

LANDMARK



SURVEY

IDENTIFICATION

Street Address: 908 Cottage Lane
 Map and Parcel: 2-55
 Census Track & Block:
 Present Owner: Murray Green & Assoc.
 Address: Red Oak La., Silver Spring, Md.
 Present Use: Apartments
 Original Owner: Andrew Brown
 Original Use: Residence

BASE DATA

Historic Name: Rugby
 Date/Period: Circa 1850
 Style: Shingle style over original Federal
 Height to Cornice:
 Height in Stories: 2 1/2
 Present Zoning: R-1
 Land Area (sq.ft.): 158 x 150
 Assessed Value (land + imp.): 4500 + 16,800 = 21,300

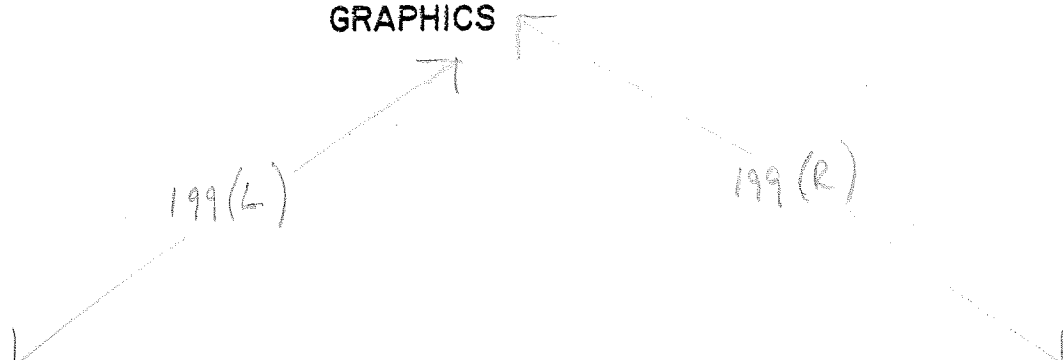
ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Rugby is one of the few remaining important late-nineteenth century houses in the city. The original brick, late Federal structure was extensively remodeled and added to during the 1880's creating a most unusual rendition of the Shingle Style, executed with imbricated, half-round slate shingles. The picturesque roofline, which sweeps down to the first story at the front of the house, is broken by a two-story gable dormer incorporating a large, semi-circular opening for a screened porch. The hipped gable roof of the original Federal portion of the house is contained between four attenuated chimneys, and is capped with metal cresting. The plan is highly irregular. The excellent interior woodwork is ornate in the late-nineteenth century manner, and very rare in the area.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

The original portion of the house was built around 1850 by Andrew Brown, who later converted it to a boy's school named Rugby. Due to Brown's extensive legal problems, the estate passed into the hands of James H. Minor, who was in turn forced to sell due to financial problems in 1878. Rugby was then bought by Joseph H. Blackwell, who almost immediately sold the buildings and 114 2/3 acres to Mrs. Bettie Winston Rosser and Maj. Gen. Thomas Lafayette Rosser. The estate of 29.8 acres was passed on to Thomas L. Rosser, Jr. at the time of Bettie W. Rosser's death in 1915. When Thomas died in 1940, the estate was willed to Harriet G. Rosser, after being extensively subdivided. It was willed to Barbara Winston Rosser upon Harriet's death in 1962. In 1967, the estate was purchased by Nathan Poole, and further subdivided. It was sold to the present owner in 1971.

GRAPHICS



CONDITIONS

Fair

SOURCES

One Cottage Lane, U.Va. Studies in Vernacular Architecture report, Meyers, Briggs, Sandbeck. ACDB's: 35, p. 329; 49, p. 262; 50, p. 124; 80, p. 333; 85, p. 109; 98, p. 170; 198, p. 168; 213, p. 15.

LANDMARK



SURVEY

IDENTIFICATION

Street Address: 908 Cottage Lane
 Map and Parcel: 2-55
 Census Tract & Block:
 Present Owner: Murray Green & Assoc.
 Address: Red Oak La., Silver Spring, Md.
 Present Use: Apartments
 Original Owner: Andrew Brown
 Original Use: Residence

BASE DATA

Historic Name: Rugby
 Date/Period: Circa 1850
 Style: Shingle style over original Federal
 Height to Cornice:
 Height in Stories: 2 1/2
 Present Zoning: R-1
 Land Area (sq.ft.): 158 x 150
 Assessed Value (land + imp.): 4500 + 16,800 =21,300

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Rugby is one of the few remaining important late-nineteenth century houses in the city. The original brick, late Federal structure was extensively remodeled and added to during the 1880's creating a most unusual rendition of the Shingle Style, executed with imbricated, half-round slate shingles. The picturesque roofline, which sweeps down to the first story at the front of the house, is broken by a two-story gable dormer incorporating a large, semi-circular opening for a screened porch. The hipped gable roof of the original Federal portion of the house is contained between four attenuated chimneys, and is capped with metal cresting. The plan is highly irregular. The excellent interior woodwork is ornate in the late-nineteenth century manner, and very rare in the area.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

The original portion of the house was built around 1850 by Andrew Brown, who later converted it to a boy's school named Rugby. Due to Brown's extensive legal problems, the estate passed into the hands of James H. Minor, who was in turn forced to sell due to financial problems in 1878. Rugby was then bought by Joseph H. Blackwell, who almost immediately sold the buildings and 114 2/3 acres to Mrs. Bettie Winston Rosser and Maj. Gen. Thomas Lafayette Rosser. The estate of 29.8 acres was passed on to Thomas L. Rosser, Jr. at the time of Bettie W. Rosser's death in 1915. When Thomas died in 1940, the estate was willed to Harriet G. Rosser, after being extensively subdivided. It was willed to Barbara Winston Rosser upon Harriet's death in 1962. In 1967, the estate was purchased by Nathan Poole, and further subdivided. It was sold to the present owner in 1971.

GRAPHICS



CONDITIONS

Fair

SOURCES

One Cottage Lane, U.Va. Studies in Vernacular Architecture report, Meyers, Briggs, Sandbeck. ACDB's: 35, p. 329; 49, p. 262; 50, p. 124; 80, p. 333; 85, p. 109; 98, p. 170; 198, p. 168; 213, p. 15.

LANDMARK



SURVEY

IDENTIFICATION

Street Address: 908 Cottage Lane
Map and Parcel: 2-55
Census Tract & Block:
Present Owner: Wesley L. Volk
Address: Route 3, Box 701
Palmyra, VA 22963
Present Use: Apartments
Original Owner: Andrew Brown
Original Use: Residence

BASE DATA

Historic Name: Rugby
Date/Period: Circa 1850
Style: Shingle style over original Federal
Height to Cornice:
Height in Stories: 2 1/2
Present Zoning: R-1
Land Area (sq.ft.): 158 x 150
Assessed Value (land + imp.): 4500 + 16,800 = 21,300

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Rugby is one of the few remaining important late-nineteenth century houses in the city. The original brick, late Federal structure was extensively remodeled and added to during the 1880's creating a most unusual rendition of the Shingle Style, executed with imbricated, half-round slate shingles. The picturesque roofline, which sweeps down to the first story at the front of the house, is broken by a two-story gable dormer incorporating a large, semi-circular opening for a screened porch. The hipped gable roof of the original Federal portion of the house is contained between four attenuated chimneys, and is capped with metal cresting. The plan is highly irregular. The excellent interior woodwork is ornate in the late-nineteenth century manner, and very rare in the area.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

The original portion of the house was built around 1850 by Andrew Brown, who later converted it to a boy's school named Rugby. Due to Brown's extensive legal problems, the estate passed into the hands of James H. Minor, who was in turn forced to sell due to financial problems in 1878. Rugby was then bought by Joseph H. Blackwell, who almost immediately sold the buildings and 114 2/3 acres to Mrs. Bettie Winston Rosser and Maj. Gen. Thomas Lafayette Rosser. The estate of 29.8 acres was passed on to Thomas L. Rosser, Jr. at the time of Bettie W. Rosser's death in 1915. When Thomas died in 1940, the estate was willed to Harriet G. Rosser, after being extensively subdivided. It was willed to Barbara Winston Rosser upon Harriet's death in 1962. In 1967, the estate was purchased by Nathan Poole, and further subdivided. It was sold to the present owner in 1971.

SIGNIFICANCE

Rugby is one of the most ambitious and most impressive Victorian structures in the area. It is of special interest that it was built around an equally impressive Federal style house whose original outline can be seen at the sides. General Rosser was a Union officer and chief engineer of the Northern Pacific Railroad.

CONDITIONS

Fair

SOURCES

One Cottage Lane, U.Va. Studies in Vernacular Architecture report, Meyers, Briggs, Sandbeck. ACDB's: 35, p. 329; 49, p. 262; 50, p. 124; 80, p. 333; 85, p. 109; 98, p. 170; 198, p. 168; 213, p. 15.

Architectural And Historic Survey



Identification

STREET ADDRESS: 908 Cottage Lane (formerly 903 Rosser Lane)	HISTORIC NAME: Rugby (CMRA)
MAP & PARCEL: 2-25	DATE / PERIOD: Circa 1850
CENSUS TRACT AND BLOCK:	STYLE: Shingle style over original Federal
PRESENT ZONING: R-1	HEIGHT (to cornice) OR STORIES: 2½
ORIGINAL OWNER: Andrew Brown	DIMENSIONS AND LAND AREA: 52,900 sq. ft. (see base map for N. R. area)
ORIGINAL USE: Residence	CONDITION: Fair
PRESENT USE: Apartments	SURVEYOR: Bibb
PRESENT OWNER: Wesley L. and Joan R. Volk	DATE OF SURVEY:
ADDRESS: 5 Cove Circle Palmyra, Virginia 22963	SOURCES: <u>One Cottage Lane</u> , U. VA. Studies in Vernacular Architectural report, Meyers, Briggs, Sandbeck. ACDB's: 35, p. 329; 49, p. 262; 50, p. 124; 80, p. 333; 85, p. 109; 98, p. 170; 198, p. 168; 213, p. 15.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Rugby is one of the few remaining important late-nineteenth century houses in the City. The original brick, late Federal structure was extensively remodeled and added to during the 1880's creating a most unusual rendition of the Shingle Style, executed with imbricated, half-round slate shingles. The picturesque roofline, which sweeps down to the first story at the front of the house, is broken by a two-storey gable dormer incorporating a large, semi-circular opening for a screened porch. The hipped gable roof of the original Federal portion of the house is contained between four attenuated chimneys, and is capped with metal cresting. The plan is highly irregular. The excellent interior woodwork is ornate in the late-nineteenth century manner, and very rare area.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

The original portion of the house was built around 1850 by Andrew Brown, who later converted it to a boy's school named Rugby. Due to Brown's extensive legal problems, the estate passed into the hands of James H. Minor, who was in turn forced to sell due to financial problems in 1878. Rugby was then bought by Joseph H. Blackwell, who almost immediately sold the buildings and 114 2/3 acres to Mrs. Bettie Winston Rosser and Maj. Gen. Thomas Lafayette Rosser. The estate of 29,8 acres was passed on to Thomas L. Rosser, Jr. at the time of Bettie W. Rosser's death in 1915. When Thomas died in 1940, the estate was willed to Harriet G. Rosser, after being extensively subdivided. It was willed to Barbara Winston Rosser upon Harriet's death in 1962. In 1967, the estate was purchased by Nathan Poole, and further subdivided. After several interim owners, Wesley L. and Joan R. Volk bought the house in 1981.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Rugby is one of the most ambitious and most impressive Victorian structures in the area. Especially noteworthy are its ornate interior woodwork and the massive dormer on the facade. It is of special interest that the house was built around an equally impressive late Federal style house whose outline can be seen at the sides. Major General Thomas Lafayette Rosser, who brought about that successful transformation and whose family occupied the house for over eighty years, was an officer in the Union army and chief engineer in the building of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Mrs. Rosser conducted a large boarding house for University students at Rugby, and in the nearby outbuildings, two of which still stand at 909 and 907 Cottage Lane. These cottages were built to house some of the numerous student boarders who took their meals at the main house. Until Miss Barbara Rosser sold the property in 1967, the 6-acre nucleus of the 115-acre plantation remained intact, and the cottages continued in their original use and relationship to the manor house. Although the boarding house begun by her grandmother had been discontinued, Miss Rosser rented the three cottages and several apartments in her home to students. Despite extensive subdivision of the property, three of the principal buildings in the residential complex survive today and still retain much of their original character. The third cottage was demolished for the construction of Cottage Lane. Cottage Lane, which runs between the cottages and the main house, follows the route of the old plantation road. Furthermore, through the estate's namesake, Rugby Road, the name "Rugby" dominates the entire northwest section of Charlottesville.

