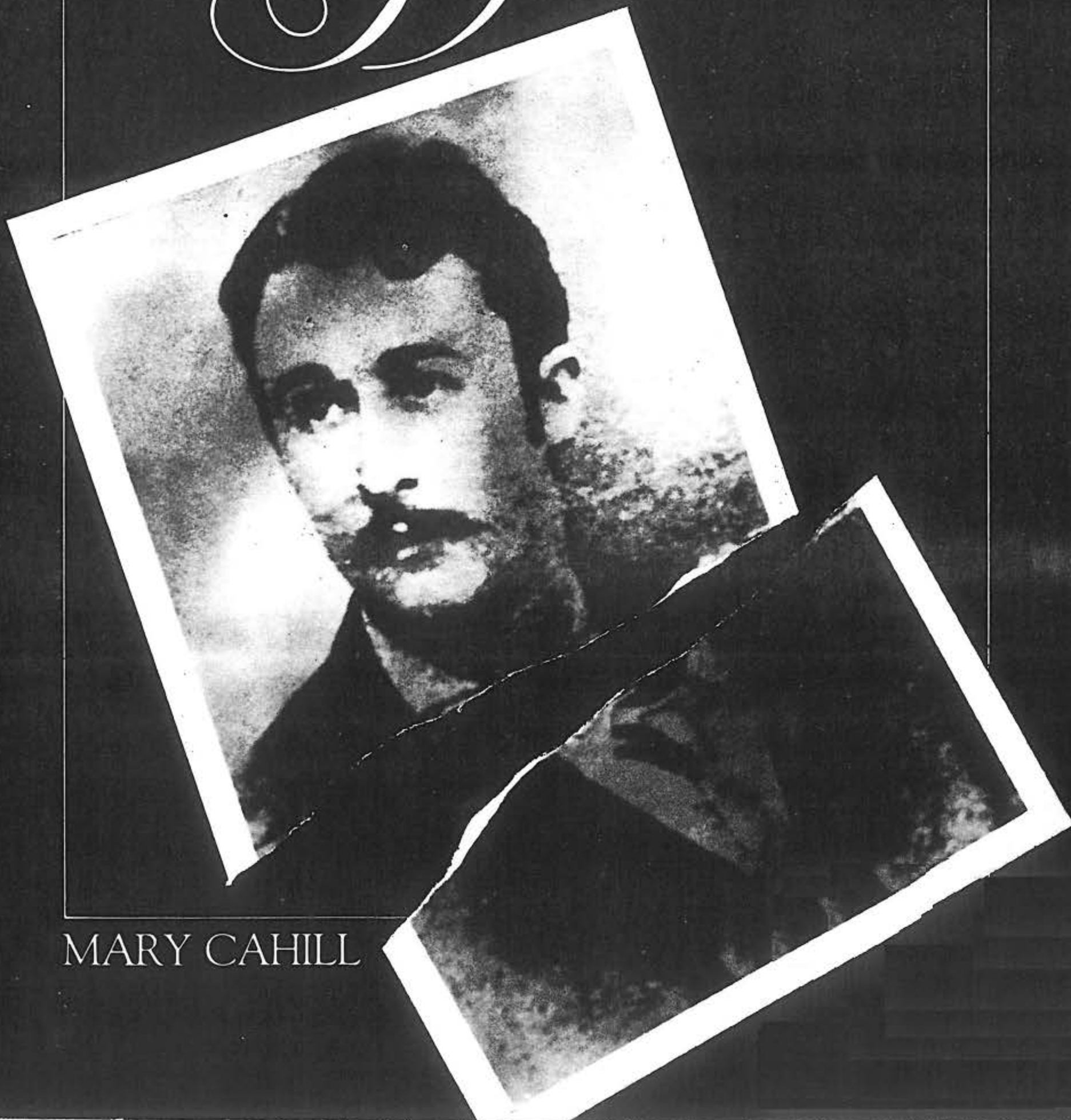


Detius In Danville



MARY CAHILL

Dedicated
to
The Memory Of
Mary Catherine Fugate
Coy Julius Garbett
and
James Wilson Jennings
for their contributions to the preservation
of Danville's past

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Preface

For one hundred years Danville's role in the life of the English composer Frederick Delius has received only minor recognition, the late Gerard Tetley, editor of *The Bee*, Danville, and William Randel, former professor of the University of Maine, being the only biographers of his Virginia period.

This manuscript is written for the commemoration of the Delius Centenary to be celebrated February 24, through March 7, 1986, in Danville and is the result of my intermittent research over a period of twelve years beginning in 1974.

On April 9, 1974, a program of song and slides was presented for the Danville Historical Society and the Music Study Club of Danville in the Fine Arts Center of Stratford College (now closed) with Jean Harper Vernon, soloist, accompanied by Jane Carr, pianist, performing some Delius songs, with me narrating slides. Six years later, March 24, 1980, a similar program was repeated at West Main Baptist Church for the Danville Historical Society.

The unanswered questions of the Delius stay aroused my curiosity and further research was done for the second program in an attempt to discover the real story of the composer's sojourn in our city. Since then still further research has been undertaken. These inquiries were greatly aided by copies of letters between the composer and Danville friends furnished to the late Dean Mary Fugate of Averett College by Dr. Lionel Carley, archivist to the Delius Trust, London, in the summer of 1974 following our program. These letters proved to be a great source of information, and most of them have now been included in Dr. Carley's book, *Delius: A Life in Letters, I, 1862-1908*. Carley is in the process of writing the second volume covering the period from 1909 to the composer's death.

I am indebted to many people in these efforts, particularly to those before me who sought to preserve something of the Delius Danville days and who came forward to offer their clippings and magazine articles for my use. Among these were the late Mrs. A. T. Gunn and the late George Myers; Ellie Holton, who has in her own private library valuable scrapbooks and collections of Danville's past; the late Edwin Booth, who as a North Danvillian and long-time history buff, gave invaluable leads; the late Dean Mary Fugate, who made available the information from Averett's archives and gave permission to photograph the portrait of Robert S. