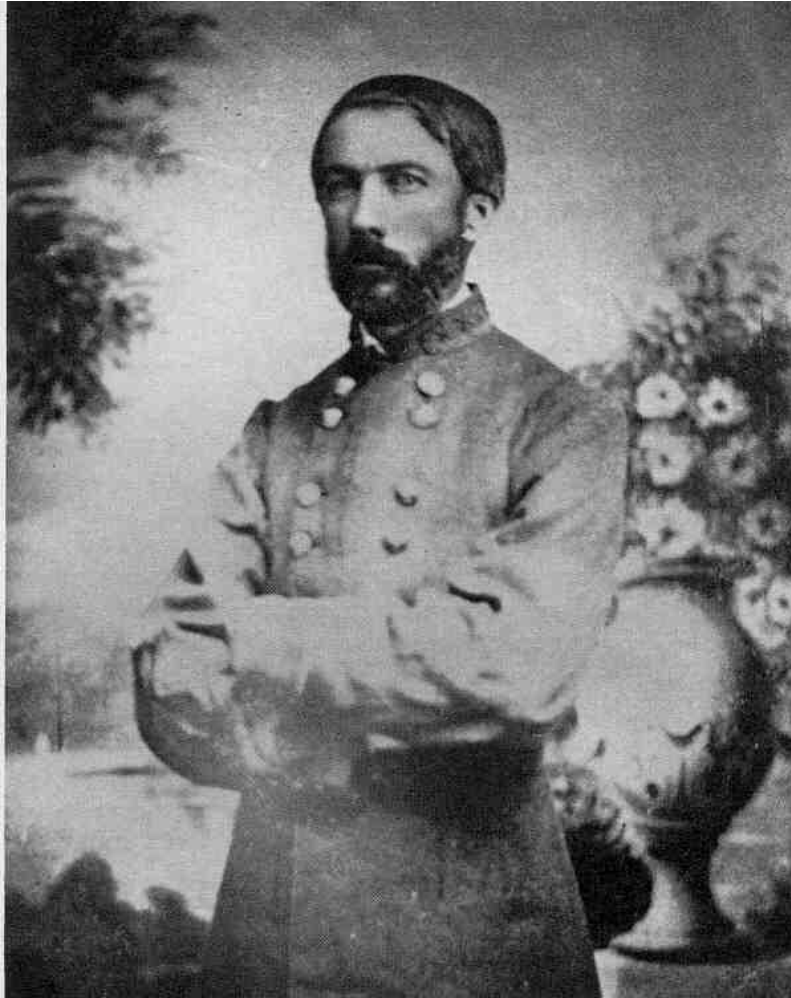


## Daniel Harvey Hill: The Pre-Civil War Years

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*The sternness and intelligence of D. H. Hill are all too obvious in this portrait photograph taken early in the Civil War. Photo from: Hal Bridges, *Lee's Marverick General. Daniel Harvey Hill* University of Nebraska Press, 1991*

Like many officers who commanded troops during the Civil War, Daniel Harvey Hill (1821-1889) is best remembered for his military exploits. Hal Bridges, the author of the most substantial study of Hill's life, explains that his book "is not a biography but a study, with some biographical background, of Daniel Harvey Hill's Civil War career."<sup>[1]</sup> James M. McPherson in his widely-read Battle Cry Of Freedom singles out Hill as one of a coterie of Southerners who possessed "high potential as military leaders" but makes no mention of Hill's pre-war career.<sup>[2]</sup> Bruce Catton likewise says nothing about

Hill's pre-war years and calls Hill a "carping dyspeptic" who sent his troops into battle with a "cold fury."<sup>[3]</sup>

This paper argues that historians, by focusing mainly or exclusively upon Hill's Civil War accomplishments, overlooked his ante-bellum years, which this writer contends were crucial in terms of bringing into perspective the man who shaped Hill's world view. "He was not less courageous in peace than in war," said Governor Angus W. I. Johnston in 1929 at the unveiling of a commemorative plaque at the site of the former North Carolina Military Institute.

Following his service in the Mexican War, Daniel Harvey Hill was an educator, not a soldier. He taught first at Washington College from 1849 until 1854, now Washington and Lee University, next at Davidson College from 1854 to 1859, and finally served as Superintendent of the North Carolina Military Institute from 1859 until the outbreak of the Civil War. This paper concentrates upon Hill's pre-Civil War life and thereby attempts to provide a more balanced and more illuminating description of Hill's character and accomplishments than scholars have heretofore produced.

Daniel Harvey Hill was not a one dimensional person. He was a complex, highly intelligent human being who exhibited an astounding array of attributes and characteristics. He was born in the York District of South Carolina on July 12, 1821. The youngest of eleven children, Hill was reared by his mother, Nancy Hill, because his father, Solomon, died when Daniel or "Harvey" was only four years old, leaving the family deeply in debt.

On a small farm in this hilly region of upper South Carolina, just below the North Carolina line, the future Confederate officer imbibed primarily from his mother the unquestioning Calvinistic faith that molded his character and guided his actions throughout life. "I had always a strong perception of right and wrong," Hill proclaimed.<sup>[5]</sup> He routinely joined his mother and his brothers and sisters in reading Bible verses aloud before going into the fields to plow the thin topsoil of the Piedmont. On Sundays Hill traveled with his family to Bethel Presbyterian Church, where Nancy Hill, a stern but compassionate disciplinarian, made certain that all her children sat quietly in straight-backed pews while the preacher held sway. Adding drama to the scene were black slaves, compelled by their owners to attend the white man's church, peering down from the balcony. Hill "accepted the institution of Negro slavery" as part of Southern civilization, states Bridges.<sup>[6]</sup>