Street Address: 1211 W. Main

Historic Name: Livers House

Map & Parcel: 10-59

Date/Period:

Census Tract & Block:

Style:

Present Owner: Mary L. deButts

Height to Cornice:

Address: Tudor Grove Farm

Height to Stories: 2 1/2

Old Lynchburg Rd. City

Present Use:

Present Zoning:

Original Owner:

Land Area (s. ft.): 109 x 267

Original Use:

211-213

Assessed Value (land+imp)

~~520 + 1576~~ 51210 + 9360 = 60570

Sunlight door

Architectural Description

4 bays wide 2 1/2 Flemish Bond - original glazing - wood lintels, mouse toothery - CR. porch - curtain between chimneys - 2 story CR enclosed porch - take chimneys

Interior - upstairs front room - excellent Federal mantel w/ Ionic columns - interlocking circle chair rail typical stairs w/ step ends - Great upstairs room has leaded architraves

1st floor - newer mantels (1890's) - Sunlight w/ leaded glass 1 Jeffersonian Architrave - 2 original carpenterlocks w/ orig. knobs

Dick DeButts -
1250 Wentham 295-1551

Historic Description William - 295-4352

Name of Persons Interviewed:

[Faint handwritten notes]

1211 W. Main

John L.
LIVERS 25-1 1913

Dorothy Moore & Mary L. de Butts 1958 - 207-123

from father →

John L. Livers from Annie R. McKennie & Hetty M. Drane 1913
25-1

They get from will of Hetty R. McKennie 1887 - 29 - 552
104' across mainst. her granddaughters

60 - 335 - 58 acres 1853
62 - 378

Rives Ges & c^{opie} Norris & cals

Same time - Univ. same bricks -

tinshingle on

always together

never east fireplaces - grandparents

~~60-335
62-378~~ → 46 78 - lot in town Clement McKennie

4/165

Architectural



And Historic

City/County Records Mrs. Robert Flood
Miss Barbara W. Rosser
Myers, Briggs, & Sandbeck, One Cottage Lane,
U. Va. Studies in Vernacular Architecture
Sanborn Map Co. - 1920

Survey

Barbara W. Rosser
WMB

Identification

STREET ADDRESS: 908 Cottage Lane (formerly 903 Rosser Lane)
MAP & PARCEL: 2-25
CENSUS TRACT AND BLOCK:
PRESENT ZONING: R-1
ORIGINAL OWNER: Andrew Brown
ORIGINAL USE: Residence
PRESENT USE: Apartments
PRESENT OWNER: Wesley L. and Joan R. Volk
ADDRESS: 5 Cove Circle
Palmyra, Virginia 22963

HISTORIC NAME: Rugby (CMRA)
DATE / PERIOD: c. ~~Circa~~ 1850, 1885 / *Victorian*
STYLE: ~~Shingle style over original Federal~~
HEIGHT (to cornice) OR STORIES: 2½
DIMENSIONS AND LAND AREA: 52,900 sq. ft. (see base map for N. R. area)
CONDITION: Fair
SURVEYOR: Bibb
DATE OF SURVEY:
SOURCES: One Cottage Lane, U. VA. Studies in Vernacular Architectural report, Myers, Briggs, Sandbeck. ACDB's: 35, p. 329; 49, p. 262; 50, p. 124; 80, p. 333; 85, p. 109; 98, p. 170; 198, p. 168; 213, p. 15.

Unidentifiable style

WMB

Rugby

Architectural

Rugby is one of the few remaining important late 18th century houses in the city. The original ~~house~~ ^{late Federal} house was enlarged in the 1850's & transformed into a Victorian structure with elements of the Shingle style using slate, rather than ~~wooden~~ ^{shingles}. The original house was a massive T-shaped building ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~the original house~~ ^{with} 2 1/2 storeys above a high basement, ~~was~~ double pile, & probably ~~was~~ ^{was} five bays wide.

It was constructed of brick laid in 5-course American-with-Flemish bond & had a steep gabled roof, ~~with~~ ^{with} clipped between the two interior end chimneys at each end of the house.

In its transformation to the Victorian style, the front slope of the roof was extended to shelter a one-storey volanda on the facade. ~~It appears~~ ^{it appears} ~~to~~ ^{to} have had a porte cochere at its southern end. An enormous gabled dormer, two storeys tall with a round-arched screened porch at ~~the~~ ^{the} attic level, was set above the northern 2/3 of the facade. An ordinary sized dormer was set into the roof beside it. The walls of the dormers & the front extension are covered with imbricated half-round slate, as is the roof. The roof has metal cresting & a wooden entablature.

The veranda has oversized cornice brackets with bullseyes. It has now been enclosed, except for the ^{projecting,} pedimented entrance bay at the northern end of the facade.

A pair of wide 7-paned doors give access to a paneled entrance hall. The floor

The excellent interior woodwork is ornate in the late-nineteenth century manner, and very rare in the area. plan is highly irregular.

There is a ~~room-sized~~ one-storey semi-octagonal projecting bay on the north end of the house. It has stained glass transoms above its fixed-sash windows.

Other windows throughout the house are single-paned double-sash with moulded trim. The large 2-storey rear wing appears to be original. A 2-storey back porch is set into the southern side of the wing.

The house was divided into apartments many years ago & has undergone many changes over the years.

Hist. D. Rosser

The original portion of the house is believed to have been built c. 1850 ~~by~~ by Andrew Brown who bought ~~to~~ the property from the estate of ~~Eric~~ Eric Morris, but apparently never received a deed. He later conducted a boys' school called "Rugby" there, & it seems likely that he might have ~~to~~ added the rear wing for that purpose. After the Civil War, Brown was unable to finish paying for the property, ^{in 1869?} & the court ordered it sold ~~to~~ (alb. chancery 7-306). It

was finally sold in 1882 to Joseph H. Blackwell (ACDB 80-333), who sold the house and 115 acres three years later to Bettie Winston Rosser, wife of Maj. Gen. Thomas Lafayette Rosser (ACDB 85-109).

Tax records show that the Rossers enlarged & remodeled the house immediately. General Rosser was an officer in the Union army & chief engineer in the building of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Rugby was intended to be only a ^{winter} ~~part-time~~ residence, but the Rossers soon sold their home in Minneapolis & lived ^{here} ~~there~~ the year around. Mrs. Rosser conducted a large boarding house for University students at Rugby, and two cottages were built to house the overflow. Later the house was divided into several apartments.

The Rosser family subdivided the estate as Chiville & the University expanded. Finally, in 1967, Barbara W. Rosser, granddaughter of General Rosser, sold ~~the~~ the house & cottages & the remaining six acres to Nathan Poole (City DB 285-226). He subdivided it still further. After several interim owners, Wesley L. & Joan R. Volk bought the house in 1981 (DB 327-539, 391-114, 399-666, 422-609).

Additional References: Alb. Chancery 7-374+475,
9-291+489, 10-246, 11-403, 12-175; ACWB 50-124;
City WB 4-443, 9-113, 13-474+477

FILE

CITY OF
CHARLOTTESVILLE
VIRGINIA
MEMO

TO: Historic Landmarks Commission
FROM: Satyendra Singh Huja, Director of Planning and Community Development S.S.H.
DATE: September 30, 1983
RE: Alterations to rear porch of "Rugby" - 908 Cottage Lane

The purpose of this memorandum is to forward you the following drawings and information to assist in review of the above item as requested by the Board of Architectural Review:

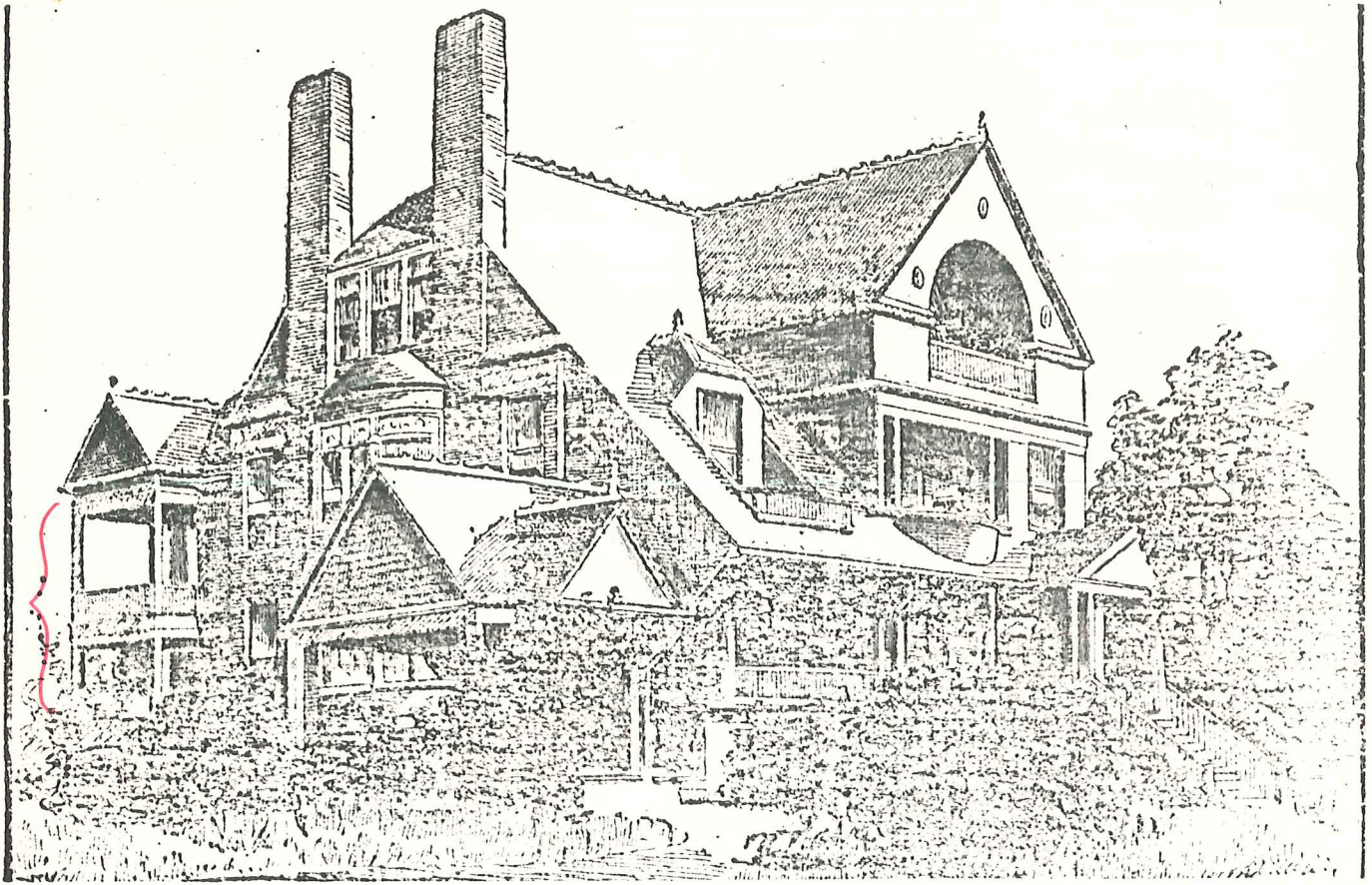
- A photocopy of an early sketch of the house
- Copies of current photos of the "front" and the "rear" porch in question.
- A sketch, with detail notes, of the proposed alterations looking from Cottage Lane.
- A sketch of the porch proposal looking from further into the yard.
- The Historic Landmarks Survey Sheet for this site.

