supported these views as well. Chivalry was a gentleman’s badge in the South, and its importance did not diminish as women became educated. Wood delights in describing jousting tournaments which took place before and after the Civil War in both *Story* and *Diana Fontaine*. Chivalry took precedence over camaraderie, ensuring the continuance of the cultural model of the protective male sheltering the weaker female. This protectionism extended to politics, property, and profession. Men would protect the interests of women, it was argued, which provided the excuse to keep women out of politics until the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified in 1920. When Virginia granted married women the right to own property in their own names in 1877, it was the last state in the union to do so. As late as 1896, the General Assembly reasserted that the practice of law would continue to exclude women.³⁴

As women began to be educated, and thereby to advance, a “more stringent code of female behavior” emerged. A woman’s virtue, the core of Victorian values, continued to be greatly emphasized, especially in the South.³⁵ As Virginians dealt with the instability following the Civil War, the “pressure on women to follow conventional paths probably intensified.”³⁶ Women represented “cohesion, decency, and self-restraint” in a society looking for stability. The model woman was still the wife and mother who confined herself to the domestic sphere, to the greater glory of herself and her family. Conventional wisdom sustained the opinion that a woman should have her name in the paper only when she married and when she died. As Dr. Mayo noted in 1892,

Southerners abided by the “peculiar temptation” to make “social success the chief end” of a woman’s life outside the home. The women’s movement in the North focused on a demand for equal civil rights and the same educational and professional opportunities as men. But in the South, women worked through the old Southern channels to seek, by using their influence, broader and better education for girls, more authority in the church, moral reforms (like the temperance movement) and new working opportunities for women.³⁷

For Annie Wood, the separate and distinct contribution of women was the one timeless, dependable aspect of life. She wrote the following passage in 1904, at the height of the Progressive Era in America, regarding the growing emergence of women “into the arena of life”:

Her ambitions and activities will, in the end, develop her as an individual; but in order to compass the greatest good of humanity, it might be well, after she has gained them, to renounce a few of the sweets of power. In order to maintain the balance it is needful that one pole (the feminine) should be negative and one current passive [with the virtues of] humility, self-control, peace . . . Woman should be the retreat, the virtual cloister, the centre of sweetness for those who seek refuge or repose . . . this is the woman-mission upon earth.³⁸

Her position solidified in 1920s and 1930s, when the national temperament became more hostile to feminism and reform. During the Depression, women were “actively discouraged from following career ambitions—and from having career ambitions.”³⁹ Directly reflecting the thinking of her times, she wrote in Album 630 a plea for a return to what she viewed as the balance between the sexes, when “woman undertakes to do the feminine part of the world’s work and man the manly part.” Decrying the loss of chivalry in particular, she noted: “Observation shows us a

generation singularly hard . . . [who] disdain chivalry as indicating inequality of the sexes, yet have not the acumen to perceive that it is the differentiation of the sexes which gives to civilization its finish, its ethical and esthetic value—its polish.”⁴⁰

Although she acknowledged the many benefits of women’s emancipation, she pointed also to the loss of those “higher values” which were traditionally the purview of women, such as “tenderness, sympathy, willingness to sacrifice one’s desires and personal ambitions to a higher cause, honor at the expense of success, and common sense as a restraint.”⁴¹ When American and European women bobbed their hair, shortened their skirts, threw away their corsets, tried out trousers, and took up tennis and golf in addition to bicycling, Annie Wood referred to them disparagingly as the “man-woman,” the hermaphrodite (“nature’s great misfit and racial cripple”) whose imitation of man is “puerile and inadequate.”⁴² She urged women that “smiles are a woman’s weapon, laughter her challenge to a world at large”; she should be “pictorial, eloquent, responsive . . . [and make] life decorative. . . . Hers is no secondary role.”⁴³ She admonishes women not to strive to be “an incomplete copy of the male,” but rather to develop “a pronounced feminine personality.” The “great mission of women,” she wrote, is to “humanize an often barbarous world.”⁴⁴

Annie Wood never accepted the values of society after World War I. In *The Great Opportunity and Other Essays*, a collection of lectures given in Norfolk and published in Florence in 1926, she expressed real bitterness and disillusionment with modern life. These essays represent Wood in her most didactic mood: hard-edged, fiercely opinionated, impatient with fools. It is well to remember that these were written

as lectures, and that Wood's own dramatic flair would have leant them an entertaining quality not so readily apparent when they are read as essays. They seem disjointed, judgmental, elitist and condescending to the modern reader. In the title essay, her noble appeal to strive to achieve one's personal best by living life as if one were practicing a fine art is muted by an officious and haughty tone. She coldly critiqued the "racial soul" of each nation, for example, and characterized the French Revolution as an aberration which fortunately did not dampen French genius.⁴⁵

In two other essays, "Has Woman a Sphere" and "Practical Psychology," she deplored sexual parity in the strongest terms. Bemoaning the changes in society, she decried the woman who delays marriage and children for economic advancement: "In the past our salvation lay in woman, she had not then become conscious of her economic power, she was still a delicious combination of fire and dew, she felt with her mind and thought with her heart, but, now the dew has evaporated and the fire alone is left. [Woman has become] Feverish and restless"⁴⁶

This aspect of modern life, the speed of change and acceleration of activity in the twentieth century, worried her greatly. She quoted Seneca to illustrate the need for repose: "He who is everywhere is nowhere."⁴⁷ She wrote that "continuous restlessness prevents people from seeing clearly" the way moving water gives back no reflection.⁴⁸ This need for quiet, perhaps equal parts a reaction to the speed of change in the twentieth century and old age, surely compelled her return to Europe, where change could be forestalled and life lived more slowly.

Other essays develop the need for independent thinking in society and view modern life as the era of mediocrity and anonymity. She quoted F. C. Eden's definition of democracy as "a form of government in which the quantity rules and the quality pays."⁴⁹

We are not born free and equal, she wrote: even heaven is based on inequality, since the angels are ordered in levels of holiness. "On earth," she wrote, "if equality were to prevail, all progress would come to a stand-still."⁵⁰ Wood was a fervent anti-Marxist, which contributed to her early support of Mussolini. The Russian Revolution of 1917 affected her profoundly. Better to mix monarchies among democracies to safeguard the attainments and values of the supreme individual, on whom the progress of society rests, she wrote.⁵¹

Like other intellectuals after World War I, she distanced herself from the plebeian and the bourgeois, especially that which was commercial or popular, which she equated with vulgarity. To seek equality is to set total standardization as a goal for society, which is an anathema both to progress and the development of character. Wood liked to quote Nietzsche on the lowering of standards of society, the moral nihilism of the modern age, and "the victory of inferiority."⁵² In this mode, she complained about modern education in school buildings made "too luxurious," in classes too easy, lacking in discipline, and too democratic to develop character, which stems from obedience.⁵³

Other essays seem less dated, since they deal with the more timeless subjects: Shakespeare and the importance of drama as an art form; symbolism in folk-lore across cultures; the image of the messiah in various faiths, which she refers to as "The Wonder

Child.” A long chapter explores Freud’s revolutionary theories in detail. Wood was fascinated with the concept of libido, the role of dreams, and the interpretation of the subconscious mind. But in a characteristically individual explication, she accounted for Freud’s focus on sexuality as a basic drive of all humans as based on his “professional observation of pathological cases.” She suggests “an enlarged interpretation of libido . . . [as a] wild creature [that] *must* be tamed, *must* be controlled, *must* be shaped to finer uses and that it is the business of all of us so to shape it.”⁵⁴ Wood took great interest in modern psychology. She viewed it as the perfect blending of scientific observation with philosophical reflection, since psychology broadened the reach of science beyond the body to encompass the mind as well. As Nietzsche explored the psychology of power, so Freud developed the power of psychology.

In *The Psychology of Crime*, published in Florence after 1926, Wood develops her dual interests in psychology and drama. Like *The Great Opportunity*, it was dedicated to “those loyal workers who have put so much of themselves into their labor of love for the Irene Leache Memorial and the Art Museum. . . .” The book consists of a series of selections from the works of classic and modern authors, restated and condensed by Wood, with commentary. She presents each dramatic sketch as a cautionary tale. Wood examines character attributes, tragic flaws, the role of fate, and the ability of the individual to define his own destiny.

Like other writers after World War I, Wood turned to classical sources partly to recover the foundation of universal truths so shaken by the war. The optimism of the nineteenth century, which held the salutary view of civilization as evolving ever higher,

crumbled with disillusionment in the aftermath of trench warfare and poison gas. Poets, playwrights, and novelists took a disparaging view of human progress. Many writers took a closer look at the nature of justice, at core values and morality, and the effects of science and industry. Ironically, as the population of cities grew more dense, people grew more socially distant from one another.

The Psychology of Crime was written in this mode. It explores Greek myths, Buddhist philosophy, and the works of Robert Browning in a series of sketches designed to be performed and discussed. It begins with "The House of Doom," a three-part depiction of the tragic story of Electra, who symbolizes for Wood "the disintegrating forces of hatred and the inevitable destruction which they bring upon the individual, the family and the State."⁵⁵ Drawing from Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, Wood also uses interpretations from two modern playwrights, Hugo von Hofmannsthal (Austrian, 1874-1929) and Emile Verhaeren (Belgian, 1855-1916).⁵⁶ She also draws from an earlier playwright, Friedrich von Hagedorn (German, 1708-1754). The Electra sketches are the most successful part of the book. In no small way, Wood has performed an impressive feat of dramatic explication. Each part is concise, provocative, and stirring. The dialogue is clear and succinct, marked by bold confrontations and tender moments. Wood handles different styles well, moving with alacrity through blank verse, dialogue, and rhymed couplets.

The next section deals with Robert Browning (English, 1812-1889). Browning was interested in the psychology of human behavior, as Wood was. She had organized a class on Browning in Norfolk, from which she probably drew these materials.⁵⁷ The four

short selections deal with failed love: “My Last Duchess,” “A Forgiveness,” and “The Laboratory,” and “Porphyria’s Lover.” In each case, a spouse is murdered without passion or remorse. In a longer selection, “The Ring and the Book Simplified,” Wood shortens the original poem, which she called “the longest in the English language.” It tells the story of a triple murder of a young wife and her parents in seventeenth-century Rome. Each of twelve cantos is told from the point of view of different characters, each of whom represents a different aspect of humanity, which Wood calls “a world in miniature.”⁵⁸ This is a perfect vehicle for Wood to explore the range of human motivations and study the reasoning each of us applies as we choose our fate.