J. W. Ratchford, a student of Hill's and fellow South Carolinian who had served under Daniel Harvey Hill throughout the Civil War, from Big Bethel to Bentonville and all places in between, and who therefore probably knew "Harvey" Hill better than anyone outside Hill's immediately family, was fervent in his praise of Hill in a letter he wrote to D. H. Hill, Jr., most likely in 1890. He made special note of his former commanding officer's intense religiosity. "No more able and gallant soldier or christian (sic.) gentleman and scholar sheathed his sword and submitted to the decrees of providence," Ratchford declared.<sup>[7]</sup> "He knew that his days were numbered," stated a Charlotte newspaper on the day following Hill's death in 1889 from stomach cancer, "and towards the last his prayers of family worship gave evidence of very close communion with His Heavenly Father."<sup>[8]</sup> "He was as earnest in his Puritan beliefs as was Stonewall Jackson," stated John Cheves Haskell, who served under D. H. Hill in eastern North Carolina in 1863.<sup>[9]</sup> According to Ratchford, Hill had a "steady unswerving faith, . . . such as took God at his word and believed he was perfect in all his attributes."<sup>[10]</sup>

In 1858, just three years before the outbreak of the Civil War, Hill proclaimed that Christianity alone "produces love, peace, joy."<sup>[11]</sup> In April 1862, while serving under Joseph E. Johnston in the trenches

outside Richmond, Va., he wrote in a letter to his wife that "all our affairs are in the hands of God."<sup>[12]</sup> "What was long admired in Gen. D. H. Hill was his devotion to revealed truth, his discipleship as a member of the Church militant and invisible," proclaimed the *Wilmington Messenger* on September 27, 1889.<sup>[13]</sup> His Christian beliefs, profoundly felt, sustained Daniel Harvey Hill until the very end.

William Hill, D. H. Hill's paternal grandfather, had attained local fame in upper South Carolina because of his exploits as a resolute patriot and ironmaster during the American Revolutionary War. Nancy Hill's father, Thomas Cabeen, a scout for Thomas Sumter, the legendary "Fighting Gamecock," had also earned a reputation for extraordinary bravery during the War for American Independence. This family tradition of resisting "tyranny" would play no small part in determining D. H. Hill's political attitudes towards the North when sectional antagonisms intensified in the years preceding the Civil War.

Like so many supporters of the Confederacy, Daniel Harvey Hill believed that America's second effort in nation building, in 1861, was just as legitimate as its first effort, in 1776. "As a boy in South Carolina he had listened to endless stories of how Grandfather Hill and other Southerners had won the Revolutionary War," writes Bridges.<sup>[14]</sup> D. H. Hill was certain that his opposition to the Union was equivalent to his grandfathers' exploits against the British. "Even before the shots were fired on Fort Sumter," explains Anne Sarah Rubin in her recently published work *A Shattered Nation: The Rise & Fall of the Confederacy 1861-1868*, Confederates were christening their struggle the 'Second American Revolution . . . .'<sup>[15]</sup>

Clearly, to understand the opinions, attitudes, and especially the intense sectional pride that characterized D. H. Hill's thinking one must scrutinize the circumstances of his childhood. His years spent in Virginia and North Carolina notwithstanding, Daniel Harvey Hill was at the core of his being a South Carolinian. "He was intensely southern in his sympathies, filled with all the traditions of South Carolina, his native state," said C. D. Fishburne, a student of Hill's at Washington College who was recruited by Hill to join the Davidson College faculty.<sup>[16]</sup> In a speech before the Davidson College Board of Trustees on February 28, 1855, Hill proclaimed:

And what shall I say of the noble state in which I was born? I have loved her with a love stronger than that of a woman. Yea, that love has only been strengthened by the abuse she has received from abolitionists, fools and false-hearted southrons (sic.). I pride myself upon nothing so much as having never permitted to pass, unrebuked, a slighting remark upon the glorious State that gave me being.<sup>[17]</sup>

D. H. Hill had feelings of deep antipathy toward people from the North. This fierce disdain even found its way into the pages of an Algebra textbook he authored in 1857. Some of the problems he devised are almost humorous in terms of how they castigate the people of the North.

A Yankee mixes a certain number of wooden nutmegs, which cost him 1/4 cent apiece, with a quantity of real nutmegs, worth 4 cents apiece, and sells the whole assortment for \$44; and gains \$3.75 by the fraud. How many wooden nutmegs were there?<sup>[18]</sup>

In the year 1692, the people of Massachusetts executed, imprisoned, or privately persecuted 469 persons, of both sexes, and all ages, for alleged crime of witchcraft. Of these, twice as many were

privately persecuted as were imprisoned, and 7 17/19 times as many more were imprisoned than were executed. Required the number of sufferers of each kind?<sup>[19]</sup>

In the year 1637, all the Pequod Indians that survived the slaughter on the Mystic River were either banished from Connecticut, or sold into slavery. The square root of twice the number of survivors is equal to 1/10 that number. What was the number? <sup>[20]</sup>

C. D. Fishburne was asked by Hill to read the manuscript before it was published. He was shocked by its contents. He expected it to deal exclusively with algebra, not also embrace anti-Northern prejudices. Fishburne told Hill that he "protested against his bringing into a book . . . allusions and references which smacked of sectional politics." Fishburne insisted that colleges and universities outside the South would not adopt the work because it contained superfluous material that was "offensive to those who lived in that happy region which lay north of Mason & Dixon's line." D. H. Hill, Fishburne reported, received these objections "very pleasantly but suggested that he did not care whether his book was received favorably by the Northern people or not."<sup>[21]</sup>

Not surprisingly, Daniel Harvey Hill admired John C. Calhoun, the South Carolina statesman, U.S. Senator, and former Vice President who had advanced in the 1830s the proposition that each individual state retained the power to nullify any Federal law it deemed to be unconstitutional. Although he died in 1850, Calhoun was in a very real sense the "father of secession."<sup>[22]</sup> " . . . how can I revere thee enough, birth-place (sic.) of the pure, spotless, incorruptible Calhoun," Hill exclaimed in his address in 1855 to the Davidson College Board of Trustees.<sup>[23]</sup> A cadet at the North Carolina Military Institute, most probably inspired by Hill, said the following about Calhoun in a letter that appeared in a Charlotte newspaper on March 13, 1860.