On Tuesday, September 27, 1983, the Board of Architectural Review voted to approve the concept of this change subject to receipt of more detailed drawings and subject to review of the proposal by the Historic Landmarks Commission. The final condition was imposed due to the Board's uncertainty about the "historic significance" of the proposed alteration due to the changes already documented in the survey sheet.

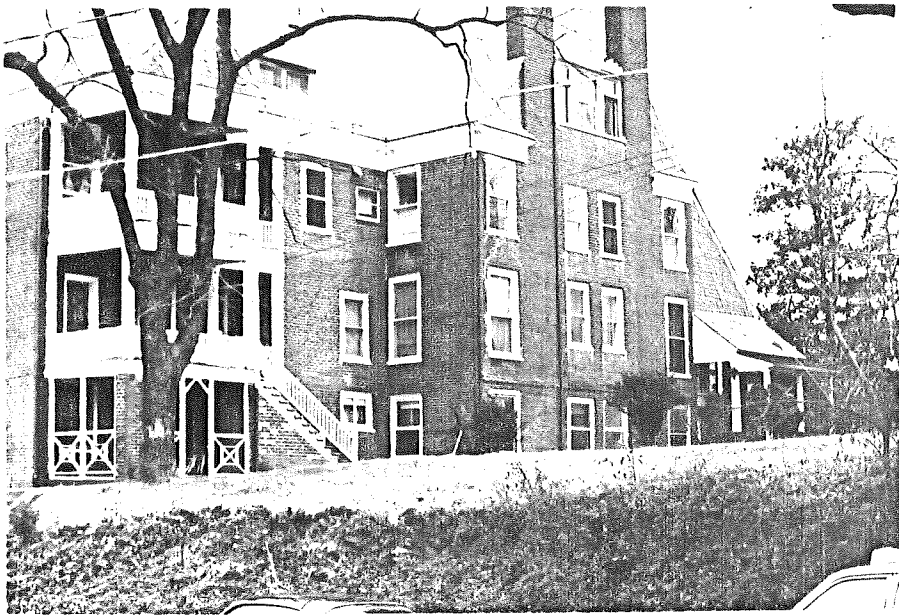
In an effort to expedite the process, the owner, Dr. Wesley A. Volk, provided us with the copies enclosed so that you might properly review this and phone in your "vote" prior to your next regular meeting. He is requesting this since the scaffolding is there and costing quite a lot of money and since he will be leaving shortly on an eight-month sabbatical, and would like to decide what to do before he leaves. We are told by the builder, Mr. Ira Harris, that the porch has experienced recurring rotting problems due to its exposure and use. The present alterations are incomplete since he needs to know whether or not to clad the post in fir and paint as it was, or, to proceed with the more substantial alterations.

We would appreciate your contacting us as soon as possible. We have additional photos in our office if they are needed. If you have any questions or need any other information, please feel free to contact me or Ron Higgins at 971-3182. Thank you.

RLH/bgj
Attachments



THE ROSSER HOUSE IN CHARLOTTESVILLE





Street
Cottage Lane

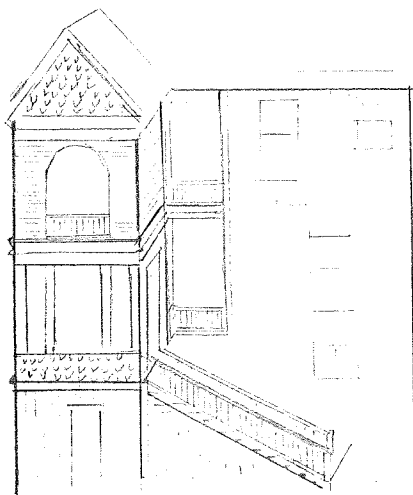
Building is red brick

- white trim
- grey slate roof & some sides

PROPOSED: TO CLOSE-IN PORCHES BECAUSE OF ROTTEN JOISTS FROM RAIN

- walls facing street - siding: slate shingles - identical to those on house
- ① - top story - copy of top porch on other side of houses
 - horizontal siding forming arch
 - retain railing
- ② - middle story: copy middle porch on other side of house
 - slate shingles at railing height
 - 2 columns in each corner

p. 2 of 2



LANDMARK



SURVEY

IDENTIFICATION

Street Address: 908 Cottage Lane
 Map and Parcel: 2-55
 Census Track & Block:
 Present Owner: Murray Green & Assoc.
 Address: Red Oak La., Silver Spring, Md.
 Present Use: Apartments
 Original Owner: Andrew Brown
 Original Use: Residence

BASE DATA

Historic Name: Rugby
 Date/Period: Circa 1850
 Style: Shingle style over original Federal
 Height to Cornice:
 Height in Stories: 2 1/2
 Present Zoning: R-1
 Land Area (sq.ft.): 158 x 150
 Assessed Value (land + imp.): 4500 + 16,800 = 21,300

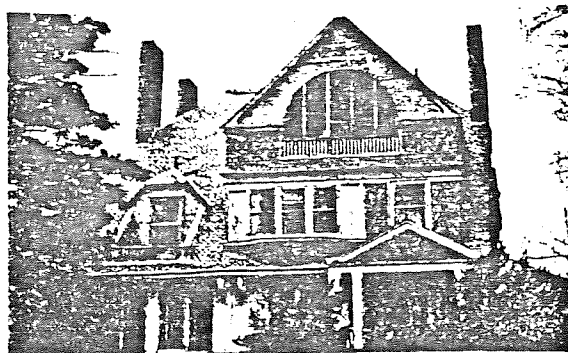
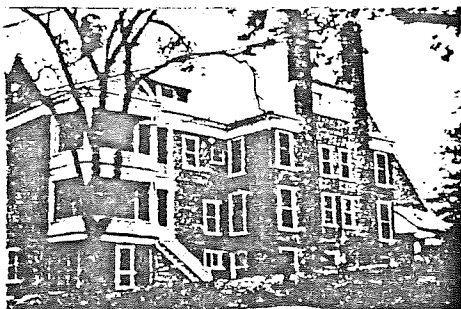
ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Rugby is one of the few remaining important late-nineteenth century houses in the city. The original brick, late Federal structure was extensively remodeled and added to during the 1880's creating a most unusual rendition of the Shingle Style, executed with imbricated, half-round slate shingles. The picturesque roofline, which sweeps down to the first story at the front of the house, is broken by a two-story gable dormer incorporating a large, semi-circular opening for a screened porch. The hipped gable roof of the original Federal portion of the house is contained between four attenuated chimneys, and is capped with metal cresting. The plan is highly irregular. The excellent interior woodwork is ornate in the late-nineteenth century manner, and very rare in the area.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

The original portion of the house was built around 1850 by Andrew Brown, who later converted it to a boy's school named Rugby. Due to Brown's extensive legal problems, the estate passed into the hands of James H. Minor, who was in turn forced to sell due to financial problems in 1878. Rugby was then bought by Joseph H. Blackwell, who almost immediately sold the buildings and 114 2/3 acres to Mrs. Bettie Winston Rosser and Maj. Gen. Thomas Lafayette Rosser. The estate of 29,8 acres was passed on to Thomas L. Rosser, Jr. at the time of Bettie W. Rosser's death in 1915. When Thomas died in 1940, the estate was willed to Harriet G. Rosser, after being extensively subdivided. It was willed to Barbara Winston Rosser upon Harriet's death in 1962. In 1967, the estate was purchased by Nathan Poole, and further subdivided. It was sold to the present owner in 1971.

GRAPHICS



CONDITIONS

Fair

SOURCES

One Cottage Lane, U.Va. Studies in Vernacular Architecture report, Meyers, Briggs, Sandbeck. ACDB's: 35, p. 329; 49, p. 262; 50, p. 124; 80, p. 333; 85, p. 109; 98, p. 170; 198, p. 168; 213, p. 15.

Thomas Lafayette Rosser

By THOMAS C. BEANE

Thomas Lafayette Rosser was born on a farm in Campbell County, Virginia, on October 14, 1836. His father, John Rosser, was of French Huguenot descent and his mother, Martha M. (Johnson) Rosser was a mixture of English and Scandinavian ancestry.¹ His mother was the third of John Rosser's four wives, and Thomas, their oldest son, was the second of five children. Very little is known about Thomas's early life, except the fact that his father was finding it difficult to support his large family on a small Virginia farm.²

In 1849 with his family and a few slaves, John Rosser moved far away from the rolling countryside of Piedmont Virginia to the flat pine-timbered country of Panola County, Texas. Because his father was forced to stay in Virginia for awhile to settle business affairs, the task of moving the family and possessions was given to young Thomas and his mother. This they accomplished with great courage but no little difficulty as they had to travel by wagon all of the way.³ Once in Texas they settled on a 640-acre farm which lay along the Sabine River about 40 miles from Shreveport, Louisiana.⁴

The next few years were full of hard work for the whole family since the new farm consisted mostly of uncleared land. First the trees had to be cut down and a home built; then fields had to be cleared and cotton planted, as well as corn which was needed in order to help feed the family, the slaves and the livestock. The cotton gin, the mill for grinding cornmeal, and the many other buildings that were needed around the farm were constructed in succession.

The many wild animals such as bears, panthers, deer, etc., which roamed the nearby forest must have made life on the farm adventurous; however, the sparsely populated area greatly limited social activity. Shreveport besides being the nearest town of any consequence was also the nearest market; young Thomas often made the trip to Shreveport by wagon in order to market the farm's crop of cotton and to buy necessary supplies.