The last section is based on “The King of the Dark Chamber,” by the Indian writer Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913.⁵⁹ Although Wood had an understanding of Indian mysticism, she confused Buddhist and Hindu thought in this segment, which is turgid and muddled. However, she was clear on what she wished the reader to glean: to discern true from false; to learn to love outside oneself; and to learn to withdraw from distraction for meditation, leading to true insight.⁶⁰ Tagore’s Queen learns to detach herself from material, surface desires as she grows to see the worth of the soul, a theme Wood returned to again and again in the last years of her life.

An earlier book, published in Florence in 1925, unites five very different periods and styles. *Drama Sketches for Parlor Acting or Recitation* is a lighter, less ponderous collection. Wood begins with Gilgamesh (*sic*), based on the Sumerian cuneiform tablets recovered from excavations at Ninevah and Nimrud from 1839 to 1876. This look at epic

Babylonian myths is told in two acts, five characters each, in an attempt at archaic style. Another selection, "The Lady Apamé," takes place in Babylonia a thousand years later, at the time of the Exile. Two other sketches take place in Italy, one in pre-Renaissance Pisa and the other in seventeenth-century Umbria. The last sketch is "An Evening in the Hotel Rambouillet," set in a Paris salon of the seventeenth century. Though none of these skits is noteworthy, they represent the kind of work Wood did for the various study groups to which she belonged. Such sketches were an excellent means of gaining a better understanding of another time, another place, a different philosophy, or a great work of literature.

Wood wrote these scenes with gusto. She made a genuine effort to match the style of writing to the times, no easy task. She demonstrated a clear understanding of the history and values of each culture. Her love of fashion is apparent in the care she took to describe costuming in great detail. She included stage settings and full directions. She had fun with these, it is clear. The final salon piece, reminiscent of Molière, is delightfully playful. Its rhymed couplets abound in coquetry, puns, and clever ripostes. It is easy to see why she would have been a valued member of a study class, the term she uses.⁶¹

As these books clearly show, Wood was a life-long learner. She had an insatiable curiosity. She traveled because it made it "possible to live in one century and to visit many."⁶² She studied art so that, by close observation of "the human countenance," she might gain insight into her own psyche, her own "mental complexes."⁶³ She yearned to understand human behavior, which led her to contemplate Socrates, Plato, Aristotle,

Pythagorus. Porphyry, Plotinus. St. Augustine. Hermetic and Gnostic sources. Buddhist and especially Zen writings, the Hindu Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita. Swedenborg, Kant, Nietzsche. Freud. and Maeterlinck. The common thread of these writers is the journey of each, separated by centuries and civilizations. to find the meaning of life. That was Annie Wood's focus for her remaining years.

CHAPTER 8

LEGACY

Annie Wood's explorations of philosophy and religion led her in surprising directions. When she and Leache lived in Norfolk, they attended St. Paul's Episcopal Church, led by their friend The Reverend Dr. Beverley Tucker. When she again lived in Norfolk during the World War I period, she returned to regular attendance at the church, sitting in the Shepherd family pew.¹ But her ideology was far from standard Episcopalian doctrine, for she shared with Leache a universalistic approach which gave equal credence to the spiritual beliefs of sources as disparate as that of the American Indian and ancient Egypt, of Krishna and Kant, Jesus and Nietzsche. An unattributed quote in *Answers of the Ages*, published by Leache and Louise Collier Willcox, speaks equally well for Wood's theology: "True religion—is the essence of all doctrines; the inner truth of all systems; creedless, nameless, untaught by priests, it is the spirit; it is not found in temple or synagogue. It is the summing up of the wisdom of the Brahmin, the Buddhist, the Greek, the Jew and the Christian."² In the same vein, Wood wrote that "It is interesting to view religion, in its essentials, as a series of gradations, all melting into each other, and springing from the same root."³

Wood's relationship with Irene Leache was based upon a foundation of higher spirituality, of their very real quest for a higher level of being. From the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1722), both women pursued an interest in spiritualism. Swedenborgian views held great attraction for a number of intellectuals at the end of the

nineteenth century, Sarah Orne Jewett among them.⁴ His mystical theology emphasized human progress through a hierarchy of eternal life: the soul is eternal, and one's behavior on earth would determine one's state in the life to come. Swedenborg wrote of mystical visions and delineated intricate supernatural hierarchies of angels and demons. The two women were stimulated to study angels themselves, and Leache's long essay on angels was included by Wood at the end of *The Story of a Friendship*. Wood's interest in angels is clear in her *pensées*, in which she devoted a dozen pages to a discussion of their appeal as an eternal source of inspiration and an example of divine serenity.⁵

But Leache was much more ethereal, more passive and other-worldly than Wood, whose interests seemed more cultural than spiritual. Wood's early interest in other cultures pulled Leache to the American southwest to visit pueblos, to the Temple of Karnak at Luxor in Egypt, and set the two friends on the path of the Druids in France and England. She was more a student of the psychology and impact of religion across cultures, East and West, primitive and advanced, than a pure spiritualist. For instance, in an essay titled "The Sun's Place in Folk-lore," she cites Egyptian hymns, the song of the Dakota Indians, Jesus Christ, Greek legends of Apollo and Aurora, Incan and Celtic practices, the Roman saturnalia, and Chinese legends.⁶ In other works, she traced the concept of the trinity and the messiah across time and cultures.⁷

However, this life-long interest in a wide variety of religious approaches intensified as Wood grew older. Meditation, reflection, and contemplation were not Sunday-only occupations for her. The cacophony of America sent her to Europe before the turn of the century, and kept her there, save only during times of war. She became

increasingly preoccupied with the quest for a higher spiritual level, placing an ever-greater emphasis on the non-physical, non-material world. As she approached the end of her life, she urged others, in the Foreword to *The Psychology of Crime*, to: “accentuate the transcendent importance of meditation, reflection and contemplation as the means by which high spiritual levels are reached . . . [and recognize] the fact that the soul cannot unfold in the midst of restlessness and noise for ceaseless activity is a form of egoism. . . .”⁸ The locus of her faith was reincarnation: the belief that the soul survives after death and is reborn, again and again.

Wood turned to the spiritual world partly in reaction to the naturalistic, mechanistic world described by Darwin. She looked upon reincarnation as the evolution of the soul. She wrote that life is actually part of “a series of lives to test a soul’s worthiness for entrance into a higher sphere . . . that and only that is true progress.”⁹ Harkening back to Plato, who emphasized the unchanging nature of a soul always cycling through birth and rebirth toward immortality, Wood wrote that “the directive purpose of every creature . . . if he is to fulfil his destiny, is *Ascent in the scale of Being*.” She urged the same attention ought to be given to “enlarge the boundaries of vision” as Einstein and Newton gave to “enlarge the boundaries of knowledge.”¹⁰ Reincarnation offered her a sense of order in the universe and optimism for an improved future.

She believed that the deepest mysteries of life are solved only through intuition, not by science or knowledge. Insight comes through reflection, not reason; insight is a glimpse into a higher realm, a Platonic world of the ideal. Like Plotinus, Pythagoras, and Nietzsche, she believed that life is transitional, not final. It is incumbent upon each of us

to lead a life of purpose, which goes beyond one's personal gain, especially if one believes that mankind shares a common destiny in a eternity of spiritual transmigration. Man "creates his own destiny which is the logical outcome of his life in a previous existence," she wrote late in life.¹¹ To ascend to a higher plane in the next incarnation, she offered five specific conditions:

1. the ability to distinguish appearance from reality
2. the ability to "choose what is most worthy of choice, even when it cuts into our deepest prejudices"
3. the avoidance of extremes and exaggeration
4. the ability to "avoid temptation, however seductive. . ."
5. the ability to distinguish between ambition and aspiration¹²

Discernment had been important to her all her life. Defining terms, distinguishing between similar concepts, explicating common misconceptions: these interests influenced her students and filled her writings. Reincarnation fit her idea of cause and effect with its tenet that what you do in this life affects the next. It also fit her concept of self-discipline, since each incarnation offers the chance for growth and improvement through choice. Each individual, therefore, is responsible for not only his actions, but his fate. Talent, character, even an affinity for a particular place relate to a previous life.¹³ She spurned the idea of an interactive God, preferring to suppose "that man and his world are the result of an evolution for which he has been mainly responsible himself."¹⁴

On the other hand, her belief in reincarnation allowed her to look the other way when faced with misery or misfortune. Wood regarded the existence of slums as a result of "lasciviousness, promiscuity, and such degrading vices," and viewed imbecility, blindness, and other maladies as stemming from "self-imposed limitations" in a former incarnation.¹⁵ She believed each person lived out one's own inadequacies from a

previous life. In relating a story about the reaction of two women upon observing an old woman on her knees scrubbing the floor, Wood suggests that maybe the old woman was rich in her last incarnation, but was mean. The Creator is therefore repaying that woman's choices from her last earthly existence. Wood remarked, "what seems life's unfairness is often Justice in disguise."¹⁶

Nietzsche's emphasis on self-improvement appealed most to Wood. She never veered from setting the highest standards for herself, or her students, or her community. She held that religion was not meant to be a poultice, to provide comfort like "a downy pillow," but rather a rigorous force which deals "with truths that are painful to face."¹⁷ One such truth, for Wood, was that salvation comes through deeds, not faith. Her interest in angels and madonnas, as in the vestal virgins, stemmed from the inspiration they offered to redirect one's conduct. The Virgin Mary, in particular, had great appeal to Wood and other Victorians, as she "symbolized all feminine values: at once virgin and mother, she defied nature and science," according to historian Yvonne Knibiehler.

In her search for enlightenment and inner peace, Wood took meaningful lessons from many philosophies and religions, blending Christianity, reincarnation, Buddhist meditation, Hindu struggle, Swedenborgian mysticism, pagan symbolism, Hermetic writings from Syria, and Platonic ideals. Her growing emphasis on the spiritual may be understood in terms of her frustration with the times, with what she viewed as the frenetic pace of the modern world, and its emphasis on physical gratification and self-fulfillment. Heaven, she fervently believed, begins on earth; it is "a state of the heart," as Nietzsche wrote.¹⁸ In pondering the value of life, she turned increasingly to piety, concentrating on

“the degree of one’s virtues” rather than the length of one’s life.¹⁹ And as she did so, she grew ever more dissatisfied with the world around her.

It was not always thus. In *Westover’s Ward*, published in 1892, Wood explored the tragic consequences of a man who chooses the pious path untempered by practical reason. Meade Westover, a Virginia gentleman trying his luck in Colorado after the Civil War, falls into befriending a scatter-brained, shallow, and ignorant girl, Angela Cloud. She was aptly named, for though she looked like an angel, her head was in the clouds. Angela was a sweetly beautiful and talented singer whose naiveté and indolence put her ever in harm’s way. In the name of protection, Westover slowly slides into marrying her because he believes that only he can teach her to be a lady, save her from sin, and become her salvation. As he takes up the task of educating Angela’s soul, Westover begins to withdraw from contemporary life, recoiling from too much vulgarity: “The unreal world was more real to Westover than . . . the actual one.”²⁰ He died a senseless death: in a tragic mistake, he is killed in a fight defending his wife’s honor. His piety has come to naught.