. . . and last of all and greatest, Calhoun -- the logical, senatorial Calhoun, who loved his country, yet preferred to sacrifice his country rather than submit to oppression, or an invasion of Southern rights.<sup>[24]</sup>

C. D. Fishburne resided in Hill's home after being recruited by Hill to join the Davidson College faculty in January 1855 and came to understand just how profoundly his mentor felt about South Carolina and about its famous native son, John C. Calhoun. One evening Fishburne casually mentioned in Hill's presence that he had little regard for Calhoun and his political ideas. The tension was immediate. Hill was furious. These remarks, Fishburne wrote, "were received by him silently and the conversation was broken off." Fishburne was devastated when Hill shunned him for several days. Finally, he went to Hill and apologized. "I assured him that I meant nothing offensive to him and . . . that my fealty to party was nothing compared with my attachments to friends."<sup>[25]</sup>

Nancy Hill did not have enough money to send her youngest child to college. Consequently, she was gratified when "Harvey" was recommended for appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1838. Admitted as a cadet on June 1<sup>st</sup>, D. H. Hill went on to graduate Number 28 in a class of 56 in 1842. Interestingly, he received some of his lowest marks in mathematics, the academic discipline he would later teach at Washington College and Davidson College. Despite his more or less average performance as a cadet, the young South Carolinian did acquire at West Point a lasting respect for what he regarded as the advantages and benefits of military education. "It is . . . impossible to over estimate the influence of military schools upon the welfare of society," Hill proclaimed in 1860. "Were

it possible to train all our young men in them, lawlessness would be absolutely unknown and unheard of in the next generation."<sup>[26]</sup>

Daniel Harvey Hill distinguished himself as a soldier in the Mexican War. Invariably a rapacious fighter, he helped Zachary Taylor capture Monterrey and fought under Winfield Scott at Vera Cruz and Cerro Gordo, and led storming parties at Padierna and Chapultepec, for which he was singled out for special praise. "He was one of the six officers in the whole force employed in Mexico who were twice brevetted (sic.) for meritorious service upon the field," says one of Hill's biographers.<sup>[27]</sup> "He believed that war meant to kill, and that the speediest way to whip your enemy was to hurt him," commented a newspaper editor many years later.<sup>[28]</sup> When the South Carolina Legislature decided to award swords to the three bravest of its soldiers in the Mexican War, Hill was selected as one of the recipients.

On November 2, 1848, Hill married Isabella Morrison, daughter of Robert Hall Morrison, the first president of Davidson College, and granddaughter of General Joseph Graham, who had seen extensive service in the Revolutionary War, including the Battle of Charlotte, and the Battle of Cowan's Ford on the Catawba River. An intelligent woman with requisite Presbyterian piety, Isabella had met "Harvey" while he was visiting one of his married sisters, who lived near Cottage Home, the residence of the Morrises in Lincoln County. In February 1849, D. H. Hill resigned from the army and traveled with his young bride to Lexington, Va., where he accepted a position as a Professor of Mathematics at Washington College. "I have never regretted leaving the service," he wrote some years later.<sup>[29]</sup>

In a letter he penned to D. H. Hill, Jr. on February 8, 1890, C. D. Fishburne gave a poignant description of his early encounters with his mathematics instructor at Washington College. "He was then comparatively a young man, wore full whiskers but no mustache, was slightly built, of serious aspect, to us youngsters at least." Fishburne went on to explain that the students were surprised by Hill's generally disheveled appearance. Unlike the other West Point graduates who taught at Washington College, he was "careless in his dress," Fishburne declared, "a fact that impressed us the more because we knew him as having been an officer of the U.S. Army."<sup>[30]</sup>

His students at Washington College held Daniel Harvey Hill in highest esteem as a teacher. "He was regarded as strictly impartial and very generous in recognizing and encouraging any originality and unusual ability among his pupils," said Fishburne.<sup>[31]</sup> He had the happy faculty," said J. W. Ratchford, "of imparting information, and what I appreciated most as a student was his ability to draw out what a boy knew."<sup>[32]</sup> "As a teacher I have never seen his superior," Fishburne exclaimed. "He had the rare capacity of interesting his pupils and of compelling them to use their faculties, often it seems unconsciously, in a manner that surprised themselves."<sup>[33]</sup>

On August 10, 1853, the Board of Trustees of Davidson College voted to invite Daniel Harvey Hill to become a Professor of Mathematics at their fledgling institution of higher education.<sup>[34]</sup> D. H. Hill was thoroughly familiar with Davidson, because, as noted earlier, his father-in-law, Robert Hall Morrison, had been the college's first president. Even though he was quite content to remain at Washington College, where he had "received not a single mark of discourtesy, or disrespect," Hill accepted the position at Davidson, largely because of his "desire to labor in a College, founded in the prayers, and by the liberality of Presbyterians." Also, the Board of Trustees had agreed to support his "views . . . in regard to the standard of education, and system of government of the College."<sup>[35]</sup> C. D. Fishburne explained that Hill "entered on his duties with the assurance that he would be heartily sustained by a

large majority of the Trustees in every effort he might make to completely change the College, in the standards of scholarship and behavior."<sup>[36]</sup>

What happened over the next five years at Davidson College illustrates just how tenacious and persistent "Harvey" Hill could be. Nothing could seemingly dissuade this man from trying to attain an objective once he had decided to pursue it. To put matters bluntly, the Board of Trustees wanted Hill to take charge and subdue the violence that was threatening to destroy the college. "Major Hill was . . . induced to accept the place by the urgent request of prominent friends of the College who were dissatisfied with its condition," said Fishburne.<sup>[37]</sup>