At the age of 16 Thomas Rosser was able to attend a regular school for the first time since leaving Virginia. The school, at Mount Enterprise, Texas, lay in the next county. He attended this school for four years and had almost decided to make the teaching profession his lifelong work when fate presented itself in the form of an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point. This appointment was obtained through the aid of a relative, Samuel McClory Fite, who later became a United States Congressman from Tennessee.⁵

Now approaching his military career, this future Major General of the Confederate States of America was a strong, tall, fairly handsome young man. Just past his twentieth birthday he had a 6 foot 2 inch frame topped with a mass of jet black hair. His eyes were the same color as his hair and were framed with bushy eyebrows.⁶

Sent with Thomas's appointment was a circular which set forth the physical and mental requirements which were demanded of every new cadet. This circular which was prepared by Jefferson Davis, then Secretary of War, warned that only about one-third of all who entered were graduated. It also advised the appointee that unless he was proficient in mathematics, physics, etc., that it might be wiser for him to refuse the appointment. By doing this he would most likely save himself from the embarrassment of failing.⁷

Evidently Thomas had little fear of failing his exams. He left almost immediately for New York, but misunderstanding the date he was to report to West Point he came East a full six months too early. Rather than repeat the long trip home to Texas and then back again, he decided to settle temporarily in a small town near West Point. While there he used his time wisely by preparing for his entrance exams at the Academy.

At that time since it was not necessary to pass a competitive exam in order to receive an appointment to West Point, the new cadets upon reporting to the Academy were given a rigid physical and mental examination. As a result of these exams many of the appointees who were not suited to such a life were dropped at once.

The mental examination was taken before the Academic Board which was composed of the Superintendent, the Commandant and Professors. The Board sat in small desks arranged in a crescent with the superintendent in the center. The appointee was required to stand before this group and answer

their questions orally.⁸ Thomas passed this exam and was admitted to West Point on July 1, 1856.

Soon after being admitted to the Academy, the Plebes along with the Third and First Class men were marched across the Plains to the camping grounds alongside old Fort Clinton. There they spent the next two months in bivouac.

There is a story about Thomas that first summer that shows his impulsiveness and quick temper. This impulsiveness was to be both a blessing and an affliction to him in the future. One night while Thomas lay asleep, some upperclassmen sneaked into his tent, slipped a rope over his leg and dragged him around the camp. Recognizing a cadet officer who kicked him during the melee, Rosser forced a fight with him the following day. In the fight that ensued Rosser, though larger than his opponent, was younger and less experienced as a fighter. His opponent knocked two front teeth loose and pounded his face. Rosser, reasoning that his opponent would soon tire, withstood the initial assault and then proceeded to beat the other cadet quite convincingly. Rosser was brought before the Cadet Board and sentenced to the stockade for fighting with a superior officer.⁹

After going back into barracks at the end of the summer, the Plebes were separated and put into different companies according to their height. During the summer Rosser and John Pelham, who was later to become Stuart's famous artilleryman, had become close friends. Since the two wanted to room together, and Pelham was somewhat shorter than Rosser, they were forced to resort to trickery to remain in the same company. After some deliberation they decided to stuff papers into Pelham's shoes in order to raise his height. The ruse worked and the two managed to stay together.¹⁰

The company to which they were assigned was "D" company of the 8th division. This company was made up mostly of boys from the South and West and was not noted for its studious cadets. Next door to Rosser and Pelham lived George A. Custer and a James Parker from Missouri. Although Custer and Rosser were to fight several times against each other in the Civil War, they remained lifelong friends and never forgot their days together at West Point.¹¹

Thomas Rosser was able to visit his home but once during the next ten years. He went home after his second year at West Point, and when the time came to leave he hated to say goodbye so much, the story goes, that he crawled out of his bedroom

window and left during the night. There is a highly complimentary description of him as he appeared at that time: "He is an admirable selection for training for the 'tented field'—hale, athletic, tall and symmetrical in dishabille, he shows all the elements of a 'dashing blue sarjint.'" ¹²

In October 1860, the cadets at West Point held a mock election to see who would win the race for President of the United States. Before this "straw ballot" took place the cadets had tried to ignore the rumors of disunion that were sweeping the country and to remain aloof from its problems. But this election showed the growing rift.

It is not clear from the account in *The Spirit of Old West Point* which candidate won the mock election, but it was most likely Douglas or Bell. Lincoln received a total of 64 votes for President, but when "tallymen" were appointed by "bitterly partisan Southerners" to hunt out the "Black Republican Abolitionists", only 30 cadets could be found that had voted for Lincoln. Whether the other cadets that had voted for Lincoln kept quiet out of fear will never be known, but in any case the feelings of disunion that were sweeping the rest of the country had finally penetrated West Point. But even though some hard feelings were engendered, many of the cadets, who were later to fight on different sides in the war, remained close friends.¹³

At this same time we have a concrete example of Rosser's impulsiveness. Even before the election of Lincoln, Rosser wrote a letter dated October 21st to Sam Houston, Governor of his home state of Texas, informing him in the event of the secession of the southern states or a dissolution of the Union, he was planning to resign from West Point.

Houston's reply dated November 17th must have caused Rosser to think about the subject, for he preserved the letter and kept it with his personal papers. Quoting from this letter:

Much as excitement has wrought upon the people's minds, I cannot for a moment entertain the belief that any cause for secession or disunion exist or that the masses of the people would be ready or willing to precipitate the country into all the horrors of revolution and civil war.

Such a picture should not be coolly contemplated but upon the contrary one should look to the Constitution as the Paladium of our rights and to the union as the

main pillow in the temple of our independence. Under the wise provisions of one, we hold our dearest rights and enjoy our chiefest blessings and with the maintenance of the other their preservation is involved.

My advice is that you give of your whole time and attention to your studies in order that you may be prepared to assure that position to which your graduation would entitle you.¹⁴

Although Thomas Rosser did follow Sam Houston's advice to stay at West Point, he did not stay there out of allegiance to the Union as Houston might have hoped. Instead he stayed so that he might be better prepared to serve the Southern Confederacy. The truth of this statement is witnessed in his letter to Jefferson Davis on February 27, 1861. He starts the letter by saying that he holds true allegiance to the South and the new nation and that he desires to offer his services to them. Then he goes on to say:

... Since I desire to devote my entire life to the military service of the Confederate States, I feel that it is very necessary in order that I may be better qualified for such duty to remain here until June and graduate. No doubt my condition in every respect would be beneficial in after life by such a course. But if you judge my services more needed at home than here, your orders for me to return to my country will be cheerfully and promptly obeyed.¹⁵

Even though he had made up his mind to remain at West Point until graduation, the rapid secession of states and the news of Fort Sumter forced him to drop out of school just before graduation. Thomas was probably among the group of cadets that went South by way of Albany for fear of being mobbed in New York. This group left West Point the morning after the news of the firing upon Fort Sumter reached the Academy.¹⁶

After making his way South, Rosser applied for and received a commission in the Confederate Army. However, he was forced to wait until June 7, 1861, when he received the following orders from Richmond, Virginia: "1st Lieut. T. L. Rosser, Corps of Artillery, is assigned to temporary duty with Major Walton's Battery of Louisiana Artillery now in this city."¹⁷

When Thomas reported to Richmond as ordered, he found that two of his West Point classmates, James Dearing and J. J.

Garnett had also been assigned to the same battery. These three young officers were made instructors, and when the battery was ordered to the plains of Manassas, they assisted in preparing the men for combat.¹⁸

After the battle of First Manassas, Rosser was put in command of the Second Company of the Washington Artillery. In May 1862, he was promoted to Captain for his success in shooting down one of McClellan's observation balloons. During the defense of Yorktown and the retreat up the Peninsula, he commanded a battery of the Washington Artillery. He was severely wounded at the battle of Mechanicsville and upon his return to duty he was commissioned as a Lieutenant Colonel of Artillery. Soon afterwards upon the request of General Stuart he was promoted to the rank of Colonel of Cavalry and placed in command of the Fifth Virginia Regiment. He held this command for fifteen months and was at Catlett Station when Pope's Headquarters were captured. He also fought at Second Manassas, South Mountain and Sharpsburg.

In the battle of Kelly's Ford, the same battle in which his former roommate, John Pelham, was killed, Rosser was wounded for the second time and disabled until the Pennsylvania campaign. As a result of that campaign he was promoted to Brigadier General and put in command of the Laurel Brigade which was Turner Ashby's old command. In the battle of Trevillian Station in which he defeated Custer, he was wounded for the third time. Soon afterwards he fought with Early in the Second Valley campaign.

In November 1864, Rosser was promoted to Major General and led a successful expedition against New Creek, West Virginia, where he took many prisoners. In January 1865, with 300 men he crossed the mountains in spite of deep snow and bitter cold, surprised and captured two Union infantry regiments in their winter camps at Beverly, West Virginia.

In the spring of 1865, he returned to Petersburg, Virginia, and near there on April 6th defeated and captured the entire command of General Theodore Reed, who died in the battle. In this same battle his close friend and West Point classmate, James Dearing, was also killed. Just before the surrender at Appomattox, Rosser managed to escape with his entire command. He then disbanded them temporarily and reported to the Confederate Secretary of War at Danville, Virginia. There

he was told to reorganize the scattered troops of Northern Virginia.¹⁹

In the performance of this order, he set up Headquarters, Army of Northern Virginia, and had several orders issued. One of these issued April 12, 1865 started as follows, "Veterans of the Old Dominion, ordered by the Secretary of War to assume command of and organize you with the view of moving upon the enemies of our country . . .," and then ended telling them to assemble as soon as possible.

Another issued on the 28th of April, 1865 said, ". . . all true men who are determined never to abandon our scared cause, but to continue the struggle for liberty as long as there is hope of success, or a plank of our government afloat, will meet me in Staunton, Virginia, on the 10th (of June) . . ." ²⁰ But while engaged in this task, he was captured in his mother-in-law's house at Hanover Courthouse, Virginia, and soon afterwards the war ended.²¹

During the war Thomas Rosser had married Betty Barbara Winston of Hanover Courthouse, Virginia. There were six children by this marriage; however, one of them, John Pelham Rosser, died in infancy. There is a very interesting family story concerning how Rosser met his wife. During the early part of the war, when Rosser with about five other officers was riding near Hanover Courthouse, he saw a row of little boys sitting on a fence rail. Jokingly Rosser said to the little boys, "If you will get me a drink of water, I will come back and marry your sister."

About one year later when Rosser again found himself in that same vicinity, he stopped at a house one day and knocked at the door intending to ask for the use of a pen and some ink. However, the door was opened by the same little boy who had given him the drink of water a year earlier; and when the little boy saw and recognized who he was, he at once began shouting to his sister, "Betty, Betty, here is the man who said he was going to come back and marry you." And, about a year after the two met, they were married. Many high-ranking Confederate officers were present at the wedding. Among them were J. E. B. Stuart, Fitz Hugh Lee and Major H. Van Borcke.²²

As a general, Thomas Rosser thought fast, moved quickly and was practically fearless. As Fitzhugh Lee phrased it, "during the war he went into many places that I would have been afraid to enter."²³ Because of his impulsive nature he was aptly

suited to be a cavalry commander. But this very impulsiveness did cause him to lose some engagements that perhaps a more cautious general might have avoided or even managed to win. Also his quick temper caused him to make many snap judgments and plans that he later had cause to regret. Nevertheless, he was one of the leading cavalry commanders of his day.