The book is flawed by abrupt transitions, cardboard characters, simplistic solutions, and repetitious meandering. Her prejudices against independent blacks, self-serving ministers, and even North Carolinians are dated, but representative of Virginians at that time. Characters in the book are presented as no more than stereotypes: a degenerate cowboy, a money-grubbing senator, a fellow Virginian who plays the roué but marries solidly, the leader of a theater troupe, an idealized wife and mother back in Virginia, a grateful former slave, and an old states’-rightist who sounds like an earlier

version of Gerald O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*: "Land is the only sure thing; so I say hold on to your land when you've got it to hold on to."²¹ But she provides needed humor with Angela's malapropisms and her habit of what Wood called "verbicide": scherzos become scare-crows, interludes change to intraludes.²²

The few action scenes are too brief and suffer by being submerged in too many Victorian platitudes. The dialogue runs to speeches rather than conversations. Wood often injected editorial comments when the action should speak for itself. But Wood was writing in the style of the New England Romanticists, like Sarah Orne Jewett, Kate Chopin, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Alice Brown, who used local color to build incidents in lieu of developing intricate plot lines. In keeping with the romantic vein of the 1870s to 1890s, Wood set her stories in rural areas and relied on dialect and the details of local customs and foods to provide verisimilitude.²³ If the book seems short on plot and long on platitudes, it was not out of step with the novels of the time.

Wood often described scenes as though they were paintings, seeing them with an artist's eye, as in this passage: "[she] nestled her head against [the sofa's] shiny black cushion, which formed an ebon frame for her young bright beauty. . . ."²⁴ Some of her writing might qualify for a Purple Prose award: "Night, scared away by gas and fire, jerked his head out of her bedroom window, and fetched now lights of his own which twinkled spare and clear in the blue-black empyrean. He was biding his time, ready to devour her with all those eyes of his when she should show herself out of doors."²⁵

It is not until the action shifts to Virginia, in Volume III, that the most compelling character in the book emerges. Westover's sister, Gay, is a talented artist who "had the

courage to be original.” wanted to pursue an art career in New York, questioned the teachings of the church, saw Angela realistically but befriended her anyway, and who respected her parents but sought her own path. She represents “the coming woman,” who will “show the world she can stand alone, except where it is a question of a man’s highest good and hers.”²⁶ Like Wood, Gay read often and broadly. She is the link to the future. And like Diana Fontaine, she chose to remain independent.

The novel is a ringing indictment of marriage in several respects. Wood contrasts the idealism of Westover with the more enlightened view of marriage held by a sympathetic character named Block, who was born Jewish but raised Catholic: “I do think it [marriage] is immoral where woman is regarded as chattels, man as purveyor, provider, protector. [Marriage] is not a utilitarian bond, but a means to a noble end; then only should the idea of it be entertained.” Wood was stating that marriage is not a perfect institution, as the Victorians had held, not every woman’s highest calling. In Westover’s words, she expanded on this theme with an interesting twist on who was best suited to marry: “It is hard for a woman to fight the battle of life, single-handed. . . for this reason ordinary women marry. It is only the strong ones that can afford to be alone; so the weak are made the most attractive, or the most appealing to our sex—their only hope is in marriage.”²⁷

Though this view might have been self-serving, Wood did recognize the changing role of women, their emerging independence, the wider world they would seek. Implicit in the story is the absurdity of a man who marries out of paternal protection rather than choosing to enhance his life through the companionship of an equal. Wood came down

on the side of a new view of marriage based on mutual support and equality, not paternalism and control.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the issue of marriage was widely debated, and a number of novels appeared which examined marriage from the perspective of the "new woman."²⁸ As more education created more opportunity for women, so more women chose celibacy over marriage. For example, of the Bryn Mawr women graduating between 1889 and 1908, 53% remained single.²⁹ To marry meant to lose one's legal freedom and cut off the few careers open to women, like teaching. Although Wood should not be considered a "new woman," she did share some of the themes of the "new woman" fiction of the 1890s: she challenged the assumption that all women should marry and have children and that all women have a strong maternal instinct. In her two novels, Wood questioned the traditional values of society and extolled the woman who read and thought for herself. She protested against the restrictive upbringing of girls which left them dependent upon husbands, fathers, and brothers. And she commented upon the inadequate education of girls, especially in *Diana Fontaine*. All of these traits were characteristic of the "new woman" fiction of the 1890s, which Wood anticipated.³⁰

Earlier nineteenth-century women more commonly wrote domestic advice, sentimental novels, or religious meditations (like Leache's *Answers of the Ages*).³¹ In 1850, women wrote almost half the novels published in the United States; by 1872, their share had increased to three-quarters.³² But the "new woman" fiction was different because it was "written by a woman about women from the standpoint of women."³³ Yet, Wood published her novels under her father's first and middle names, Algernon

Ridgeway. A number of women writers took male pseudonyms (notably George Sand and George Eliot) in order to avoid sexual prejudice and to enable the book to receive a neutral reading and a wider audience.³⁴ Wood strived to speak with clarity for her male characters, and treated them with both sympathy and respect. It is difficult to perceive a female voice. Though most novels of the period written by women dealt with marriage and education, Wood's fiction aimed equally at male and female interests. She later complained about the proliferation of popular novels, saying that literature should not appeal to the masses but rather "set a standard of taste and conduct," and should depend on "analysis or portraiture."³⁵ She aimed to do that in her novels. Though not great literature, both books have a strong voice, strong imagery, and a strong message. *Diana Fontaine*, in particular, is a fine book.

Wood published *Diana Fontaine* in 1891, when she and Leache left Norfolk for what they presumed to be a period of rest before resuming their duties at the school. It was her first published work, though it is so much more polished in every aspect than *Westover's Ward* that it is tempting to think *Diana* may have been written after *Westover's Ward*. Set in Virginia just after the Civil War, it relates the story of an eighteen-year-old orphan who comes to live with her father's family in a small Shenandoah Valley town (Pughtown), leaving behind the sophisticated life she had known with her mother's relatives in New York and Newport. She drew heavily upon her Wood relatives in Winchester both in characterization and names, her summer experiences there, and the girls she met at Angerona. All the place names and Valley traditions ring true. Wood's contemporaries commented that they recognized many

people in the book.³⁶ In addition, Irene Leache's experiences during the war inform the narrative and provide specific details. Wood had a keen understanding of the effects of Reconstruction in Virginia, and she expressed herself well.

The main character is in many ways a mirror image of Wood herself, and she portrays other women in the book with insight and a sharp eye for detail. The male characters are equally well-drawn and memorable. In some respect, each represented the various ways men responded to the postbellum period: some returned to what they did before, like the good Dr. Loughborough; some dwelled in the past and lamented the present, like Roy McElroy, forever ruined by the war; and others, like Grat Fontaine, turned toward politics to shape the future.³⁷ Her perceptive characterizations of women are equally memorable, including the hapless Aunt Mary Jane, described as "the presiding spirit of stagnation."³⁸ The women are multi-dimensional and sometimes noble, fulfilling their duties with dignity and steadfastness. The hilarious jealousy of Vanessa is balanced with the innate goodness of Louisy; Grat Fontaine's despicable male chauvinism is countered by Diana's independence.

Several themes emerge which directly contrast with Wood's writings in the 1920s and 1930s. A number of references to the plight of women show an early feminist bent. She wrote, about Squire Fontaine: "when a woman has no vocation for matrimony, she is no longer a woman but a slave. In his eyes, women must either be slaves or queens. . . ." Later she commented that "In the Hessian districts, men are certainly the lords of creation; women being regarded as shrewd and superior beasts of burden."³⁹ Wood had no patience for this attitude, and was equally appalled at the lack of education for women.

which concentrated almost exclusively on domestic skills. She treated the accomplishments of women during the war with awe, no doubt based on her understanding of Leache's experiences.

In later life, Wood was judgmental and elitist. But in *Diana Fontaine*, the heroine grew from a judgmental immaturity to a heightened awareness of others. She learned compassion for the less fortunate, following Loughborough's advice to "put yourself into other people, not them into you."⁴⁰ She comes to genuinely care for those she had previously thought only ignorant and provincial. When she first arrived in the Valley, all she saw was ignorance and backwardness (especially regarding women). But she grew to become a much more giving individual, who knew she had contributed to the happiness of others in a significant way, who learned that life can obtain higher value through what one may give to others. Through discipline, Diana moved from "wit and brilliancy" to "wisdom and truth." She leaves Virginia to study music in Austria, where, fifteen years later, she again meets the man she gave up in Winchester so that he might marry the good woman who counted on him, though he and Diana were in love and well-suited. Wood succinctly described a mature Diana, who has succeeded in reaching for a higher calling: "She was less pretty, more interesting; less bewitching, more charming. There was less of allurements, yet more of power. At eighteen, women have passion; at thirty, their feelings put on wings and fly upward, under the name of sentiment."⁴¹

Diana took an unconventional path, much as Wood did. Wood's own personality is clear in her description of Diana's "spontaneity of feeling, her freedom of manner, her frankness of utterance, and, also, by the direct gaze with which she encountered the eye

of man or beast.”⁴² Other aspects of the book directly reflect Wood’s life: her interest in music and art and mythology, her love of travel, her understanding of the Civil War. The dialogue is authentic, even annoyingly so when she insists on spelling colloquial pronunciations phonetically, as in “Lou-i-sy Fawny-stawk.” She catches the cadence and idiosyncrasies of country speech, as in Vanessa’s catch phrase, “ ‘deed and ‘deed I don’t.” She makes you feel as though you are in the same room.

Her descriptions of plants and flowers sing with knowledge and appreciation. Color was important to her, and she used it often to describe not only flowers and clothing, but health and character. She applied the same careful observation to furniture and decor, having fun with the prints framed with “nutshells glued together,” and the crowded, fussy parlor with its black horsehair sofa and “two robins’ nests and a painted China dog.”⁴³

Yet nothing comes close to her enthusiasm for Virginia food. The abundance of offerings at each tea is set in sharp contrast to the sparcity of the surroundings, but even the most backward and downtrodden women seem to become alchemists with food. In *Diana Fontaine*, tea includes “cherries stewed in solferino juice,” pumpkin butter, smoked sausage, fried chicken, sliced red tomatoes, “damson-cheese,” “curds oversprinkled with pepper and deluged with the richest cream,” five kinds of cakes, three kinds of breads, and “jumbles rough on the top with sugar and finished off in the center with a raisin.” the whole topped off with “a pitcher of frothing milk.” The country women of Virginia, she wrote, took the same care with the colors of foods that “a town-

bred woman would exhibit in her work in decorative painting.”⁴⁴ Food was their art, and Wood was an appreciative connoisseur.