The behavior of the Davidson students, like that on many other college campuses in the South, was raucous and unsettling. Many of the approximately 90 students were virtually out of control. Riots were common. Drinking and carousing were widespread. If suspended, troublemakers would not go home, largely because they did not have enough money to pay their way. Waiting to be readmitted, they would walk around campus or sleep all day in the town's boarding houses. Even worse, at night, under the cover of darkness, they would entertain themselves by making mischief, much of it mean spirited. On December 22, 1853, for example, students attacked the houses of two professors with rocks and eggs and set off several bombs on the campus, "the report being heard some four or five miles around the College."<sup>[38]</sup> On April 21, 1854, a "wooden building was demolished" during a campus riot.<sup>[39]</sup> One student even put gunpowder into a candle snuffer, which exploded when it was used. The unsuspecting owner suffered serious damage to one eye.<sup>[40]</sup>

After fulfilling his obligations at Washington College, Hill arrived in Davidson on May 28, 1854, and almost immediately began implementing major changes in the academic program. Uppermost on his agenda was the installation of the same military grading system of merits and demerits used at many colleges during the 1850's, including Washington College and West Point. Not a few students, Hill insisted, had been "allowed to trample upon all laws, human and divine." These surly youngsters had an "undisciplined mind, an uncultivated heart, yet with exalted ideas of personal dignity, and a scowling contempt for lawful authority, and wholesome restraint," he lamented.<sup>[41]</sup>

Daniel Harvey Hill did not seek to be popular. In his opinion, neither should colleges. Too many colleges and universities, he insisted, had become little more than "polishing and varnishing" institutions, because they did everything necessary to maintain their enrollment, including sacrificing academic standards.<sup>[42]</sup> And what kind of graduates did such places produce? "An occasional scholar is sent out from their walls, whilst thousands of conceited ignoramuses are spawned forth with not enough Algebra to equate their minds with zero," Hill proclaimed in his official inaugural address to the Board of Trustees on February 28, 1855. ". . . ninnyes take degrees," the acerbic major continued, "and blockheads bear away the title of Bachelor of Arts; though the only art they acquired in College was the art of yelling, ringing of bells, and blowing horns in nocturnal rows."<sup>[43]</sup>

Hill insisted that he knew how to end such fractious behavior. Never one to mince words, especially when he believed that somebody in authority was incompetent, Hill lashed out at Samuel Williamson, the College's president. "The character of a College depends mainly upon the character of its President," Hill told the Board of Trustees several months later.<sup>[44]</sup> In August 1854, Williamson resigned when it became clear that the combative new mathematics professor was going to prevail. Hill also offered to quit, but the Board of Trustees insisted that he stay. As promised, the Board of Trustees



approved Hill's new grading system of merits and demerits, on August 8, 1854. The most severe punishment was bestowed upon those students guilty of "profanity, fighting, disorderly conduct in recitation rooms, in Chapel, or on the Campus." There were also severe penalties for students "being improperly dressed in Chapel, in recitation rooms, or on Campus."<sup>[45]</sup> Clearly, a restrictive new regime was taking control at Davidson College, and Hill was its architect.

Daniel Harvey Hill, his religious proclivities notwithstanding, was obviously anything but serene, tranquil and soft spoken. Even C. D. Fishburne admitted that Hill's "manner was direct."<sup>[46]</sup> "He was what he seemed. There was no hypocrisy or guile or sham about him," said the *Wilmington Messenger* many years later.<sup>[47]</sup> According to Ratchford, Hill "could see and appreciate good or bad in those he came in contact with."<sup>[48]</sup> The truth was that D. H. Hill could be cantankerous, quarrelsome, and highly judgmental, especially toward his superiors. Pity the person who pricked his ire or stood in his way. "He was a bitter, sarcastic critic of the frailties of humans," says Jeffrey D. Wert in his biography of Hill's close associate in combat and fellow classmate at West Point, James Longstreet.<sup>[49]</sup> According to John Haskell, D. H. Hill was "eccentric on the verge of wrongheadedness (sic)."<sup>[50]</sup>

Hill believed that human beings were by nature wretched and sinful creatures. "Self-abasement and self-aborrence must lie at the very foundation of the Christian character," Hill wrote in 1858.<sup>[51]</sup> Regardless of its origins, this predilection to emphasize the negative aspects of human deportment brought a harshness to Hill's rhetoric. As already seen, his inaugural address at Davidson was full of vituperative language. Without rewards for good behavior, he maintained, the majority of students would "speedily acquire idle habits, and learn to drone away their time between lounging, cards, cigars, and whiskey punch."<sup>[52]</sup> And as for those miscreants who had no desire to improve their behavior, they would "congregate together around their filthy whiskey bottle, like ill-omened vultures around a rotten carcass."<sup>[53]</sup> It was this tendency toward invective and pointing out the faults in others that caused many people to dislike and fear Daniel Harvey Hill.

Hal Bridges reminds us that Hill was a man of many facets. "At every stage of his career, the attractive qualities . . . were liberally intermingled with his prickly traits of character," says Bridges.<sup>[54]</sup> Ratchford noted that Hill "was as helpless in the affections of his wife and children as other mortals."<sup>[55]</sup> C. D. Fishburne described the impact that the death of Hill's eldest son, Robert Hall Morrison Hill, on April 5, 1857 had upon Hill.<sup>[56]</sup> "I have never witnessed more intense anguish than his death caused to his father," Fishburne declared. "For a time I feared that the Major's mind could become seriously affected. All the fountains of tenderness and grief overflowed."<sup>[57]</sup> Hill's letters during the Civil War to his wife, Isabella, are replete with examples of familial affection, compassion, and concern. On May 10, 1862, the dutiful husband and father gave explicit instructions to Isabella.