When the Civil War ended, Thomas Rosser was 28 years old, weighed 200 pounds and was flat broke. After a quest for something to do, he finally decided to take up the study of law with Judge John W. Brockenborough of Lexington, Virginia.²⁴ Feeling that he was not suited for the legal profession, however, he discontinued his law studies and took a position with the National Express Company, under Joseph E. Johnston. He was appointed Southern Superintendent, and in this capacity he traveled around the South opening branch offices for the company in such southern cities as Mobile, New Orleans and Galveston.²⁵

The National Express Company, chartered in Virginia, was formed for the purpose of providing a faster means of transporting small parcels. However the company lasted only a few months and then was forced into bankruptcy.²⁶

Rosser then decided to move to Baltimore, Maryland, and try his fortune there. For a while he worked in Baltimore at the city waterworks, and while there he moved his family to nearby Catonsville where his wife helped to supplement the family income by running a small truck farm. In November 1866, while in Baltimore, he connected himself with the firm of Ferguson and Tyson, General Commission Brokers, whose offices were located at 121 North Lombard Street. But evidently Rosser was not successful in this endeavor as there is no further mention of it.²⁷

Deciding that the most profitable jobs were to be had in the West, Rosser regretfully left his family in Catonsville, and in 1868 got a minor engineering position on the Pittsburgh and Connersville Railway. His next move was further west where he applied for a position with the Cincinnati and Ohio Railroad but was turned down because he had been a rebel.²⁸

In 1871, Thomas Rosser arrived in Minneapolis with 25 cents in his pocket. In St. Paul he talked to William L. Barny, President of the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railway, which connected St. Paul and Lake Superior. At first Barny, though sympathetic to General Rosser, regretfully told him that there



GENERAL THOMAS L. ROSSER

were no positions open at the present time. However after General Rosser had exclaimed that he didn't want a position but merely a job, President Barny hired him as a common axman at \$40 a month with the promise that if he proved himself he would get a promotion. One month later Barny, true to his word, promoted Rosser to the position of transit man. After working in this capacity for a while, Rosser was to get the break that was to start him on the second important phase of his life, that of a railroad construction engineer.²⁹

In 1871, Rosser was hired by the Northern Pacific Railroad. Soon afterwards a resolution passed by the board of Directors gave Rosser the title of Assistant Engineer, and he was made Division Engineer in charge of surveys and construction through North Dakota and Montana.

Immediately starting to work with the survey party, General Rosser chose the precise spot where the railroad crosses the Red River at Fargo, North Dakota. Although others have been given credit for this choice, Rosser's claim is substantiated by the following records kept by the surveying party:

July 17: Monday. Today we commenced our work in Dakota by connecting J. E. Thomas's line with the third line west from the river

July 18: Tuesday. Today we connected J. E. Thomas's line with the section line between Section 7, 18, TWP. (This line is directly on 13th Avenue South, Fargo North Dakota.)

July 20: Thursday. We fixed the crossing of the Red River today and ran a short piece of a line on each side³⁰

The Northern Pacific Railroad for several years had felt the need of sending an engineering party west to the Yellowstone, but it was not until 1871 when the necessary military escort was obtained that the dangerous trip into Indian country was deemed practical. Because of his proven ability to lead men, General Rosser was picked to head the engineering party which left Fort Rice on September 9th. The military escort which consisted of 500 men, artillery, 2 gatlin guns, 50 Indian scouts and a train of 100 wagons loaded with supplies and equipment was commanded by General Joseph N. Whistler. This expedition went up the Heart River to its head, through the badlands of the Little Missouri and across to the Yellowstone. On October 14th, the expedition returned to its starting point at Fort

Rice after an absence of about five weeks.³¹

In September, 1871, General Rosser decided to set up his winter camp and chose a spot which runs along what is now Front Street, Fargo, North Dakota. The camp which consisted of 50 tents was called Fargo on the Prairie.

Once settled in his camp Rosser immediately sent for his family. There is a contemporary account of their tent home which is indicative of their life at that time. The white tent was located on what is now the northeast corner of Broadway and Front Streets. There was a wooden floor, a stove, six pieces of furniture and twelve or more pictures.³²

Although the people in Fargo on the Prairie had a hard winter, there was a settlement near them which, though gay on the exterior, found life much harder that winter. This camp was called Fargo in the Timber and consisted of about 600 people. "The people were what you would call 'the end of the track gang.' People who were always pushing just ahead of the track construction."

Log huts and tents composed the settlement which was literally infested with gambling houses and dance halls. However, during the winter the food became very scarce, and there is an amusing story which centers around this fact.

One day before Christmas, Fargo in the Timbers learned that a 4-horse wagon had gone east to get a supply of potatoes for Rosser's camp. Just after dusk the wagons crossed the river and started to climb the bank on the Dakota side. The drivers were well muffled up and were cold from their long drive. They didn't notice that several men had taken out the rod which held the end board in place. The potatoes had been loosely packed. When the wagon reached the steepest part of the bank, the end board was raised and revolvers were fired off. This scared the horses and they ran off; the potatoes which were strung out along the trail were picked up by men, women and children.³³

In 1873 another Yellowstone expedition was made. Again General Rosser was picked to be in charge of the railroad engineers and surveyors. The military party consisted of "nineteen companies of infantry and twelve troops of cavalry with 300 wagons, oxen, mules, horses, stores and artillery," under the command of General David S. Stanley. Rosser's old friend

and adversary, General George A. Custer, was made second in command.³⁴

Rosser and Custer must have spent many hours talking over old times. In one of Custer's letters to his wife he said:

Well, I have joined the engineers and am having such pleasantries with General Rosser. We talk over our West Point times and discuss the battles of the war. I stretched the buffalo robe under the fly of the tent, and there in the moonlight he and I, lying at full length, listen to each other's accounts of battles in which both had borne a part. It seemed like the times we were cadets together, huddled on one blanket and discussing dreams of the future.³⁵

The expedition left Fort Lincoln in June, 1873, and spent all summer exploring and surveying the proposed route of the Northern Pacific Railroad. During the trip they had some trouble with Indians. At one time General Rosser, who had ridden ahead of the main body with a few men, found himself surrounded by Indians but was able to hold them off until help arrived.³⁶

When Rosser returned to Fargo after this extensive expedition, he was met with the sad news that his infant son, John Pelham Rosser, had died during his absence. His death was mainly due to the lack of competent medical attention. Because of this incident Rosser decided to move his family to Minneapolis. There they bought a home which they kept for the next fifteen years.³⁷

During the panic of 1873 the firm of J. Cooke and Company, which had been financing the Northern Pacific Railroad was forced into bankruptcy, and the railroad went into the hands of a receiver. Therefore all work ceased for two years while the company was being reorganized.

General Rosser, finding himself temporarily out of work, was forced to seek a new position until the railway again started operation. By a stroke of good fortune, the city of Minneapolis was in desperate need of a city engineer; so Rosser filled that position temporarily.³⁸

When the construction on the Northern Pacific Railroad started again in 1876, Rosser left Minneapolis and rejoined the company. He then helped to survey the line across the Missouri River in the Dakota territory where he located the site for Mandon, North Dakota. There Rosser under authority from

Vice-President Stark, Chairman of the Northern Pacific Land committee, began to issue permits to persons desiring to buy lots in Mandon. There was a great demand for land, as the division yards for the whole section from Fargo, North Dakota to Livingston, Montana were to be located there. In fact several riots broke out before the lots were finally divided and sold.⁸⁹

In the winter of 1878-79 Rosser achieved one of his most notable feats which enabled the Northern Pacific to continue construction throughout the winter months. The railway had been built to the Missouri River, and with the coming of winter it became impossible to build a bridge. The problem that faced the company was how to transport the heavy supplies that were needed to continue building the railroad to the other side of the ice-covered river. Some of the company officials said there was no possible way to transport the heavy iron rails locomotives across to the other side of the river and advised waiting until spring to continue building. Then Rosser devised a plan that was both original and daring. His plan was to lay the tracks directly on the solidly frozen river. After laying the tracks Rosser proved the feasibility of the idea by personally running the first train across. Because of Rosser's daring plan, 25 additional miles of track were completed before the spring thaw set in. As the bridge of ice was used until the final moment, the last train that went across was so submerged that water even covered the floor of the cab.⁴⁰ In the last feverish hours before the ice pack broke, desperate attempts were made to remove the valuable rails and wooden cross ties. While attempting to aid in this operation, Rosser strained himself so much that he never again enjoyed good health.⁹¹

In 1881 Rosser resigned from the Northern Pacific and accepted a position as chief engineer of the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Although he stayed in Canada but for a short while, his influence must have been felt because R. G. Macbeth in his book *Romance of the Canadian Pacific Railway* said, "I never pass the little station of Rosser just west of Winnipeg, but I visualize again the tall handsome Southerner after whom it was called in those early days."⁴² Perhaps the reason for Rosser's early resignation from this position was his desire to be near his son Thomas who was attending the University of Virginia at that time. But whatever the reason, General Rosser moved his family to Charlottesville in 1883, where he purchased a home

called Rugby which at that time was part of an extensive farm.⁴³

For the next few years, although the family residence was in Charlottesville, the Rossers spent the summers in Minneapolis at their old home, which was not sold until 1900.

Even though General Rosser became a dairy farmer after he moved to Charlottesville, he did not completely give up the life of excitement and adventure he had followed prior to that time. Instead he turned his interest toward various financial schemes, and to the local political arena.

In the early 1880's he became interested in the proposed canal through Nicaragua. Later he became chief engineer of a construction company that was formed to build a canal there. However, in 1884 when the United States Senate was considering a treaty with Nicaragua, which would permit the building of a canal, Rosser, though he evidently should have benefited by the passage of the treaty, violently opposed its ratification on the grounds that the treaty was unconstitutional because "Congress has no right to expend money for public works in a foreign country."⁴⁴ By the early 1890's however, the plan to build a canal through Nicaragua had to be abandoned because the obstacles that had to be overcome before the canal could be constructed seemed insurmountable.

An amusing incident in General Rosser's life occurred in 1887 when his impulsiveness and quick temper embroiled him in a feud with General P. H. Sheridan—a feud which rapidly spread to include many newspapers and different groups over the country. It all started when a newspaper writer, misunderstanding General Sheridan, quoted him as saying that he was planning to visit the Shenandoah Valley to see if it had recovered from the destruction he had wrought. On May 2 of that year General Rosser, after reading that column, immediately wrote a stinging letter to the newspapers in which he said:

I have seen it reported that General P. H. Sheridan, United States Army, contemplates at an early date another ride up the Shenandoah Valley. I had hoped that our beautiful valley would never again be desecrated by his footprints. Cold, cruel and brutal must be the character of this soldier who fondly cherishes memories of the wild wanton waste and desolation which his barbarous torch spread through the valley.⁴⁵

This letter caused excitement in both the North and the

South. While newspapers in such southern cities as Richmond and Charleston defended Rosser, northern newspapers and different veterans' organizations, bitterly criticized and poked fun at him. The following is an example of the latter.