Wood also loved fashion, and her descriptions of women often begin with what they were wearing: lilac lawn, ashes-of-roses silk, bright pink stripes of Mozambique with black velvet wristlets, homespun muslin, or a feather-trimmed riding-habit. Her attention to clothing is apparent in this description of Diana’s outfit: “With one hand she held up her dress, a white lawn prigged with red currants; with the other she swung a shade-hat, such as one buys at the most approved city milliner’s—a variegated straw, decorated with French currants of exaggeratedly juicy appearance, bunched amid loops of black velvet ribbon.”⁴⁵

Dress in the nineteenth century greatly differentiated the sexes, and was closely monitored. George Sand’s adoption of trousers at mid-century, as a way of asserting that “genius has no sex,” became the notorious example of a woman stepping out of her sphere and being shunned by society.⁴⁶ In her novels and dramatic sketches and *pensées*, Wood relished the descriptions of the dress of each character, for she believed that “clothes are a great psychological factor in morals and manners,” a position as current as the latest discussion on school uniforms.⁴⁷ When corsets went out of vogue after 1905, and women began wearing trousers, Wood decried the lack of “seemliness and good taste” presented by the looser clothing, which she thought unnaturally blurred the lines between men and women.⁴⁸

As a writer, Wood was unusual in that she wrote across genres, tackling fiction, social commentary, drama (some in verse), historical essays, travel memoirs, and literary

criticism. In her writing as in her life, she sought to connect with others and thus provide a bridge between public and private spheres.⁴⁹ For a Victorian woman, within an inhibited society, she wrote with impetuous honesty and spunk. Her keen intellect shows through in her extensive vocabulary, in her impressive knowledge of art and music, literature and history. With *Diana Fontaine*, she achieved the high standard she set for herself, though she did not think so, believing that “fiction was not her forté.”⁵⁰ But *Diana Fontaine* is less dated after a hundred years than the essays of the 1920s and 1930s, and well worth reading. In a delightful turn of events, it will be taught this fall, for the first time, as part of a women’s studies class at the University of Arkansas.⁵¹ It deserves to be rediscovered.

On Friday, February 9, 1940, headlines in the *Virginian-Pilot* presaged the coming war: “Chamberlain Condemns Nazi ‘Acts of Murder’ And Russian Bombings.” Norfolk had begun preparing in 1938, when President Roosevelt pushed Congress to authorize \$12 million to make ready the Naval Base and the Navy Yard. Jobs for 15,000 people spurred a new prosperity.⁵² Norfolk would soon be inundated with an additional 30,000 people, as the navy added to the population on ship and shore. By December 1943, the civilian population would grow by 28% to a record 200,000, with an almost equal number of military at 168,000 people.⁵³ The town was bustling once again.

Also on February 9, 1940, Anna Cogswell Wood died in Florence at the age of 89. Her body was cremated and the ashes brought back to Norfolk for burial in Elmwood Cemetery, in the Curd family plot, not far from the Shepherd family plot where Irene Leache was interred. Within a week, Wood’s friends held a memorial service for her in

the Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences. at the Irene Leache Memorial's regular Thursday lecture time. 4:00 p.m. Sallie Shepherd. Fannie Curd. Emma Shepherd. and Lucy Gordon each spoke. recalling Wood's contributions to her community, her role as a teacher. writer. and civic leader. Louis Jaffé's editorial. which had appeared in the *Virginian-Pilot* three days before. was read in its entirety. It stated. in part. that "no woman of her day. perhaps no woman in Norfolk's whole history. made a more important personal contribution to the city's cultural estate."⁵⁴ The service appropriately opened and closed with a violin solo. honoring Wood's love of music.⁵⁵

Other articles in the paper the Friday she died served as silent testimony to the truth of the editorial. A review of that week's Memorial lecture noted the fine program given by Virginia Lyne Tunstall. then living in Cleveland. Ohio. in her "artistic" review of two books. The Little Theater production of "Our Town" was running that week. to high acclaim. On the front page. Southern women had gathered 40,000 strong to adopt an education program to stop lynching; women were at last comfortable in the public sphere.⁵⁶

Wood's will delivered on her early promise. leaving her entire estate to the Irene Leache Memorial for the perpetuation of the arts. However. she provided a special gift to her two dear friends. May Gold and Sallie Shepherd: income from the estate would go in equal shares to the two women at \$50 per month as long as they both lived.⁵⁷ Sadly. both would die within the year.

On October 30. 1940. Theodore Garnett reported to the Memorial that Wood had left them an estate estimated at about \$70,000: \$16,000 in lots and rental property around

Norfolk, \$13,000 in cash, and \$42,000 in stocks, bonds, and notes. Garnett had served as her attorney after C. Whittle Sams died, with Edmund S. Ruffin managing the assets.⁵⁸ An estimated \$20,000, still in Italy, was never retrieved. The general feeling was that her companion and servant, Fiammetta, stole the money, but perhaps Wood left it to her in gratitude: at any rate, the war in Italy prevented much investigation.⁵⁹ The financial security Wood's estate brought to the Memorial allowed that group to begin to collect art in earnest, to expand the lecture series, to contribute to other cultural endeavors, and to support the arts in whatever ways they chose.

Wood's grave is next to the narrow lane which winds through the old cemetery near downtown Norfolk. The headstone is carved in art deco style, with a row of thick ivy leading down to the small footstone marked with her initials. On the headstone, along with the names of her parents and the dates and places of her birth and death, she is remembered as Annie Cogswell Wood, co-founder of the Leache-Wood Seminary and the founder of the Irene Leache Memorial. The inscription adds, "Their works do follow them," no mere platitude in this case. As the editorialist wrote, "The lamp lighted in this city by Miss Wood in the early Seventies of the last century can never go out. No woman could ask for a brighter memorial to her labors."⁶⁰

The initiatives which began in 1901 with the goal of perpetuating the memory of Irene Leache through encouragement of the arts continue still. The art gallery she first conceived has grown into an internationally-known collection. The Chrysler Museum of Art, housed in a beautiful Italianate building on the original site of the first Museum of Arts and Sciences. The lecture series she founded in 1914 continued without pause for

more than sixty years, bringing to Norfolk such distinguished lecturers as Eudora Welty, George Garrett, May Sarton, Werner von Braun, and the photographer Cecil Beaton. When the attendance waned in the mid-1970s, as other cultural opportunities became readily available, lecture funds were applied to underwrite similar programming on public television through WHRO-TV.⁶¹ The Norfolk Society of Arts continues a memorial series endowed by the brother of one of the early and frequent lecturers, Mabel Brown of Norfolk, Wood's friend. Still a vital part of the life of the community, the Society continues to promote the arts and support the Museum, in particular through its operation of the Museum gift shop.

The work of the Prize Bureau, to recognize excellence and encourage creativity in the fine arts, continues with the Irene Leache Memorial Literary Contest, believed to be the oldest continuous competition of its kind in the country. From only a few entries at its inception in 1914, the contest has grown to attract more than 1,000 submissions in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry from residents of Virginia and North Carolina. Works of art are encouraged with the Irene Leache Memorial Biennial Art Contest, which began with only 45 submissions. In the early days of the Museum, the Memorial purchased a number of the best works to highlight the work of local artists, which were displayed in a separate gallery beginning in 1952.⁶² The most recent competition, in 1996, attracted more than 700 works by 251 artists, from which the Irene Leache Memorial Exhibition selected eighty-nine works by sixty-two artists from twelve states and the District of Columbia for viewing.⁶³

The collection, too, has grown from its humble beginnings in the basement of the old library. In 1940, the Board of the Memorial purchased two Flemish tapestries dating from the sixteenth century in memory of Wood and Sallie Shepherd. In 1951, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the memorial groups, the Irene Leache Memorial dedicated a distinctive fifteenth-century polychrome wood sculpture, *St. Michael the Archangel*, in memory of Wood. And in 1958, in memory of Fannie Curd, they purchased an early sixteenth century panel painting, *Madonna and Child with the Infant St. John the Baptist and Angels*.⁶⁴ The newest additions to the collection are an illuminated *Book of Hours* (French, c. 1480) and a limestone sculpture of *St. Margaret and the Dragon* (French, early sixteenth century). Though the art is still owned by the Memorial, it continues to be housed in The Chrysler Museum in the Irene Leache Memorial Room, honoring the original agreement with the city.

The Virginia Symphony, the Norfolk Little Theater, and the Tidewater Artist's Association owe their conception and nurturance to Annie Wood and to those hard-working women, and a few men, who never lost sight of the crucial role of the arts in the life of a community. Though few people would know to whom they owe gratitude, Annie Wood's legacy surely endures.

When Leache and Wood founded a school for girls based on a new model of rigor and excellence, they attempted no less than the development of each student's body and soul to the highest level she might achieve. The assurance and independence their students gained benefited the individual, their families, and their communities, wherever they settled. The reputation of the school still clearly resonates.

At a time when women had to win the right to learn, the right to teach, and the right to think for themselves, Wood influenced a generation of girls, and their families, about the potential of women.⁶⁵ When schooling for girls meant domestic skills or finishing school polish, she and Leache brought them calculus, chemistry, and calisthenics. To provide the best faculty, they offered classes in pedagogy and made certain that they and their teachers could attend the foremost summer seminars. They introduced kindergarten, psychology, physics, and a host of other innovations into the school curriculum, raising the standards for all and leading the way for other schools.

When Norfolk's cultural offerings were almost non-existent, she and Leache introduced salons and study groups. When no college existed to provide continuing education and stimulation, Wood started a weekly lecture series to bring the best and the brightest minds to address topics designed to provide stimulation across a stunning range of interests. At a time when creative endeavors were pursued at home in isolation, Wood started a Prize Bureau to draw out and encourage talent in all the fine arts. Always seeking excellence, she promoted the highest literary and esthetic ideals without compromise.

When few people traveled abroad, and even fewer at the leisurely pace she enjoyed, Wood brought the treasures of western civilization back to Norfolk through albums and framed prints and copies of great works of art. On behalf of a city with no museum, she worked tirelessly to build an art gallery open to all to enjoy, and where children might be given their first appreciation of the magic of art. With the

establishment of the Irene Leache Memorial and the Norfolk Society of Arts. Wood made tangible her hopes for a cultural base in Norfolk.