Train our children to love God. Our gloomy Presbyterian ideas encourage fear of God, not love for him. Let our children be taught love love love. God be with you my child & the dear ones.<sup>[58]</sup>

One month later he wrote:

It is of infinite importance that you should be calm & have strong faith. Don't let little matters fret you. Make home attractive to the children. Those who have happy homes seldom turn out badly.<sup>[59]</sup>

In *The Land We Love*, a magazine Hill produced in Charlotte from 1866 until 1869, the indefatigable soldier and teacher wrote at length about his views on parenting. Here again, one encounters the religious and philosophical perspectives that had their roots in his antebellum years. Claiming that the Bible "is superior to all other books," Hill insisted that a "study of its precious contents will develop and will strengthen the mental faculties more fully than all the literature of earth."<sup>[60]</sup> Most likely inspired by memories of his own mother, Hill proclaimed: "No man has ever become really great in the widest and best sense of the word who did not receive in his youth that religious training which usually devolves from the mother."<sup>[61]</sup> According to Hill, parents should "prayerfully watch over the young immortals committed to their care!"<sup>[62]</sup>

The minutes of the Davidson College Faculty are filled with the precepts of *in loco parentis*. Professors, especially D. H. Hill, subjected students to exacting regulations, including unannounced inspections of dormitory rooms to make sure that students were studying, informing parents when their children were "too frequently absent from College duties," and reading each Monday in Chapel a "list of the delinquencies and offenses" that had occurred the previous week.<sup>[63]</sup> ". . . on account of noise on the campus, Profs. Hill and Fishburn (sic.) inspected the College Buildings and found that Messrs. Bailey, and R. B. Caldwell were absent from their rooms," the Faculty minutes declared on one occasion.<sup>[64]</sup>

D. H. Hill was particularly concerned about students drinking whiskey. The minutes of one meeting stated:

Faculty met, and after the usual business, some conversation was had about certain students being addicted to drinking, and it was reported that a citizen of the village had informed a member of the Faculty that there was a good deal of drinking this term among the students. Where-upon, it was agreed, on motion of Major Hill, that the Faculty visit the students' rooms one night of this week.<sup>[65]</sup>

There was also anxiety about the presence of firearms on campus. The Faculty stipulated that "no student be allowed to use fire-arms (sic.), except on Saturday, and at no time on the College premises."<sup>[66]</sup> The new instruments of control even extended to visitors to the campus. In May 1855, the Faculty hired policemen and directed them "to disperse negroes who may collect about the College on Sundays."<sup>[67]</sup>

It was against the background of these strictures that a large number of Davidson students rioted with particular ferocity on the night of December 21, 1854. No doubt harboring deep resentments over the enforcement of Hill's restrictive measures, the participants in this uprising expressed their anger by lighting fires and throwing rocks and eggs at two professors' houses, including the home of J. R. Gilland, the president of the Faculty. Rocks flew through the air. One struck Hill in the forehead. Undismayed, blood dripping down his face, the feisty mathematics professor pressed the attack, just as he had done in the Mexican War and as he would do later in battle after battle with Federal troops during the Civil War. Gradually the students retreated and began to slip away into the darkness. Hill ordered the Faculty -- there were only four members -- to enter the dormitories to make sure which students had stayed in their rooms.

All the students were either at their desks studying or asleep in their beds when the faculty entered. One room was locked. Hill smashed in the door with an ax, rushed in and found D. Newton, a known mischief-maker, feigning sleep but still wearing his boots. The repercussions of this student uprising



were dramatic and profound, at least for Davidson College. An inquisition of sorts occurred the next day, when the entire student body was ordered to appear before the Faculty and explain their whereabouts the night before. Not surprisingly, everybody insisted that they had not taken part in the recent disturbance. On December 26th, the Faculty suspended D. Newton for three months for "his inattention to his studies, . . . his having used in a written essay disrespectful language to a Professor, and from the strong circumstantial evidence to convict him of participating in a riot on the night of the 21st." Forty-two students, more than 50 percent of those attending Davidson College, signed a petition requesting that Newton be allowed to remain. The document contended that convicting Newton on mere circumstantial evidence was "inconsistent with the principles of justice, and contrary to the dictates of reason."<sup>[68]</sup> When D. H. Hill and his colleagues refused to adhere to their wishes, the protesting students left school, many never to return.

Davidson College derived enormous benefits from having "Harvey" Hill on its faculty. In addition to leading the effort to restore discipline, he labored tirelessly to strengthen the academic program. Hill persuaded the Board of Trustees to purchase new equipment for the Mathematics Department. He brought C. D. Fishburne to Davidson and agreed to pay Fishburne's salary for two years if the money could not be raised to meet this obligation -- no small commitment when his own annual salary was just \$1705. It was during Hill's tenure at Davidson that Salisbury merchant Maxwell Chambers bequeathed \$300,000 to the college. Ratchford insisted that this gift was a direct result of the improvements that Hill had championed. "This I presume is the largest Legacy ever left to one College in the Southern States," said Robert Hall Morrison, D. H. Hill's father-in-law.<sup>[69]</sup> Anyone doubting the importance of his contributions to the overall improvement of Davidson College need only read what the Board of Trustees said about D. H. Hill when he resigned from the faculty on July 11, 1859.

That whilst we, as a Board of Trustees, accede to the wishes of Major D. H. Hill, we accept his resignation with very great reluctance, much regretting to lose from our Institution such a pure and high minded Christian gentleman, diligent and untiring student; thorough and ripe scholar, and able faithful, and successful Instructor -- especially in his Department -- as Major Hill as ever proved himself to be since he came amongst us.<sup>[70]</sup>

In 1859, no doubt at D. H. Hill's urging, the General Assembly enacted legislation which assured that his impact upon campus life at Davidson College would endure. The law stipulated that no person could "erect, keep, maintain or have at Davidson College, or within three miles thereof, any tipping house, establishment or place for the sale of wines, cordials, spirituous or malt liquors." It prohibited "any billiard table, or other public table of any kind, at which games of chance or skill (by whatever name called) may be played." The punishments for violating these prohibitions were severe, especially for slaves. They were "to receive thirty-nine lashes on his or her bare back."<sup>[71]</sup>