An Impending Crisis
General Order #1
Valley of the Shenandoah
May 7, 1887

All persons answering to the name of little Phil Sheridan are distinctly warned not to trespass upon this valley or any part of it; a man named little Phil Sheridan was down here some years ago and left an unfavorable impression. I myself did not see him owing to a pressing rapid transient engagement in the other direction. I have undertaken the task of protecting the valley against his approach, and will do so with my right hand resting on Jefferson Davis and my left on the Calhoun monument.

signed Rosser, Major General ⁴⁶

Also, in criticism of his letter the John A. Logan Post, Union Veteran's Union of Bloomington, Indiana passed a resolution condemning General Rosser and expressing the hope that he would be forced to "draw his subsistence for the next quarter century from a region abundantly supplied with rations as was the Shenandoah Valley after Sheridan had passed over it." ⁴⁷

Even though the newspapers and public soon dismissed the incident, neither General Rosser nor General Sheridan forgot it, and for the rest of their lives were to speak bitterly of one another.

One of the most interesting and intriguing phases of General Rosser's life centers around his political views and practices. Although most of his life he was a strong and at times even an outspoken Democrat, during his last few years he changed his political views completely and became an ardent Republican. Although there was perhaps no single factor which brought about this change, he did state in a letter, in which he announced his support of Theodore Roosevelt and the Republican Party, that he had changed sides because the Spanish-American War had shown him that the Republican not the Democratic Party was best for the country. ⁴⁸

A letter that Rosser wrote October 23, 1886 indicates that he had been a strong Democrat. His object in writing this

letter was to convince some friends not to support General John E. Roller, an independent candidate, but to support Charles T. O'Ferrall, the Democratic nominee, for Congress. In this letter Rosser said:

As you well know there are really but two political parties in the United States . . . The drift of the Republican party is toward centralization, aristocracy and monopolies. The aim of the Democratic is as you well know, to adhere to the Constitution of the United States in treatment of all national affairs, and to give home rule to the individual states.

In supporting General Roller, you strengthen the Republican party, the natural and hereditary enemy of Virginia. ⁴⁹

Also in a newspaper interview in 1888 he was called a "brave and outspoken Democrat." ⁵⁰

In 1892, he attempted to get the Democratic nomination for Congress for Virginia's seventh district, but was defeated by Charles T. O'Ferrall, the incumbent. ⁵¹ Rosser's dislike for O'Ferrall, which evidently stemmed from this defeat, was a decisive factor in his switch to the Republican party.

On August 5, 1893, elections were held in Albemarle County for delegates to the state Democratic convention, which was to nominate a candidate for governor. Charles T. O'Ferrall, the same man that Rosser had supported five years earlier and had run against in 1892 for Congress, was the strongest and best-liked candidate for governor.

The Democrats in the precinct where Rosser lived met at the county courthouse in order to elect their delegates. The meeting became very wild, and a fight almost occurred between the pro-O'Ferrall men led by R. T. W. Duke and the anti-O'Ferrall group led by Rosser. After the election of a pro-O'Ferrall chairman, the Rosser group withdrew and held a separate meeting on the courthouse lawn. Each faction elected two delegates to the state convention. The pro-O'Ferrall group elected John R. Moon and J. N. Lawhorn, while the anti-O'Ferrall faction elected Thomas L. Rosser and Morris Walker. The *Daily Progress* report on this affair said that nothing like it had been seen in Charlottesville for 20 years. ⁵²

Later on in the same month when the state convention was held in Richmond, the question of which set of delegates should be seated came up before the committee on credentials. During

the course of the hearing, which was finally decided in favor of the pro-O'Ferrall delegates, it was reported that a fight almost broke out between Rosser and R. T. W. Duke. This was later denied by both men.⁵³

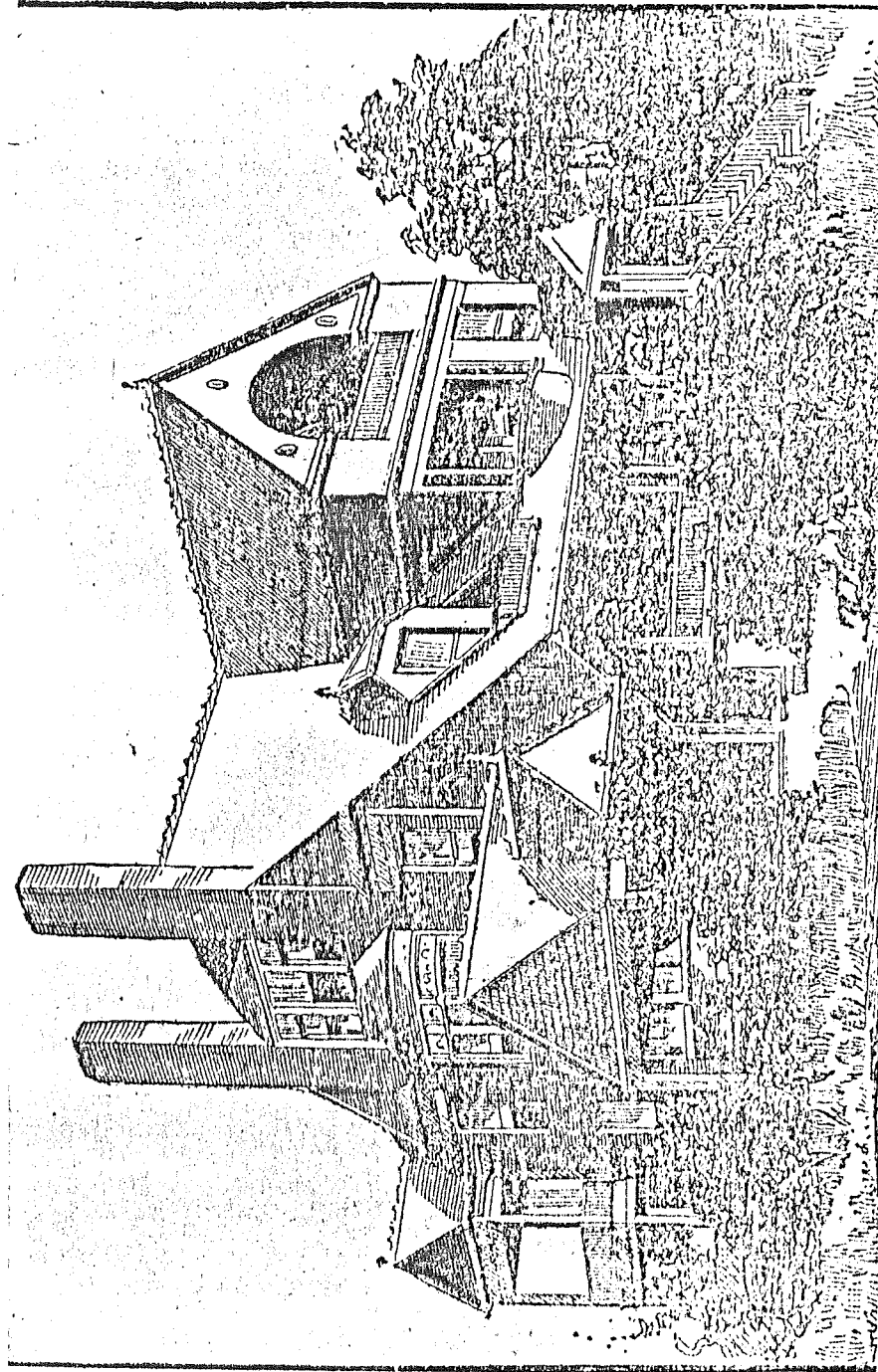
In the convention O'Ferrall was nominated by a large majority. His nomination evidently made General Rosser so angry he wrote a blistering letter, published in the *Daily Progress*, declaring that "The convention was manipulated by machine politicians, even here in Charlottesville; delegates among the partisans of O'Ferrall were largely composed of postmasters, aspirants for post offices, . . . and office seekers generally."⁵⁴ On August 28th, an editorial of the *Daily Progress* sincerely regretted "that General Rosser has felt called upon to write a letter arraigning the Democratic Party for the action of its convention composed of nearly 2,000 chosen representatives."

This editorial evidently made Rosser even angrier, for he replied ". . . that I know that I am a Democrat. I can say that I will always adhere to the political party of Thomas Jefferson . . . but I will not push, pull or run with a political office-making machine." He went on to say that the "Chivalrous O'Ferrall" had promised the office of postmaster of Charlottesville to a supporter, as soon as he could succeed in turning out "the most accomplished, capable and efficient incumbent," who was a widow of a "gallant Confederate soldier," and who had no other means of support.⁵⁵

This letter raised a storm of criticism all over Virginia and almost destroyed what little influence Rosser had left in Albemarle County Democratic circles.⁵⁶ When on September 4th, his enemy R. T. W. Duke was elected county Democratic chairman, Rosser influence was at its lowest ebb.⁵⁷

As a result of his dislike for Charles T. O'Ferrall and his general dissatisfaction with the state Democratic Party, Rosser turned against them in the election of 1893 and campaigned vigorously for the Populists. However, even though General Rosser did make many speeches for the Populists, it is doubted that he ever considered himself a member of that party. His primary purpose in aiding them seems to have been to defeat O'Ferrall.⁵⁸

Rosser did not break away from the Democratic column immediately after his rebuff in the convention, but rather he waited until the first part of October to come out in support of



THE ROSSER HOUSE IN CHARLOTTESVILLE

the Populists. On October 11th in a speech in Winchester, he said that "he had abandoned the Democratic Party because it had deserted the creed of Jefferson."⁵⁰

From Winchester he started on a speaking tour that was to cover much of the state. On October 15 he spoke in Charlottesville, on the 17th in Harrisonburg, and on the 18th he held a debate with Fitz Hugh Lee at Hanover Courthouse. In that debate, Rosser declared that he was not an aspirant for any office, that he was a "Jeffersonian and a Jacksonian Democrat and not a Grover Cleveland nor a Charles T. O'Ferrall Democrat." He further stated that, "the recent Richmond convention was a packed convention and that O'Ferrall had no right to handle the Democratic Banner," because his "ring had seated delegates in the Richmond Convention where none had been duly elected." He ended his speech by saying that O'Ferrall had promised to resign from Congress if nominated for Governor, so that a new congressman could be elected in the November election; however, he had not resigned.⁶⁰

On the 23rd of October, O'Ferrall in an interview in Abingdon said that he had not resigned because his friends had asked him not to do so. When asked about Rosser, he exclaimed that Rosser "was piqued because of his failure last year to induce the people of the Seventh District to recognize his pre-eminent fitness for congress but had renominated him (O'Ferrall) for his sixth term by acclamation." He went on to say that Rosser had left Virginia "immediately after the war when she needed all her sons and was gone for many years. When he returned, he displayed an overwhelming desire for political attainment at the hands of a people whom he had left to work out their own salvation without his herculean aid . . . Well can the Democratic Party say: 'Go little fly and seek more congenial society in the bosom of the Populist.'" ⁶¹

Rosser spoke in Saluda on the 25th of October, in Mathews Courthouse on the 26th and in Williamsburg on the 28th. While in Williamsburg he declared, "that he was raised by a Democratic father and had never voted any other ticket, but would never vot it again."⁶² On November 2, Rosser spoke in Richmond and on Monday the 6th he made a last minute appeal to the voters of Charlottesville, denouncing O'Ferrall and the Democratic Party.⁶³

When Charles T. O'Ferrall was elected by a large majority, Rosser quietly retired from the political scene until the follow-

ing September. Then a rumor was circulated that Rosser was planning to return to the Democratic party in the near future. Such a report caused varied reactions within the state.⁶⁴ When questioned by reporters about his plans, Rosser answered with a letter to the *Richmond Dispatch*:

. . . I am entirely out of Politics. I have never been anything but an old fashion Jeffersonian Democrat. I regard the present Democratic Party as a very different thing from the Democratic Party of our fathers . . . and it is therefore a new party. The Republican Party is not only a new party, but it is purely sectional. The Populist Party is democratic, but not the old Democratic Party and is also a new party . . . satisfaction is not to be found in new parties but old principles.