Wood was not a feminist. She was socially conservative and intellectually broad; the contradictions in the arc of her life are clear. Yet, both Leache and Wood had to act independently of family, had to be responsible for themselves and their livelihoods at a time when that was not common or easy. Their success influenced a whole generation of women just venturing into the public realm, at a time when the culture “demanded they be passive, dependent, and superficial.”⁶⁶ They taught young girls to think for themselves, not to follow the crowd, to distinguish between what is popular and what is of enduring value. Wood was a Victorian woman who nevertheless promoted character, self-control, and intelligence over winsomeness, fragility, and dependence. Although she admired girlish beauty and femininity, she met men on an intellectual level, and wrote about women who did so also.

For all that she accomplished, Annie Wood gave full credit to Irene Leache, whose love and guidance inspired and even defined Wood as an adult. Leache gave that untested and unformed eighteen-year-old girl at Angerona a lifetime of purpose. She opened intellectual horizons, provided the opportunity for meaningful work, became family, partner, and spiritual guide to her. “To you I owe the growth of the soul,” Wood wrote about Leache in *The Story of a Friendship*, “as well as the sweetness of my life, and this must be an enduring bond.” And so the two remarkable women remain inseparable in life and in death, as Annie Wood wanted it. She loved Irene Leache “deeply, broadly, loftily,” and from that love came the growth of a community.⁶⁷

NOTES

Prologue

¹ The Prologue is a creative interpretation based on Wood's description in *The Story of a Friendship* (New York: Knickerbocker, 1901) 74-78, with supplementary material from Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *Norfolk: Historic Southern Port* 2d ed. 1931 (Durham: Duke UP, 1962) and Thomas C. Parramore, Peter C. Stewart, and Tommy L. Bogger, *Norfolk: The First Four Centuries* (Charlottesville: UP of VA, 1994), and Glenn James on Virginia railroads.

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¹ H. W. Burton, *The History of Norfolk, Virginia* (Norfolk: Job Print, 1877) 262.

² Wood, *The Story of a Friendship* (New York: Knickerbocker, 1901) 80.

³ Wood, *Story* 104 and 110.

⁴ Virginia Lyne Tunstall, "The Story of Two Remarkable Women and Their Living Memorial: A Short History of the Irene Leache Memorial," Nov. 1962, Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.

⁵ Mrs. M. N. King, quoted in "Tribute paid Mrs. Curd at Irene Leache Fete," *Virginian-Pilot* Mar. 24, 1956: 4.

⁶ "Norfolk's Debt to Miss Wood," editorial [Louis Jaffé], *Virginian-Pilot* Feb. 12, 1940: 6.

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² See the section on German Baptists in Anna Cogswell Wood [as Algernon Ridgeway], *Diana Fontaine: A Novel* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1891) 244-55; for information on the other denominations, see Cornelius Heatwole, *A History of Education in Virginia* (New York: MacMillan, 1916) 137.

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⁴ Carol McGinniss, *Virginia Genealogy: Sources & Resources* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1993) 178.

⁵ *Frederick County, City of Winchester*, map (Winchester-Frederick County Board of Realtors and Eugene M. Scheel, 1974).

⁶ Elizabeth Crawford Engle, personal papers and family records, Winchester, VA.

⁷ Engle, family records.

⁸ *Frederick County*, map.

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- ¹¹ Wood, *Diana* 29.
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- ¹³ T. K. Cartmell, *Shenandoah Valley Pioneers and Their Descendants: A History of Frederick County, Virginia* (Berryville, VA: Chesapeake Book Co., 1963) 513.
- ¹⁴ Cartmell 477.
- ¹⁵ Cartmell 477.
- ¹⁶ *Frederick County*, map.
- ¹⁷ Kerns 33.
- ¹⁸ Some of the Lupton furniture from Rock Hill is now displayed in the DeWitt Wallace Museum in Williamsburg, VA.
- ¹⁹ Garland R. Quarles, *Some Worthy Lives: Mini-Biographies, Winchester and Frederick County* (Winchester, VA: Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society, 1988) 104.
- ²⁰ Wood, *Diana* 21.
- ²¹ Wood, *Diana* 22.
- ²² Wood, *Diana* 22.
- ²³ Engle, personal interview, Mar. 4-5, 1996.
- ²⁴ Engle, personal interview, Mar. 4-5, 1996.
- ²⁵ Engle, personal papers. According to a handwritten inscription by Laura Gold Crawford, Elizabeth Engle's mother, inside the front cover of [The] *Record of Hunter of Hunterston, Ayrshire, Scotland*, by Mary Alice Hunter Bull (Washington, D.C.: Gibson Bros, 1902); Bull was most likely the daughter of Annie Wood's great-aunt, Mary (May) Hunter, and the book was among Wood's things left in Norfolk in 1921 with Emma Shepherd and sent to Laura Gold Crawford after Wood's death.
- ²⁶ *Frederick County Deed Book 68* (Frederick County Courthouse, Winchester, VA) 242.
- ²⁷ *Frederick County Deed Book 76* (Frederick County Courthouse, Winchester, VA) 248.
- ²⁸ Engle, from family records.
- ²⁹ Engle, from family records.
- ³⁰ E. O. Jameson. *The Cogswells in America* (Boston: Alfred Mudge, 1884) 150.
- ³¹ Jameson 2.
- ³² Jameson 3.
- ³³ Jameson 4.
- ³⁴ Jameson 151-52.
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- ³⁶ Jameson 153.
- ³⁷ Jameson 150.
- ³⁸ Virginia Lyne Tunstall. "The Story of Two Remarkable Women and Their Living Memorial: A Short History of the Irene Leache Memorial." Nov. 1962: Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA: 1; Quarles 249; and Engle, personal interview, Mar. 4-5, 1996.

³⁹ Genevieve Fraisse and Michelle Perrot, eds. *A History of Women in the West, Vol. IV: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War* (Cambridge: Belknap-Harvard UP, 1953) 110-11.

⁴⁰ Fraisse and Perrot 111.

⁴¹ Curd, Fannie Rogers (Mrs. Fred W.), "Leache-Wood Seminary, Norfolk, Virginia," original text, written for "a history of Norfolk," n.d.. Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA: 1. Also in a biographical sketch of Anna Cogswell Wood, Vertical File, "Norfolk, Virginia, Schools: Leache-Wood Seminary," unsigned, n.d. [pre-1940], Sargeant Memorial Room, Kim Memorial Library, Norfolk, VA; also in Tunstall, 1.

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⁴⁶ Wood, *Diana* 3.

⁴⁷ From Engle, addressed to her parents, Frank and Laura Crawford, photocopy in the Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.

⁴⁸ Wood, *Diana* 217.

⁴⁹ *Frederick County Will Book 30* (Frederick County Courthouse, Winchester, VA) 334.

⁵⁰ Wood, *Diana* 288-89.

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¹ Geoffrey C. Ward, Ken Burns, and Ric Burns, *The Civil War: An Illustrated History* (New York: Knopf/Random House, 1990) 138.

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⁵ Cochran 21.

⁶ Cochran 26.

⁷ Cochran 23.

⁸ Foote 459.

⁹ Wood, 172.

¹⁰ Wood, *Diana* 42.

¹¹ Wood, *Diana* 30.

¹² Wood, *Story* 42.

¹³ Col. A. Lyon Fremantle, in "Kate Sperry's Diary: 1861-1866" Cristine Andrae, ed. *Virginia Country's Civil War, Vol. 1* (Middleburg, VA: The Country Publishers, 1983) 62.

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- ¹⁵ Wood, *Diana* 117.
- ¹⁶ A. D. Mayo. *Southern Women in the Recent Educational Movement in the South*. 1892. Intro. Dan T. Carter and Amy Friedlander. eds. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1978; Rpt. of Circular of Information, 1892. No. 1. U.S. Bureau of Education. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1892) 24.
- ¹⁷ Mayo 43.
- ¹⁸ William A. Link. *A Hard Road and a Lonely Place: Schooling, Society, and Reform in Rural Virginia, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: UNC P. 1986) x.
- ¹⁹ Mayo 142.
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- ²² Wood, *Diana* 104.
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- ²⁴ Wood [As Algernon Ridgeway], *Westover's Ward*. vol. 3 (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1892) 237-39.
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- ²⁸ Anna Cogswell Wood, *The Great Opportunity and Other Essays* (Florence: Seeber, 1926) 62.
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- ³¹ Engle, personal interview. Mar. 4-5, 1996.
- ³² Wood, *Diana* 126.
- ³³ Wood, *Story* 3.
- ³⁴ Wood, *Story* 19-22.
- ³⁵ Wood, *Story* 23-39.
- ³⁶ "Interment record—Irene Leache," Elmwood Cemetery, Norfolk, VA, Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.
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- ³⁹ Wood, *Story* 31-32.
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¹² Parramore 202.

¹³ Parramore 195.

¹⁴ Parramore 207-8.

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- ²⁵ Parramore 232.
- ²⁶ Parramore 237.
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- ²⁸ Parramore 233.
- ²⁹ Parramore 247.
- ³⁰ *Norfolk and Portsmouth Directory*, 1872: 299-300, Sargeant Memorial Room, Kim Memorial Library, Norfolk, VA.
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- ¹¹⁶ Leache-Wood 1880 catalog, 8.
- ¹¹⁷ "Irene Leache Memorial Is A Half-Century Old" *Virginian-Pilot* Apr. 15, 1951: 6.
- ¹¹⁸ Fannie Rogers Curd, "Leache-Wood Seminary. Norfolk, Virginia." Original text of an article written for "a history of Norfolk." Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, n.d.: 1.
- ¹¹⁹ Leache-Wood 1880 catalog, 6.
- ¹²⁰ Laws 116.
- ¹²¹ Leache-Wood 1880 catalog, 6-7.
- ¹²² Wood, *Story* 85.0
- ¹²³ Wood, *Story* 89.
- ¹²⁴ Tunstall 4.
- ¹²⁵ Wood, *Story* 88.
- ¹²⁶ Wood, *Story* 89.
- ¹²⁷ Tunstall 4.
- ¹²⁸ Curd, in "An Appreciation" 6.
- ¹²⁹ Sallie Shepherd, "An Appreciation: Annie Cogswell Wood," Feb. 15, 1940: 3, Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.
- ¹³⁰ Curd 2.
- ¹³¹ Wood, *Story* 90.
- ¹³² Wood, *Story* 80, 83.
- ¹³³ Wood, *Story* 83
- ¹³⁴ Laws 81, from interview with Mrs. James Wolcott, Sr., the youngest daughter of Isabella McIntosh Baylor, and a graduate of Leache-Wood.
- ¹³⁵ Wood, *Story* 104, 110.
- ¹³⁶ Parramore 219 and 230.
- ¹³⁷ Laws 61.
- ¹³⁸ Gray G1.
- ¹³⁹ George Tucker, "Tidewater Landfalls: Her Contribution Not Forgotten," *Virginian-Pilot* Dec. 2, 1967: C1.
- ¹⁴⁰ Edith Brooke Robertson, "The Beginning of the Monday Club," n.d.: 2. Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.
- ¹⁴¹ Theodora Penny Martin, *The Sound of Our Own Voices: Women's Study Clubs 1860-1910* (Boston: Beacon, 1987) 30.
- ¹⁴² Martin 3.
- ¹⁴³ Wood, *Story* 269.
- ¹⁴⁴ Anna Cogswell Wood, Album 9, n.d.: opp. 47. Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.
- ¹⁴⁵ Wood, *Diana Fontaine* 229 and Album 9: opp. 14.
- ¹⁴⁶ Lerner 206 and Farello 169.