The departure of Daniel Harvey Hill from Davidson College came as no surprise, because he had already accepted the position of Superintendent of the North Carolina Military Institute in Charlotte.<sup>[72]</sup> The impetus for establishing the North Carolina Military Institute was provided by a group of Charlotte businessmen and professionals headed by Dr. Charles J. Fox.<sup>[73]</sup> "Those gentlemen who originated and pushed forward the scheme are entitled to much credit for energy and zeal," said the *Western Democrat*.<sup>[74]</sup> They raised \$15,000 by selling stock to individuals and received \$10,000 from the City of Charlotte, also to purchase stock. The voters had approved this financial outlay in a special referendum held on March 27, 1858.<sup>[75]</sup> Dr. Fox and his associates bought a tract of land about

one-half mile south of Charlotte beside the tracks of the Charlotte and South Carolina Railroad and hired Sydney Reading, a contractor, to oversee the construction of Steward's Hall, a massive, castle-like, three and four-story brick edifice designed to look like the buildings at West Point.<sup>[76]</sup>

A festive ceremony was held on the grounds on Saturday, July 31, 1858, when the cornerstone was laid for Steward's Hall. Governor William A. Graham spoke to a "large assemblage of ladies and gentlemen."<sup>[77]</sup> On September 28, 1858, the *Western Democrat* reported that Daniel Harvey Hill would be the Superintendent. "The mere mention of this fact we think will insure confidence in the success of the undertaking," the *Western Democrat* proclaimed.<sup>[78]</sup> Classes began at the North Carolina Military Institute on October 1, 1859.<sup>[79]</sup> The institute had two departments – a Primary Department for boys from 12 to 15 and a Scientific Department for young men from 15 to 21. Chartered by the North Carolina Legislature to award degrees, the Scientific Department, which had 60 cadets enrolled during the first year, patterned its curriculum after the courses taught at West Point, which meant that it emphasized such technical and scientific skills as engineering, surveying, mathematics and chemistry, plus the art of warfare.

The influence of D. H. Hill over the educational philosophy of the North Carolina Military Institute was paramount. In keeping with his gloomy appraisal of human nature, Hill insisted that discipline must be rigorously enforced. Just as at Davidson College, he held firmly to the belief that young men, unless closely supervised, would inevitably go astray. "The great sin of the age," he told the Education Committee of the North Carolina Legislature in January 1861, "is resistance to established authority."<sup>[80]</sup> The Superintendent wrote a lengthy description of the school's mission shortly before the institute opened in 1859.

The organization of this Institution and the principles upon which it is based entitle it to the patronage of the State. The instruction imparted is peculiarly suited to our Southern agricultural population; the discipline is of the kind most popular with Southern youth; the prohibition of pocket-money and the dressing of all alike in one common uniform prevent extravagance and the indulgence in crime, and cut off the pride and ostentation engendered by fine clothes; the exercise required in drilling, parading and in guard duty, preserves the health, and occupies that time which might otherwise be spent in vice.<sup>[81]</sup>

As expected, Christianity, although non-sectarian, occupied a central place in the instructional program of the North Carolina Military Institute. "Will not Christians, especially, furnish the youthful cadets with that sound, healthful and pure literature which the young so much need?", Hill asked.<sup>[82]</sup> Cadets had to attend chapel twice daily -- in the morning to listen to a sermon and in the afternoon to hear Biblical instruction -- as well as go to church on Sunday. Henry E. Shepherd, a cadet at the Institute, remembered Superintendent Hill's lectures in the chapel with fondness. "I listened eagerly to the comments of the 'Major' as he read the Scriptures in chapel and at times revealed their infinite stylistic power," he wrote many years later.<sup>[83]</sup>

J. W. Ratchford, who had left Davidson College and had followed D. H. Hill to the North Carolina Military Institute, also remembered attending chapel and listening to his mentor speak. Hill spoke about politics too. When word arrived that South Carolina had seceded on December 20, 1860, many of the cadets from South Carolina, including Ratchford, considered withdrawing from school and going home to support their native state. "Gen. Hill made us a talk . . . one morning, telling us that if we did

have a war he expected to go, and advised us to stay at school until it was certain," Ratchford reported.<sup>[84]</sup>

One comes away from examining those fateful weeks in the first quarter of 1861 with the distinct feeling that Hill, in keeping with his long-held convictions, was willing to fight to protect the Southern way of life but that he sincerely hoped that war would not occur. D. H. Hill had no illusions about the horrible realities of military combat. "Recruiting sergeants, with their drums and fifes, try to allure by 'the pride, pomp, and circumstance of war;' they never allude to the hot, weary marches, the dreary night-watches, the mangled limbs, and crushed carcasses of the battle-field (sic.)," he proclaimed.<sup>[85]</sup>

Hill was proud of the South's military tradition. "The armies of the Revolution were commanded by Washington, a Southern General," he told an audience in Wilmington.<sup>[86]</sup> But he knew that a struggle with the North would be long and arduous. After Confederate troops opened fire on the Federal garrison at Fort Sumter in the harbor at Charleston, S. C. on April 12, 1861, Hill summoned the young cadets to the chapel in Steward's Hall on the outskirts of Charlotte and told them what to expect in the weeks, months and years ahead. His words were prophetic. Ratchford recalled what the Superintendent said.

He warned us that it would be no child's play, and the chances were that it would last as long as the Revolutionary war, and we would all get enough of it. He mentioned the contrast between the resources of the North and the South, both in men and means. . . .<sup>[87]</sup>

Rumor and suspicion were rampant in Charlotte-Mecklenburg in the spring of 1861. The *Western Democrat* reported that "several strangers" were prowling about different sections of Mecklenburg County pretending to be peddlers "but acting in such manner as to cause the belief that this was not the real object." The newspaper went on to state that these "sneaky fellows" were asking all sorts of questions about the status of people's property. One was even discovered "talking with Negroes at a distance from any road or path." The article applauded the determination of local farmers to arrest these troublemakers and turn them over to the sheriff for questioning. "In these times of peril," declared the *Western Democrat*, "it behooves every man to be on the alert, and we verily believe no class of persons needs watching more than these strolling traders."<sup>[88]</sup>