Then he ended the letter by saying he was going to vote for Democratic nominees in the coming election, but only because he thought they were the best men.⁶⁵

The next day in an editorial the *Richmond Dispatch* averred that if one read General Rosser's letter closely, he would see that Rosser is returning to the Democratic Party.⁶⁶ For the next few years, Rosser did vote for the Democratic nominees but evidently with little enthusiasm.

During the Spanish-American War, Rosser secured an appointment as a Brigadier General in the United States Army. Because of his poor health, he was kept in Virginia and put in charge of training the Third Brigade, Second Division, First Army Corp. While engaged in this task, he caught pneumonia and there were fears for his life. As a result of this illness, his activity was cut down to a great degree and he was forced to lead a less strenuous life thereafter.⁶⁷

In 1899 Rosser became interested in another business venture, that of settling Americans in Cuba. Fitz Hugh Lee who was in Cuba as a result of the Spanish American War had written Rosser a letter which had fired his enthusiasm over the project. Their plan was simple. American investors were afraid to invest their money in Cuba because of the extreme unrest and frequent revolutions. By colonizing the country with Americans, they would thus stabilize it and render it safe for future investments.⁶⁸ In July, 1899, Rosser, in a newspaper interview, explained that a recent trip to Cuba had convinced him that "American colonization furnishes the best solution of the Cuban problem, and that he is taking up a colonization scheme

that will fill up the island with Americans."⁶⁹ However, the scheme was soon abandoned for reasons that have yet to be discovered.

In 1900, Rosser finally made a clean break with the Democrats and joined the Republican Party. On June 28 of that year, he wrote a letter to Theodore Roosevelt saying "I have hitherto been an earnest worker in the ranks of the Democratic Party, but circumstances have so changed that I can affiliate with it no longer . . . I most heartily approve the administration of President McKinley and shall do all in my power to insure his election to the high office he now holds."⁷⁰ In commenting on this letter the *Norfolk Public Ledger* declared that it was no great surprise since "Rosser had been boxing the political compass for the past several years."⁷¹

Finally in 1905, the Republicans gave Rosser a choice political plum, that of postmaster of Charlottesville. This position he held until his death in 1910.

A few years before his death, General Rosser had a severe stroke and was unable to speak or move about. This was indeed a sad ending for a man who had lived such an active and useful life. But when he died on March 29, 1910, the many cards and letters of sympathy that came to his family showed that he had been remembered and respected.⁷²

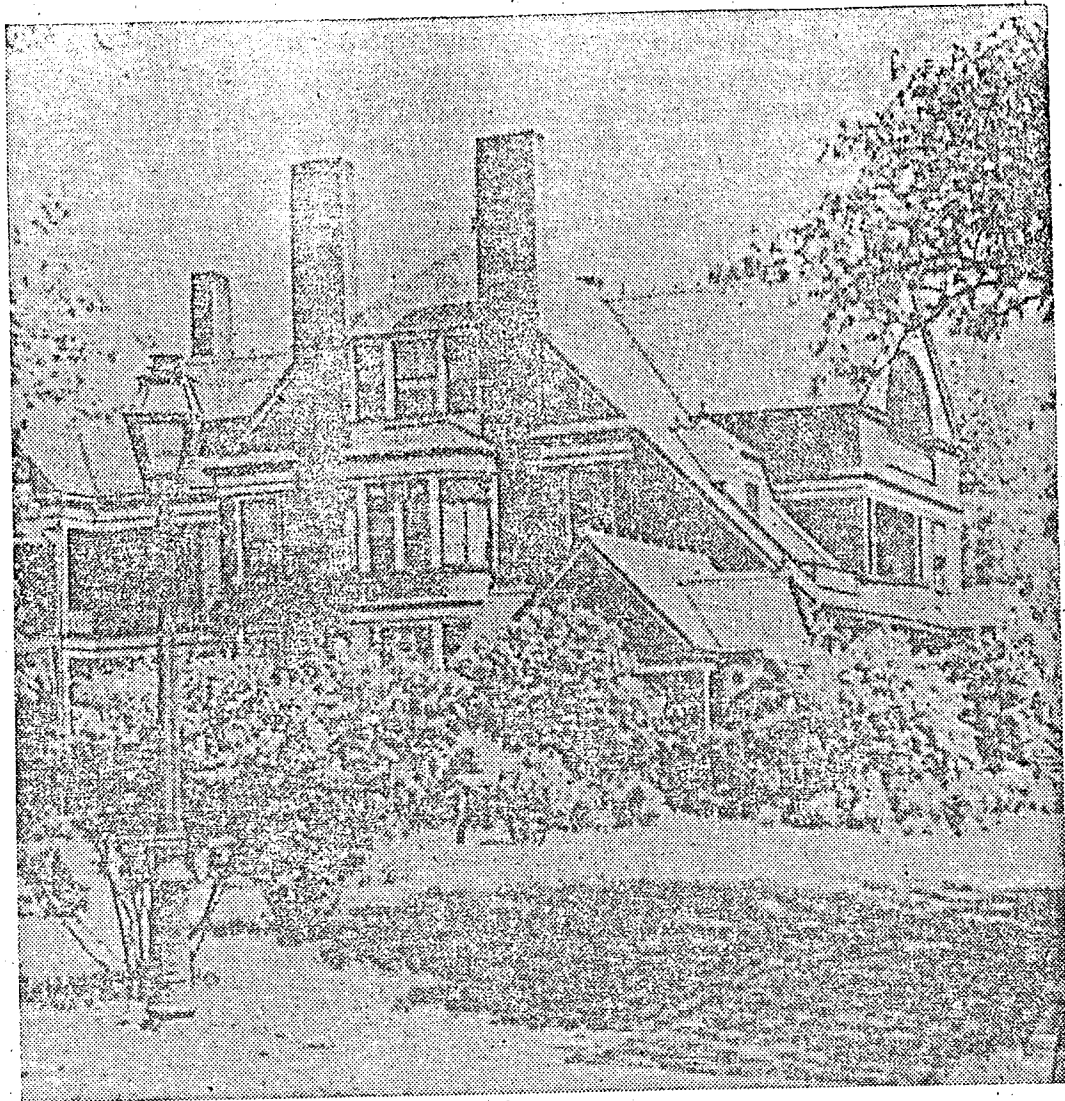
In order fully to understand General Rosser, one must associate him with the spectacular age in which he lived. Because he was very much a product of his time, Thomas Rosser like so many of his contemporaries was brash, quick-tempered and changable. However, he was also energetic and willing to take chances in order to achieve his purposes. During his life, General Rosser lived in many places and was forced to adapt himself to various situations. However, he was never afraid to stand up to what he considered was right, regardless of the odds or the consequences.

Thomas Lafayette Rosser was so many things in his life that one could almost call him "a jack of all trades," succeeding in some of his ventures, failing in others. As a boy he succeeded in adapting himself to the frontier life of Texas. As a man he became a fine soldier, a good surveyor and engineer, a fair businessman, but a failure as a politician. His greatest accomplishment lies not in his glory and achievements as a soldier, but rather in his contributions to the building of the Northern Pacific Railroad.

NOTES

- ¹. Joseph Mills Hanson, "Thomas Lafayette Rosser, Four-Square-American," *American Legion Monthly Magazine* (Indianapolis, ?), Vol. ?, page ?. (A typed copy of this article is deposited in the Thomas L. Rosser collection in the University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville.)
- ². Interview with Margarete Rosser Elliot, October, 1956. Charlottesville, Virginia. (Mrs. Elliot is the youngest daughter of General Rosser.)
- ³. *Ibid.*
- ⁴. Hanson, "Four-Square-American."
- ⁵. Elliot, Personal Interview.
- ⁶. Fargo, North Dakota, *Forum*, June 4, 1950. (This edition carries a special section which discusses some of the original settlers of Fargo, including General Rosser.)
- ⁷. Morris Schaff, *The Spirit of Old West Point 1858-1862* (Boston & New York, 1908), 2.
- ⁸. Schaff, *Spirit of Old West Point*, 37.
- ⁹. Elliott, Personal Interview.
- ¹⁰. Hanson, "Four-Square-American". (Schaff in his book *The Spirit of Old West Point*, tells the same story on himself. Page 85.)
- ¹¹. Fargo, *Forum*, June 4, 1950.
- ¹². Newspaper Clipping, Rosser Collection, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville. (This is one of a number of newspaper articles that are in the collection that have neither date nor heading.)
- ¹³. Schaff, *Spirit of Old West Point*, 164-165.
- ¹⁴. Sam Houston to Thomas Rosser, October 21, 1861. Rosser Collection, University of Virginia.
- ¹⁵. Thomas Rosser to Jefferson Davis, February 27, 1861. Rosser Collection, University of Virginia.
- ¹⁶. Schaff, *Spirit of Old West Point*, 221.
- ¹⁷. Special Orders # 6, Adj. Inspector General's Office, June 7, 1861. Rosser Collection, University of Virginia.
- ¹⁸. William M. Owen, *In Camp and Battle with the Washington Artillery of New Orleans* (Boston 1885), 16.
- ¹⁹. Jed Hotchkiss, "Biographical Sketch of General Rosser," *Confederate Military History* (Atlanta, 1899), III, 658.
- ²⁰. General Orders # 1 & 4, Headquarters Army of Northern Virginia, April, 12 & 28, 1865. Rosser Collection, University of Virginia.
- ²¹. Newspaper Clippings, Rosser Collection, University of Virginia. (These clippings, carry a story written by Thomas Rosser, in which he gives his own story of the war. About 10 pages long.)
- ²². Elliot, Personal Interview.
- ²³. Richmond, Virginia, *Dispatch*, October 19, 1893.
- ²⁴. Hanson, "Four-Square-American."
- ²⁵. Mobile, Alabama, *Evening Times*, May 12, 1866.
- ²⁶. Bradley Tyler Johnson, *A Memoir of the Life and Public Service of Joseph E. Johnston* (Baltimore, 1891), 245.
- ²⁷. Broadside, November, 1866. Rosser Collection, University of Virginia.
- ²⁸. Hanson, "Four-Square-American."
- ²⁹. Fargo, North Dakota, *Forum*, June 4, 1950.
- ³⁰. *Ibid.* (Eugene V. Smalley in his book, *History of the Northern Pacific Railway*, gives the credit for choosing the spot where the railroad crosses the Red River to various men in the front office of the Northern Pacific Railroad Company.)
- ³¹. Lewis F. Crawford, *History of North Dakota* (, 1931), I, 266-268.
- ³². Fargo, *Forum*, June 4, 1950.
- ³³. G. F. Keeney, "Fargo in the Timbers," *Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota* (Bismarck, 1906), I, 318-121.
- ³⁴. Crawford, *History of North Dakota*, I, 206-268.
- ³⁵. Elizabeth B. Custer, *Boots and Saddles* (New York, 1885), 275.
- ³⁶. Elliott, Personal Interview.