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- ¹ Wood, *Story* 10.

- ² Wood, *Story* 106.
- ³ Wood, *Story* 10.
- ⁴ Wood, *Story* 12.
- ⁵ Wood, *Diana Fontaine* 4-5.
- ⁶ Virginia Lyne Tunstall "The Story of Two Remarkable Women and Their Living Memorial: A Short History of the Irene Leache Memorial." Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA. Nov. 1962: 7.
- ⁷ Wood, *Story* 80.
- ⁸ Wood, *Story* 81.
- ⁹ Wood, *Story* 83.
- ¹⁰ Wood, Album 8. Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.: opp. 29.
- ¹¹ Leache-Wood Seminary Yearbook, "Nods and Becks: 1910," Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA, n.p.
- ¹² Emma Shepherd, "An Appreciation: Annie Cogswell Wood," Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA. 15 Feb. 1940: 6.
- ¹³ "The Girl Graduate: Her Own Book," 1910 scrapbook of Agnes W. Wallace, Leache-Wood Seminary alumna, Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.
- ¹⁴ Constance Curtis Laws, *The Academy Movement in Norfolk, Virginia with Emphasis on Curriculum Development from 1750 to 1920*. Thesis. Old Dominion U, 1967: 118.
- ¹⁵ Thomas C. Parramore, with Peter C. Stewart and Tommy L. Bogger *Norfolk: The First Four Centuries* (Charlottesville: UP of VA, 1994) 249.
- ¹⁶ Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in Twentieth-Century Norfolk, Virginia* (Berkeley: U of Cal. P, 1991) 10.
- ¹⁷ "Norfolk, Virginia 1897" *The Norfolk Virginia Illustrated Edition* (Norfolk: Burke & Gregory, 1897) 7-8.
- ¹⁸ Wertenbaker 252; Parramore 265; Lewis 22.
- ¹⁹ Donna Dashiell Mayer, "A Higher Education: The Norfolk College for Young Ladies, 1879-1899," *Virginia Cavalcade* Winter 1994: 103-109.
- ²⁰ Laws 88 and 94.
- ²¹ Ashby Jenkins Willcox, telephone interview Aug. 25, 1996, and Edith Brooke Robertson, telephone interview Aug. 27, 1996.
- ²² Laws 95.
- ²³ Laws 84.
- ²⁴ Suzanne Lebsock and Kym S. Rice. "*A Share of Honour*": *Virginia Women 1600-1945* (Richmond: The Virginia Women's Cultural History Project, 1984) 129.
- ²⁵ Laws 118.
- ²⁶ McCoy 124; xx.
- ²⁷ Robertson, telephone interviews Sept. 17, 1996 and Aug. 27, 1996.
- ²⁸ Edith Robertson, family papers.
- ²⁹ Irene Kirke Leache and Louise Collier Willcox [as "I.K.L. and L. C. W."], Foreword, *Answers of the Ages* (Chicago: Herbert S. Stone, 1900) n.p.
- ³⁰ Wood, *Idlys* x.

- ³¹ Fraisse and Perrot 468.
- ³² Fraisse and Perrot 466-70.
- ³³ Fraisse and Perrot 468.
- ³⁴ Wood, *Story* 221-22. and 167.
- ³⁵ Album 9, opp. 47.
- ³⁶ Wood, *Story* 246.
- ³⁷ Wood, *Story* 192-93.
- ³⁸ Wood, *Story* 166.
- ³⁹ Wood, *Story* 123-24.
- ⁴⁰ Wood, *Story* 127.
- ⁴¹ Wood, *Story* 131.
- ⁴² Wood, *Story* 145.
- ⁴³ Wood, *Idyls* 142-43.
- ⁴⁴ Wood, *Idyls* 77.
- ⁴⁵ Irene Leache [presumed], Album 3. Irene Leache Memorial Archives. Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.
- ⁴⁶ Wood, *Story* 127.
- ⁴⁷ Wood, *Story* 132.
- ⁴⁸ Wood, *Story* 172-178.
- ⁴⁹ Letter dated Feb. 29, 1896. Edith Robertson, family papers.
- ⁵⁰ Wood, *Idyls* 60.
- ⁵¹ Wood, *Story* 143-44.
- ⁵² Wood, *Idyls* 199.
- ⁵³ Emma Shepherd, "An Appreciation: Annie Cogswell Wood." Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA. Feb. 15, 1940: 6.
- ⁵⁴ Wood, *Story* 290.
- ⁵⁵ Wood, *Idyls* 33.
- ⁵⁶ Wood, *Story* 206 for Arles; 289 for Paris; 191 for Cagots; 120 for Monet.
- ⁵⁷ Wood, *Idyls* 51-52; 53-54.
- ⁵⁸ Wood, *Idyls* 210-214.
- ⁵⁹ From Wood, *Idyls*.
- ⁶⁰ Wood, *Idyls* 14-20 and *Story* 188.
- ⁶¹ Wood, *Story* 168; *Idyls* 108.
- ⁶² Wood, *Story* 167.
- ⁶³ Photo Album "Book II." Irene Leache Memorial Archives. Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA. n.d., n.p.
- ⁶⁴ Wood, *Story* 158.
- ⁶⁵ Wood, *Story* 150-151.
- ⁶⁶ Wood, *Story* 160.
- ⁶⁷ Wood, *Story* 155-56.
- ⁶⁸ Wood, *Story* 159.
- ⁶⁹ Wood, *Story* 258.
- ⁷⁰ Wood, Album 630, opp. 20.
- ⁷¹ Wood, *Story* 219-21.
- ⁷² Wood, *Story* 236.

⁷³ Wood, *Story* 224, 252-54.

⁷⁴ Wood, *Story* 254, 252, 232.

⁷⁵ Wood, *Story* 265, 231.

⁷⁶ Wood, *Story* 276-77.

⁷⁷ Wood, *Story* 296.

⁷⁸ Edith Robertson, personal interview, Mar. 5, 1996.

⁷⁹ Wood, *Story* 307.

⁸⁰ Wood, *Story* 313.

⁸¹ Curd, "An Appreciation: Annie Cogswell Wood," Feb. 15, 1940 (Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.) 4.

Chapter 6

¹ Minutes, May 23, 1901, Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA: 1.

² "Constitution, Irene Leache Library," Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA: 5.

³ Constitution 4.

⁴ Parramore 275.

⁵ Wood, Letter "To the Board of Directors of The Norfolk Public Library, Norfolk, Va.," Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA: 1.

⁶ Minutes June 8, 1905, Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA: 1.

⁷ For example, the High Museum in Atlanta was founded in 1926, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond in 1934, and the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts in 1930, according to *The Official Museum Directory* 26th ed., Vol. 1, The American Association of Museums (New Providence, NJ: R. R. Bowker, 1995).

⁸ Members of the Fireside Club at the time, as listed in the minutes, were the Reverend and Mrs. B. D. Tucker, The Honorable and Mrs. Barton Myers, Mrs. E. Goodrich, Mrs. Joseph Hubbard, Miss Loulie Taylor, Miss Sarah Acker, Miss May Gold, Miss Fanny Sams, Mrs. William T. Brooke, Miss Sallie Shepherd, Miss Sallie Leache, Miss Mary Ghisselin, Mr. Morris King, Mr. And Mrs. William Henry Sargeant, Mrs. John Taylor, Judge Garnett, Miss Lena Tucker, Captain J. J. Burroughs, Mr. Joseph Dillard, the Reverend Arthur Lloyd, Mrs. Jonathan Newport Green, Mrs. Robert Mallet, Mrs. Christian, Mr. Albert Field, Mrs. M. N. Observe, Mr. Theodore Price, Mrs. J. C. Still, and Mr. Arthur Humphries.

⁹ Minutes Jan. 2, 1906: 18. Former teachers accepted as honorary members, as listed in the minutes, were Miss Sallie Leache, Mrs. John Sellman, Miss Julia Leache, Miss Jennie Young, Mrs. Westmore Willcox [Louise Collier Willcox], Mrs. Lemuel Shepherd [Emma Cartwright Shepherd], Miss Pendleton, Miss Sarah Acker, and Miss Lena Tucker.

¹⁰ Minutes June 16, 1905: 6.

¹¹ Minutes June 4, 1906: 26.

¹² Curd 1.

¹³ Minutes Dec. 28, 1905: 14.

- ¹⁴ Minutes June 8, 1905: 2.
- ¹⁵ "Irene Leache Art Collection. Catalogue 1914." Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.
- ¹⁶ "Leache-Wood Alumnae. Annual Reports: 1906-1913," Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA: 1.
- ¹⁷ "Leache-Wood Alumnae. Annual Reports: 1906-1913": 2.
- ¹⁸ Parramore 256.
- ¹⁹ Parramore 274.
- ²⁰ Parramore 288 and 284-5.
- ²¹ Parramore 289.
- ²² Parramore 291.
- ²³ Minutes, Annual Report, May 1916, 110-116.
- ²⁴ Minutes, May 17, 1915: 74.
- ²⁵ Minutes, Mar. 11, 1915: 68-69.
- ²⁶ Minutes, April 30, 1914: 42-44.
- ²⁷ "To the Members of the Leache Wood Alumnae Association," Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA, n.d.
- ²⁸ "Constitution of the Irene Leache Art Association," Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.
- ²⁹ Eleanor Ramsey Williamson (Mrs. Sterling R. Williamson), "The Norfolk Society of Arts," *Earlier Times Remembered* (Norfolk: Norfolk Society of Arts, 1988) 9.
- ³⁰ Minutes, Dec. 11, 1916.
- ³¹ Minutes, Jan. 16, 1917.
- ³² Minutes, Jan. 25, 1917.
- ³³ Minutes, Mar. 12, 1917 to May 31, 1917.
- ³⁴ Minutes, Jan. 15, 1918.
- ³⁵ Minutes, Jan. 15, 1918.
- ³⁶ "Charter of the Irene Leache Memorial," Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.
- ³⁷ "By-Laws of the Irene Leache Memorial," Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.
- ³⁸ Curd, quoted in Omeda Brockett, "Museum Gets Memorial Statue Honoring Anna Cogswell Wood," *Virginian-Pilot* Oct. 15, 1939: Pt. 4, 2.
- ³⁹ "Museum Background and Development of Organization to Date," Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA. [1957]: 1.
- ⁴⁰ "Norfolk Museum: A Brief Chronology," Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.
- ⁴¹ "Agreement, June 2, 1926," Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA: 1-3.
- ⁴² Omeda Brockett, "Society of Arts and Leache Memorial," *Virginian-Pilot*: Apr. 29, 1951: Pt. 4, 3.
- ⁴³ "Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences Is Reality; Open With Exhibit Today," *Virginian-Pilot* Mar. 5, 1933: Pt. 2, 2.
- ⁴⁴ *Virginian-Pilot* Mar. 5, 1933: A1.
- ⁴⁵ "Formal Opening of Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences Attended By Large

Crowd." *Virginian-Pilot* Mar. 6, 1933: 14.