April and May 1861 witnessed a flurry of activity at the North Carolina Military Institute. A particularly dramatic scene occurred when the cadets raised a secession flag, made by the ladies of Charlotte, over Steward's Hall so the passengers on the trains moving north out of South Carolina could see it. James H. Lane, a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute and a member of Hill's faculty, described what happened when the next locomotive passed by the campus. ". . . the artillery thundered its greetings to South Carolina as the train passed slowly by: the male passengers yelled themselves hoarse; the ladies waved their handkerchiefs and threw kisses to these brave boys."<sup>[89]</sup>

The mood of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County was hopeful and resolute at the beginning of the Civil War. Just as they had done for the cadets at the North Carolina Military Institute, the "young ladies" of Charlotte presented a flag to the "Charlotte Greys," a local volunteer unit. Lizzie Alexander, a Confederate supporter, gave a stirring speech on April 21<sup>st</sup> when she addressed the Sharon Riflemen on the occasion of their receiving a "handsome flag" from the local ladies. "Permit me in the name of the ladies of Sharon to present you this Flag bearing the Lone Star as an emblem of North Carolina, to whom alone we now owe allegiance," she began. "Together with this token of our esteem

and confidence," she exclaimed, "we also entrust to you, brave sons of Mecklenburg, our dearest interests and hopes of security."<sup>[90]</sup>

Governor John W. Ellis summoned D. H. Hill to Raleigh to organize the State's first military instruction camp. The cadets from the North Carolina Military Institute followed soon thereafter. They marched as a body into Charlotte and boarded trains headed for the State capital on April 26th. Crowds lined the platform as the locomotive pulled away from the station. It was Friday night. Steward Hall was turned over to the State as a place for volunteers to rendezvous.

Clearly, the principal components of Daniel Harvey Hill's persona had attained their final form by the time he was 41 years old at the outbreak of the Civil War. Reared in a family deeply rooted in the patriotic myths of the War for American Independence, Hill saw himself as one of a long line of South Carolinians who were willing to follow in the footsteps of the likes of John C. Calhoun and participate in a God-ordained mission to resist "tyrannical authority." Also fundamental to his makeup was an unquestioning acceptance of the Calvinistic teachings of Presbyterianism – a predilection that gave rise to seriousness of purpose, sobriety, tenacity, and disparagement of human nature. Like many who distrust people, Hill had an intensely authoritarian personality and advocated the imposition of rigid discipline as a means to discourage inappropriate behavior. This overarching propensity caused some to see Hill as an intimidating, even cynical person, his mentoring of students and his feelings of affection and devotion to his friends and family to the contrary notwithstanding.

Dr. John Bunyan Shearer, the president of Davidson College, presided at Hill's funeral, which took place on September 25, 1889, in the Presbyterian Church in Davidson. Shearer took his text from 2nd Samuel, 3:38.

*Know ye not that there is a prince  
and a great man fallen this day  
in Israel.*<sup>[91]</sup>

Shearer eulogized Hill. He praised the former general as a "fearless patriot" and a "military hero."<sup>[92]</sup> "The Gallant Confederate General Gone To His Rest," declared the headline in the *Charlotte Chronicle*.<sup>[93]</sup> Not surprisingly, there was no mention in the press of Hill's pre-Civil War attainments. A granite obelisk marks the final resting place of Daniel Harvey Hill in the town cemetery in Davidson.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Hal Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General* (New York, Toronto, Boston: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1971), vii, hereinafter cited as Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*.

<sup>[2]</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry Of Freedom. The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), 276.

<sup>[3]</sup> Bruce Catton, *Bruce Catton's Civil War* (New York: The Fairfax Press, 1984), 120.

<sup>[4]</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, September 29, 1927.

<sup>[5]</sup> Quoted in Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 17.

<sup>[6]</sup> Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 19. In the 1840s, approximately 25 percent of the members of Bethel Presbyterian Church were slaves, see "bethelpresbyterian.org/page13.html."

<sup>[7]</sup> J. W. Ratchford to D. H. Hill, Jr., Paint Rock, Texas, n.d., 77, Daniel Harvey Hill, Jr. Papers, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C. Hereafter cited as Ratchford.

- [8] *Charlotte Chronicle*, September 25, 1889.
- [9] John Cleves Haskell, *The Haskell Memoirs* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), p. 40.
- [10] Ratchford, 4.
- [11] Major D. H. Hill, *A Consideration Of The Sermon On The Mount* (William S. & Alfred Martien, 1858), 8.
- [12] D. H. Hill to his wife, April 22, 1862, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.
- [13] *Wilmington Messenger*, September 27, 1889.
- [14] Bridges, p. 18.
- [15] Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise & Fall of the Confederacy 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 14.
- [16] C. D. Fishburne to D. H. Hill, Jr., Chancellorsville, Va., February 8, 1890, p. 12, Daniel Harvey Hill, Jr. Papers, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N. C. Hereafter cited as Fishburne. His name is sometimes spelled 'Fishburn.' However, his signature on this letter clearly contains a final 'e.' Consequently, that spelling shall be used throughout this book.
- [17] D. H. Hill, *College Discipline*. An Inaugural Address Delivered at Davidson College, N.C. On the 28th February, 1855 (The Watchman Office, 1855). Hereafter cited as Discipline.
- [18] Major D. H. Hill, *Elements Of Hill's Algebra* (J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1857), 124. Hereinafter cited as Algebra.
- [19] Algebra., 151.
- [20] Algebra., 318
- [21] Fishburne, 12.
- [22] John Caldwell Calhoun (1782-1850) was born near Abbeville, S.C. He served in the House of Representatives from 1811 until 1817, as Secretary of War from 1817 until 1825, as Vice President under John Quincy Adams from 1825 until 1832, as Secretary of State under John Tyler from 1844 until 1845, and in the Senate from 1832 until 1843 and from 1845 until his death in 1850. Calhoun was an ardent defender of the South and of slavery and of the right of States to secede from the United States of America.
- [23] Discipline
- [24] *Western Democrat* (Charlotte), March 13, 1860.
- [25] Fishburne, 12-13.
- [26] *Western Democrat*, (Charlotte) January 15, 1861.
- [27] A. C. Avery, Memorial Address on Life and Character of Lieutenant General D. H. Hill (Edwards & Broughton), 7.
- [28] *Wilmington Messenger*, September 27, 1889.
- [29] D. H. Hill to Kinstrung (October 30, 1858), College Archives, Davidson College Library, Davidson, N.C.
- [30] Fishburne, 1.
- [31] Fishburne, 3.
- [32] Ratchford, 2-3.
- [33] Fishburne, 2-3.
- [34] Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Davidson College (August 10, 1853), College Archives, Davidson College Library, Davidson, N.C. Hereafter cited as Davidson College Board of Trustees.
- [35] Discipline. 4.
- [36] Fishburne, 8.
- [37] Fishburne, 7.
- [38] Davidson College Board of Trustees (February 21, 1854).