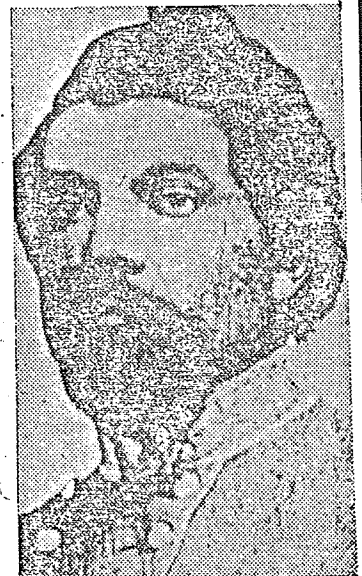
- ³⁷. Fargo, *Forum*, June 4, 1950.
- ³⁸. Hanson, "Four-Square-American."
- ³⁹. Newspaper Clipping, Rosser Collection, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville.
- ⁴⁰. Fargo, *Forum*, June 4, 1950.
- ⁴¹. Elliot, Personal Interview.
- ⁴². R. G. Macbeth, *The Romance of the Canadian Pacific Railway* (Toronto, 1924), 74.
- ⁴³. Joseph Mills Hanson, "Thomas Lafayette Rosser," *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1935) XVI, 181.
- ⁴⁴. Ollen L. Burnette, "The Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Diplomacy of Garfield, Arthur and Cleveland," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1952, 172.
- ⁴⁵. Newspaper Clipping, May 2, 1887. Rosser Collection, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville.
- ⁴⁶. Newspaper Clipping, May 7, 1887. *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷. Newspaper Clipping, May 7, 1887. *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸. Charlottesville, Virginia, *Daily Progress*, June 28, 1900.
- ⁴⁹. Newspaper Clipping, October 23, 1886. Rosser Collection, University of Virginia.
- ⁵⁰. Newspaper Clipping, 1888. *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹. Charlottesville, *Daily Progress*, September 2, 1893.
- ⁵². *Ibid.*, August 5, 1893.
- ⁵³. *Ibid.*, August 19, 1893.
- ⁵⁴. *Ibid.*, August 28, 1893.
- ⁵⁵. *Ibid.*, August 28, 30, 1893.
- ⁵⁶. The Charlottesville, *Daily Progress* quoted various state newspapers which had commented on Rosser's letters. For example on September 2, 1893, it quoted both the *Richmond Times* and the *Petersburg Index-Appeal*. The *Times* said "He has in time past done good and loyal work for the people of Virginia, and we earnestly hope that he will allow neither pique nor the allurements of office to tempt him not to separate himself from his old and tried associates." The *Index-Appeal* said "This is rough language indeed, but as General Rosser has the Congressional bee buzzing about his bonnet . . . it may be he thinks that an appeal to the disaffected Democrats and Populist of his district is best made by a sensational allegiance like the foregoing."
- ⁵⁷. Charlottesville, *Daily Progress*, September 4, 1893.
- ⁵⁸. I have based this statement upon various newspaper articles and editorials about General Rosser before, during and after the campaign of 1893. For example on August 28, 1893, just one month before he began to support the Populist he said, "I know that I am a Democrat. I can say that I will always support the political party of Thomas Jefferson." Also on the 18th of October in a speech supporting the Populists he said that he was a "Jeffersonian and a Jacksonian Democrat." (Both statements can be found in the Charlottesville, *Daily Progress*.) Finally in all his speeches during the campaign, Rosser dwelt mostly upon what a scoundrel O'Ferrall was.
- ⁵⁹. Richmond, Virginia, *Dispatch*, October 11, 1893.
- ⁶⁰. *Ibid.*, October 19, 1893.
- ⁶¹. *Ibid.*, October 23, 1893.
- ⁶². *Ibid.*, October 29, 1893.
- ⁶³. *Ibid.*, November 3, 1893.
- ⁶⁴. Charlottesville, Virginia, *Weekly Progress*, September 6, 1894. In an editorial the *Weekly Progress* said, "Those who knew General Rosser have never believed that the professions he made last year when labouring under the excitement of real or imaginary wrongs was a genuine conversion to Populism." They also quoted the *Petersburg Index-Appeal* who said, "It is reported that General Rosser intends to desert the Populist and return to the Democratic fold. The fates are against the Democrats this year."
- ⁶⁵. Richmond, *Dispatch*, September 15, 1894.
- ⁶⁶. *Ibid.*, September 16, 1894.



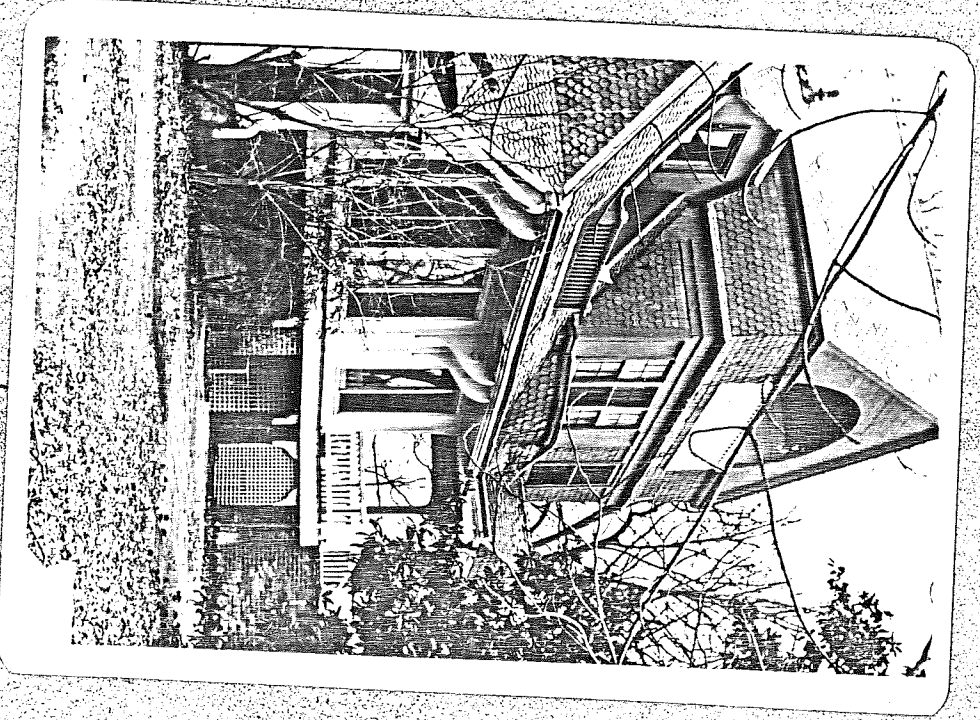
—Courtesy of Mrs. Marguerite Rosser Elliott.

The Name Rugby

Rugby Avenue, Rugby Place, Rugby Circle, Rugby Road. They all get their name from the house shown above. Built in 1850 by Andrew Brown, the house served as a boys' school and was named Rugby after the famous school in England. Maj. Gen. Thomas Lafayette Rosser, who served under Jeb Stuart in the Civil War, bought the home in 1885 and lived there with his family until his death in 1910. Marguerite Rosser Elliott, Rosser's daughter, and Mrs. Elliott's niece, Miss Barbara Rosser, now occupy the home. It has been substantially altered since the photograph above was taken about the turn of the century, and now is used as an apartment house. Gen. Rosser, incidentally, was a friend of Gen. Custer, the Yankee officer who rode into Charlottesville the day the town surrendered in 1864 and who earlier in that year had struck deep into Confederate territory in a planned attack on a railroad line passing through Charlottesville.



Gen. Thomas L. Rosser



OUTSTANDING AUCTION

SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 1984 at 10 a.m.

Preview: Week of Sale, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

and Friday Evening 5 to 8 p.m.

**AT OUR SALESROOM, 218 WEST MARKET ST.
Charlottesville, Virginia**

PROPERTY OF MISS BARBARA ROSSER

Miss Barbara Rosser, of Charlottesville, Virginia, the granddaughter of General Thomas Rosser who distinguished himself during the Civil War, will be selling at Public Auction the majority of her fabulous collection. The items to be sold include property which belonged to the General as well as property which belonged to Miss Rosser's great, great grandmother and great, great grandfather, Elizabeth Lindsey Gordon and William Fitzhugh Gordon of "Edgeworth" (the town of Gordonsville, Virginia being named after them). Also included in the sale is the property which came from "Stonefield," a residence owned by the sisters, Miss Nancy Gordon and Harriet G. Rosser, Miss Rosser's mother; and from "Hartfield," a residence owned by Miss Rosser's great, great, great grandfather, John Austin Hart; (the city of Hartford, Connecticut, being named after him); and the property known as "Rugby," a former boys school purchased by General Rosser and later the home of Miss Rosser and her mother and father. The catalogue will contain as much history of the Rosser family as we have been able to obtain.

FINE 18th AND 19th CENTURY FURNITURE AND ACCESSORIES

including Hepplewhite Bureau Desk and Bookcase, with pull out writing compartment, five drawers and pigeon holes. Base with three graduated drawers, straight bracket feet. Bookcase top with two plain paneled doors, moulded concave cornice. Cherry with Yellow Pine secondary wood. Light wood inlay around doors and drawers. American and probably Piedmont, Va., 1790-1800, 43" W; Childs Slant Front Desk, interior with three drawers over five pigeon holes (drawers repaired). Base with three graduated drawers with beading on drawer dividers. Bracket feet, 26" W x 31" H, Walnut with Yellow Pine secondary wood, probably Va., late 18th Century; Victornia Sofa, tufted back, serpentine front, carved crest, finger carved arms and cabriole legs; Victorian Marble Top Washstands, (several); Dropleaf Dining Table, walnut, six tapered legs (two swing legs), 49" W, probably Va.; Victorian Desk with lift top and leather writing surface, 1870-1890, walnut; Bookcase with two glass doors with six panels each, two doors at bottom with plain panels, walnut, bracket feet with shaped apron, probably Va.; Victorian Marble Top Chests of Drawers (several); Console Table with revolving top, carved pedestal and carved paw feet, mahogany, Empire, 1830; Pine Cupboard, American, mid 19th Century; Post Office Desk; Pair Victorian Gentlemen's Chairs; Tavern Table with four tapered legs, four plain stretchers, pine, early 18th Century; Arm Chair, mahogany, plain backward curved crest and one slat, saber front and legs, upholstered in leather. According to the Rosser history, this chair belonged to Thomas Jefferson; Victorian Beds, walnut, curved headboards (several); Pine Chest of Drawers, bracket feet and shaped apron, 1840 to 1860; Side Chairs, four, cane back and seats, carved

908 COTTAGE LANE

Ruby Manor Apts.

"old" (assessor)

General
bld. by Thos. Rossor
as family home

had been a use before

Barbara Rossor (Miss)
lives in Co.
795-2278

#165

made lots
peculiarly shaped
because bld. between
this + Cottage next door

9 apts.
underground over
fallout shelter! well
('61-62)

R-1



Washington area
owner: Murray Green & Assoc. * (1971)
W-5-0059

purch. from Corinne M. Poole - Parsons + Marshall

orig Thomas L. Rosse

before 1940

red oak ~~tree~~

orig Murray Green
Ann Reiter
Albert Cohen
Sid L. Schwartz
Alvin Rose
Lloyd Zinger

Silver Spring, Md.

they rent it out

unimproved lots around
belong to Dick Munnally

Jas. Marshall
handles rents

c. 1970