⁴⁶ "Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences Is Reality; Open With Exhibit Today," *Virginian-Pilot* Mar. 5, 1933: Pt. 2, 2.

⁴⁷ Wertenbaker 379.

⁴⁸ "Formal Opening of Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences Attended By Large Crowd." *Virginian-Pilot* Mar. 6, 1933: 14.

⁴⁹ Exhibition catalog, "Irene Leache Memorial Collection of Statuary, Pictures, Curios. Mar. 6, 1934 to Mar. 31, 1934." Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.

⁵⁰ Alice Jaffé, "The Irene Leache Memorial," in *Earlier Times Remembered*. Norfolk: Norfolk Society of Arts, 1988: 7.

⁵¹ William Sloane, letter dated Sep. 17, 1938, Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.

⁵² *Norfolk and Portsmouth Directories*, 1916. Sargeant Memorial Room. Kim Memorial Library, Norfolk, VA.

⁵³ Tunstall 7.

⁵⁴ Edith Shepherd Brooke, transcript of personal interview with Edith Brooke Robertson [her daughter], Spring 1992: Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.

⁵⁵ Tunstall 8.

⁵⁶ Curd 2.

⁵⁷ "Society of Arts-Irene Leache Groups Announce Schedule." *Virginian-Pilot*: Oct. 23, 1955: C1.

⁵⁸ Williamson, in "Earlier Times Remembered" Norfolk: Norfolk Society of Arts, 1988: 10.

⁵⁹ Minutes Feb. 5, 1917.

⁶⁰ Minutes Mar. 12, 1917.

⁶¹ Minutes May 31, 1917.

⁶² Minutes May 8, 1916.

⁶³ Minutes Nov. 27, 1922.

⁶⁴ "Museum Background II - The Norfolk Society of Arts." *Norfolk Museum Bulletin* Feb. 1952: 21.

⁶⁵ Minutes Dec. 11, 1916.

⁶⁶ Williamson, "Earlier Times Remembered," 10.

⁶⁷ Williamson, "Creativity of Women and the Norfolk Society of Arts: 1871-1933," Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA., 10-11.

⁶⁸ Moore and Morton.

Chapter 7

¹ Ashby Jenkins Willcox, telephone interview, July 22, 1996.

² Postcard from Mary L. Simpson to Wood August 12, 1926; postcard from May Gold to Laura Crawford, personal papers of Elizabeth Engle.

³ Fraisse and Perrot 107.

⁴ Letter to Laura Crawford Gold from Sallie Shepherd May 25, 1926; postcards to May Gold from Wood, n.d., Engle papers.

⁵ Postcard from Wood to May Gold, n.d. [late 1920s], Engle papers.

⁶ Postcards from Wood to May Gold and Laura Gold Crawford, dated May 12, 1928 and May 25, 1926. Engle papers; Edith Brooke Robertson, telephone interview, 6 June 1996; postcard from Wood to Sallie Shepherd dated July 12, 1925. Robertson family papers.

⁷ Postcards, n.d., Robertson papers.

⁸ Postcard from Wood to Emma Shepherd Jan. 8, 19—. Robertson papers.

⁹ Postcard from Wood to May Gold [1920s], Engle papers.

¹⁰ Postcards. Robertson papers.

¹¹ Minutes Mar. 28, 1935 and Mar. 28, 1940. Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.

¹² Minutes April 14, 1930.

¹³ Minutes Nov. 20, 1928.

¹⁴ Minutes April 11, 1935, May 23, 1935, Sept. 24, 1935, and elsewhere.

¹⁵ Minutes April 19, 1934.

¹⁵ Curd, ed. *Irene Leache Memorial Anthology* (Dallas: Kaleidograph Press, 1934).

¹⁶ Minutes Nov. 12, 1923.

¹⁷ Fraisse and Perrot 251.

¹⁸ "An Appreciation" 9.

¹⁹ Wood, Album 10.

²⁰ Emma Shepherd, "An Appreciation"

²¹ Wood, Album 630 opp. "Lake Leman."

²² Wood, Album 3 opp. "San Salvador—Lake Lugano."

²³ Wood, Album 4, inscription.

²⁴ Wood, Albums 1 and 2.

²⁵ Wood, Album 8, opp. "Portrait by Ingres."

²⁶ Wood, Album 9 [1933], first page.

²⁷ Wood, Album 4, opp. "La Flora Rosalba."

²⁸ Rorer 18.

²⁹ Fraisse and Perrot 471, and Lerner xxiv.

³⁰ Fraisse and Perrot 73.

³¹ Fraisse and Perrot 61-62 and 53.

³² Nietzsche quoted in Fraisse and Perrot 75.

³³ Lebsock and Rice 131, 113, and 112.

³⁴ Fraisse and Perrot 117-18.

³⁵ Lebsock and Rice 115.

³⁶ Mayo 56 and 54.

³⁷ Wood, *Idyls* 232-33.

³⁸ Lebsock and Rice 142.

³⁹ Wood's comments on feminism begin opp. "A Swiss Chalet" and end opp. "Varese."

⁴⁰ Wood, Album 630, opp. "Lake Como" and "Varese."

- ⁴¹ Wood, Album 630, opp. "Madonna del Sasso—Locarno."
- ⁴² Wood, Album 1, opp. "Smiles," and Album 9 opp. "Eve—Nonnembruch—Swiss."
- ⁴³ Wood, Album 3, opp. "Saint Agnes—as Child," and Album 13 opp. "Madonna—Battoni."
- ⁴⁴ Wood, *The Great Opportunity* 16.
- ⁴⁵ Wood, *The Great Opportunity* 82.
- ⁴⁶ Wood, Album 9 [1933], opp. "Young girl—Alex Roche—Edinburg."
- ⁴⁷ Wood, Album 10, opp. "Ludovica Tournabuorni, Ghirlandaio."
- ⁴⁸ Wood, *The Great Opportunity* 19.
- ⁴⁹ Wood, Album [no number, loose pages], opp. "A Venetian Nobleman."
- ⁵⁰ Re Marx, see Wood, *The Great Opportunity* 13; re Mussolini, see *The Great Opportunity* 32 and 35; re the problems with democracy, see "The Individual versus The Social Unit," *The Great Opportunity* 87-106.
- ⁵¹ Re Nietzsche, W. L. Reese, *Dictionary of philosophy and Religion: Eastern and Western Thought*, 1990 (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities P, 1993) 392; quote from Wood, *The Great Opportunity* 69.
- ⁵² Wood, *The Great Opportunity* 101 and 106.
- ⁵³ Wood, *The Great Opportunity* 170.
- ⁵⁴ Wood, *The Psychology of Crime* 13.
- ⁵⁵ *Benét's Reader's Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed. Siepmann, Katherine Baker, ed. (NY: Harper Collins, 1987) 455 and 1025.
- ⁵⁶ Emma Shepherd, "An Appreciation" 8.
- ⁵⁷ Wood, *The Psychology of Crime* 103, 106.
- ⁵⁸ *Benét's* 954.
- ⁵⁹ Wood, *The Psychology of Crime* 133-34.
- ⁶⁰ Wood, *Drama Sketches* 3.
- ⁶¹ Wood, *The Psychology of Crime* 77.
- ⁶² Wood, Album 4, inside back cover.

Chapter 8

- ¹ Edith Robertson, personal interview August 26, 1996.
- ² Leache and Willcox, *Answers* 90.
- ³ Wood, Album 7 opp. "The Bearded Bacchus."
- ⁴ Paula Blanchard, *Sarah Orne Jewett: Her World and Her Work* Radcliffe Biography Series 1994 (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995) 74-79.
- ⁵ See Wood, Albums 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 13 opp. pictures of angels.
- ⁶ Wood, *The Great Opportunity* 127-140.
- ⁷ Wood, Album 6 opp. "Maternal love by Cremona," and "The Wonder-Child," *The Great Opportunity*, 107-124.
- ⁸ Wood, *The Psychology of Crime* 4.
- ⁹ Wood, Album 6 opp. "Violante by Palma Vecchio."
- ¹⁰ Wood, *The Great Opportunity* 8 and 123.
- ¹¹ Wood, Album 630 opp. "Alpine Shepherds."

- ¹² Wood. Album 6 opp. "Violante by Palma Vecchio."
- ¹³ Wood. Album 1 opp. "Marguerite, Queen of Navarre." and *Story* 249.
- ¹⁴ Wood. Album 3 opp. "Detail from Last Supper. Andrea del Sarto."
- ¹⁵ Wood. Small Album [no number] opp. "Lake Lemman" and "'A 16th century Place, Saltina."
- ¹⁶ Wood. Album 6 opp. "Little Prince Louis" and "Morelli's Madonna"
- ¹⁷ Wood. Small Album [no number] opp. "'Where are you going, my pretty maid'"
- ¹⁸ Quoted in *The Portable Nietzsche*, Walter Kaufman, trans. 1954 (New York: Viking, 1966) 608.
- ¹⁹ Wood. Album 4 opp. "Fruit-Piece."
- ²⁰ Wood. *Westover's Ward* vol. I, 149.
- ²¹ Wood. *Westover's Ward* vol. II, 253.
- ²² Wood. *Westover's Ward* vol II. 170-71.
- ²³ Dorothea Walker. *Alice Brown* (New York: Twayne. 1974) 31 and 135-36.
- ²⁴ Wood. *Westover's Ward* vol. I, 130.
- ²⁵ Wood. *Westover's Ward* vol. I, 148.
- ²⁶ Wood. *Westover's Ward* vol. III, 267.
- ²⁷ Wood. *Westover's Ward* vol II, 90.
- ²⁸ Himmelfarb 191.
- ²⁹ Fraisse and Perrot 323 and 394.
- ³⁰ Kate Flint. *The Woman Reader: 1837-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933) 294.
- ³¹ Maxine Schwartz Seller, ed. *Women Educators in the United States, 1820-1993: A Bio-Biographical Sourcebook* (Westport, CN: Greenwood, 1994) 111.
- ³² Hobbs 18.
- ³³ Flint 298.
- ³⁴ Fraisse and Perrot 531-32.
- ³⁵ Wood. Album 9 opp. a picture of a Swiss chalet.
- ³⁶ Elizabeth Engle. personal interview. Mar. 3-4, 1996.
- ³⁷ Wood. *Diana Fontaine* 51-52.
- ³⁸ Wood. *Diana Fontaine* 266.
- ³⁹ Wood. *Diana Fontaine* 54 and 188.
- ⁴⁰ Wood. *Diana Fontaine* 249.
- ⁴¹ Wood. *Diana Fontaine* 250 and 301-02.
- ⁴² Wood. *Diana Fontaine* 86.
- ⁴³ Wood. *Diana Fontaine* 67 and 69.
- ⁴⁴ Wood. *Diana Fontaine* 84, 83, and 82.
- ⁴⁵ Wood. *Diana Fontaine* 5-6.
- ⁴⁶ Fraisse and Perrot 309.
- ⁴⁷ Wood. Small Album [no number] opp. "Mignon."
- ⁴⁸ Fraisse and Perrot 331 on corsets: "seemliness" in Small Album opp. "Some more. . . [swans]" and Album 630 opp. "An Alpine Village."
- ⁴⁹ Hobbs 19.
- ⁵⁰ Emma Shepherd. "An Appreciation," 7.