- [39] *Minutes of the Faculty of Davidson College*, April 24, 1854. College Archives, Davidson College Library, Davidson, N.C. Hereafter cited as Davidson College Faculty.
- [40] For a detailed history of Davidson College, see Mary D. Beaty, *A History of Davidson College* (Briarpatch Press, 1988).
- [41] Discipline, 6.
- [42] Address.
- [43] Discipline, 11.
- [44] Discipline, 10.
- [45] Davidson College Board of Trustees, August 8, 1854.
- [46] Fishburne, 1.
- [47] *Wilmington Messenger*, September 27, 1889.
- [48] Ratchford, 2.
- [49] Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet. The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier. A Biography* (Simon and Schuster, 1993) 93.
- [50] Haskell, 45.
- [51] D. H. Hill, *A Consideration Of The Sermon On The Mount* (William S. & Alfred Martien, 1858), 7.
- [52] Discipline, 12.
- [53] Address.
- [54] Bridges, 151.
- [55] Ratchford, 5.
- [56] The Davidson College Cemetery contains the graves of three sons of Daniel and Isabella Hill who died as children. Willie Morrison Hill (born November 17, 1855, died April 2, 1856); Robert Hall Morrison Hill (born July 29, 1850, died April 5, 1857); James Irwin Hill (February 8, 1861, died November 10, 1866).
- [57] Fishburne, 11.
- [58] D. H. Hill to his wife, May 10, 1862. D. H. Hill Papers. North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.
- [59] D. H. Hill to his wife, June 7, 1862. D. H. Hill Papers. North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.
- [60] p. 36.
- [61] p. 37.
- [62] p. 38.
- [63] Davidson College Faculty, (June 12, July 10, 1854).
- [64] Davidson College Faculty, (April 24, 1855).
- [65] Davidson College Faculty, (February 8, 1858).
- [66] Davidson College Faculty (February 19, 1858).
- [67] Davidson College Faculty. (May 5, 1855).
- [68] Davidson College Faculty. (January 2, 1855).
- [69] Quoted in Beaty, 60.
- [70] Davidson College Board of Trustees (July 11, 1859).
- [71] *Public Laws Of The State Of North Carolina, Passed By The General Assembly At Its Session Of 1858-9: Together With The Comptroller's Statement Of Public Revenue And Expenditure* (Holden and Wilson, 1859), pp. 72-73.
- [72] *Western Democrat* (Charlotte), September 28, 1858.
- [73] The General Statutes list the following individuals as the Board of Trustees of the North Carolina Military Institute: Charles J. Fox, James H. Carson, H. Laff Alexander, T. H. Brim, James P. Invire, S. M. Blair, David Parks, James H. Davis, Moses Heart, John A. Young, J. M. Davidson, and J. H. Wayne



(Public Laws, p. 384). This writer believes that 'James P. Invire' was James P. Irwin, Hill's brother-in-law, and 'T. H. Brim' was T. H. Brem.

[\[74\]](#) *Western Democrat* (Charlotte), June 29, 1858.

[\[75\]](#) The only other military institute in North Carolina, also a private school, was in Hillsborough.

[\[76\]](#) Steward's Hall was 270 feet long (*Western Democrat*, June 29, 1853). This writer believes it was the largest building in Charlotte when it was erected.

[\[77\]](#) *Western Democrat* (Charlotte), August 3, 1858.

[\[78\]](#) *Western Democrat* (Charlotte), September 28, 1858.

[\[79\]](#) The campus was located about where the Charlotte Central Y.M.C.A. now stands on East Morehead Street. Steward's Hall faced west, and the front door was somewhere in the present right-of-way of South Boulevard. The parade ground, where cadets practiced infantry tactics and fired artillery pieces daily, extended from the front of Steward's Hall down the hill to the edge of the railroad tracks that still run parallel to South Boulevard and South Tryon Street.

[\[80\]](#) *Western Democrat* (Charlotte), January 15, 1861.

[\[81\]](#) *Western Democrt* (Charlotte), September 6, 1858.

[\[82\]](#) *Western Democrt* (Charlotte), September 6, 1858.

[\[83\]](#) Henry E. Shepherd, *Gen. D. H. Hill -- A Character Sketch* (College Archives, Davidson College Library, Davidson, N.C.). According to Shepherd, some of the weapons that were taken when John Brown was captured in Harper's Ferry, Va. in 1859 were brought and stored in the arsenal of the North Carolina Military Institute.

[\[84\]](#) Ratchford, p. 5.

[\[85\]](#) Major D. H. Hill, *A Consideration Of The Sermon On The Mount* (William S. & Alfred Martien, 1858), 20.

[\[86\]](#) *Western Democrat* (Charlotte), January 15, 1861.

[\[87\]](#) Ratchford, pp. 5-6.

[\[88\]](#) *Western Democrat*, (Charlotte) May 14, 1861.

[\[89\]](#) *Speech delivered at Auburn, Alabama by General Lane*. College Archives, Davidson College Library, Davidson, N.C.

[\[90\]](#) *Western Democrat*, (Charlotte) May 21, 1861.

[\[91\]](#) *Charlotte Chronicle*, September 26, 1889.

[\[92\]](#) *Charlotte Chronicle*, September 26, 1889.

[\[93\]](#) *Charlotte Chronicle*, September 25, 1889.