⁵¹ Sarah Wilkinson-Freeman, a professor of women's studies at Arkansas State University, discovered *Diana Fontaine* through her dissertation on "Women in the Transformation of American Politics: 1890-1940." One of her subjects, Daisy Denson, was a Leache-Wood graduate.

⁵² Wertenbaker 345.

⁵³ Parramore 336.

⁵⁴ "Norfolk's Debt to Miss Wood," editorial [Louis Jaffé], *Virginian-Pilot* Feb. 12, 1940: 6.

⁵⁵ Sallie Shepherd, Fannie Curd, Emma Shepherd, Lucy Gordon, "An Appreciation: Annie Cogswell Wood," Feb. 15, 1940, Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA; and "Norfolk Friends Honor Memory of Miss Annie Wood," *Virginian-Pilot* Feb. 16, 1940: 18.

⁵⁶ *Virginian-Pilot* Feb. 9, 1940: 2, 11, and 1.

⁵⁷ Will, dated Dec. 22, 1934, Irene Leache Memorial Archives, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.

⁵⁸ Minutes October 30, 1940, May 6, 1940, and July 9, 1941.

⁵⁹ Tunstall 9.

⁶⁰ "Norfolk's Debt to Miss Wood," editorial [Louis Jaffé], *Virginian-Pilot* Feb. 12, 1940: 6.

⁶¹ From conversations with Catherine Brinkley, Julie Dalton, and Edith Robertson, September 1996.

⁶² "Acquisitions from the Irene Leache Annual," *Norfolk Museum Bulletin*, vol. 5, No. 4, April 1952, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.

⁶³ Minutes, Annual Reports, May 1996.

⁶⁴ Alice Jaffé, "The Irene Leache Memorial," 6, and Omeda Brockett, "Museum Gets Memorial Statue Honoring Anna Cogswell Wood," *Virginian-Pilot* Oct. 15, 1939: Pt. 4, 2.

⁶⁵ Lerner 203.

⁶⁶ Lebsock and Rice 134.

⁶⁷ Wood, *Story* 308 and 310.

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APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGY

| | | |
|--------------|-----------|---|
| 1850 | August 2 | Anna Cogswell Wood born in Winchester, Virginia. |
| 1850 or 1851 | | Wood family moves to New York or New Jersey. |
| 1861 | April 20 | Civil War begins with shots fired on Fort Sumter. |
| 1862 | May | Norfolk under Union control. |
| 1865 | April 9 | Civil War ends with Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia |
| 1868 | September | Wood enrolls at the Valley Female Seminary, Angerona, in Winchester, Virginia; meets Irene Kirke Leache, a teacher at the school. |
| 1871 | August | Wood and Leache move to Norfolk to establish the Leache-Wood Seminary. |
| 1871 | September | Leache-Wood Seminary opens. |
| 1880 | September | Leache-Wood at 138 Granby Street expands with addition facing Freemason Street. |
| 1886 | | Leache and Wood form the Fireside Club. |
| 1891 | | Leache and Wood lease the school to Agnes Douglas West and began traveling through Europe and the Middle East. |
| | | <i>Diana Fontaine</i> published. |
| 1892 | | <i>Westover's Ward</i> published. |
| 1898 | | Agnes Douglas West purchases the school from Leache and Wood. |
| 1900 | September | Leache-Wood moves to Fairfax Avenue in Ghent, where it remained until closing in 1917. |
| | October | Leache and Wood return to Norfolk. |

- December 2 Leache dies in Norfolk at the age of 61.
- 1901 April 17 Irene Leache Library chartered in Norfolk.
- Wood returns to Europe and begins to send art works back to Norfolk.
- The Story of a Friendship* published.
- 1903 May 22 Wood applied to the Norfolk Public Library for space to display the growing collection of the Irene Leache Art Gallery in the new Freemason Street Library, to be designated the Irene K. Leache Memorial Room.
- 1904 *Idyls and Impressions of Travel* published.
- 1905 June 5 Leache-Wood Alumnae Association formed.
- 1914 May Alumnae Association name changed to Irene Leache Art Association; Irene Leache Library continues.
- fall Wood returns to Norfolk; World War I begins in Europe.
- November 12 Lecture series begins, organized by Wood for the Alumnae Association and held in the Memorial Room at the library.
- 1917 January 16 Irene Leache Art Association changes to Norfolk Society of Arts.
- March Florence Sloane offers to house the Irene Leache Library collection at a building she owned on Mowbray Arch; the Norfolk Society of Arts accepted in May.
- June Wood asks the Norfolk Society of Arts to reestablish the "cultural branch of the society" as "the Irene Leache Library branch of the Norfolk Society of Arts."
- Oct. 2 Norfolk Common (City) Council agrees to set aside land for a future museum, in response to petitioning from the Norfolk Society of Arts.
- 1918 January 15 Florence Sloane offers to build an Arts Building for the Norfolk Society of Arts, to house the collection and serve as a cultural center for the arts, which was gratefully accepted.

The Irene Leache Library name was reinstated, to provide lectures, drama, and music programs, and maintain the collection; the primary role of the Norfolk Society of Arts is to establish an art museum.

- May 30 Irene Leache Library rechartered as the Irene Leache Memorial.
- October Norfolk Society of Arts held its first meeting in Mrs. Sloane's building, the Service Man's Club, renamed the Society of Arts Building in January 1920.
- Wood establishes the Prize Bureau to encourage excellence in the arts—leading to the Irene Leache Memorial Art Biennial and the Irene Leache Memorial Literary Contest.
- 1920 Norfolk Society of Arts establishes a Music Committee to arrange regular concerts—leading to the Norfolk Civic Symphony, now the Virginia Symphony, whose first performance was in April 1921.
- Norfolk Society of Arts establishes a Drama Committee to hold regular productions, later called the Art Players—leading to the Norfolk Little Theater (1926).
- 1921 Wood returns to Florence, Italy.
- 1923 March Norfolk Society of Arts starts a building fund for the museum.
- 1925 *Drama Sketches for Parlor Acting or Recitation* published.
- Norfolk Society of Arts forms the Art Corner to hold regular exhibits—leading to the Tidewater Artists Association.
- 1926 January Board of Trustees of Museum is named, three men appointed by the city and six by the Society of Arts.
- The Great Opportunity and Other Essays* published.
- The Psychology of Crime* published.
- 1933 February 12 Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences opens on Mowbray Arch.
- 1934 *Irene Leache Memorial Anthology* published by Fannie Rogers Curd.
- Irene Leache Memorial Room opens in the Museum, with Wood's

albums on display.

1940 February 9 Wood dies in Florence, Italy, at the age of 89, leaving her estate to the Irene Leache Memorial.

February 15 Memorial service for Wood at the Museum, organized by the Irene Leache Memorial.

The Memorial begins to build the collection with authentic works of art, beginning with two Flemish tapestries (1940), and continuing with purchases in the 1950s to the present.

1973 Museum renamed the Chrysler Museum of Art.

APPENDIX B

PRESIDENTS OF THE IRENE LEACHE MEMORIAL

| President | Term |
|---|-----------|
| Anna Cogswell Wood | 1901-1940 |
| Frances "Fannie" Rogers Curd (Mrs. Frederick) | 1940-1958 |
| Melissa Payne King (Mrs. Marion N.) | 1958-1966 |
| Nannie Baylor Wolcott (Mrs. James M., Sr.) | 1966-1968 |
| Frances Ferguson Carney (Mrs. James A.) | 1968-1975 |
| Julie Nutt Dalton (Mrs. Edward W.) | 1975-1980 |
| Indie Lindsay Bilisoly (Mrs. Frank N. III) | 1980-1983 |
| Clara Mitchell Wolcott (Mrs. Edward W.) | 1983-1988 |
| Edith Brooke Robertson (Mrs. J. W. P.) | 1988-1991 |
| Carter Grandy Scott (Mrs. Glenn Allan) | 1991-1996 |
| Gail Evett (Mrs. Russell D.) | 1996- |

VITA

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Education

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA. BS Psychology, June 1970.
Hollins College, Roanoke, VA (1966-67).
Norfolk Academy, Norfolk, VA, Class of 1966.

Professional Experience

Founder and co-owner, J. M. Prince Books, Norfolk, VA (1982-88).
The Planning Council, Norfolk, VA: Health Information Center, 1971-72.
Teacher, Ohel Sholom religious school, fourth grade.

Volunteer Experience

President, the Norfolk Forum (1995-97) and Program Chairman (1994-96).
Director and Recording Secretary, Irene Leache Memorial (1988-current).
Trustee and Vice-President for Education, Norfolk Academy (1985-present).
Founding Member, Virginians Against Handgun Violence (1994-96).
Chairman, Learning Bridge Advisory Committee (1993-95); member 1993-present.
President, Friends of the Norfolk Public Library (1978-80); co-chair of the Book Review Contest and Book Author Luncheon.
Director, Ohel Sholom Temple (1980-92); chair of Religious School Committee.
Director, Fred Heutte Foundation (1996-current).
Representative to the Governor's Conference on Libraries (1988).
The Junior League of Norfolk-Virginia Beach (1979-84).

Other

Wrote newsletters for J. M. Prince Books, Virginians Against Handgun Violence, and Friends of the Norfolk Public Library.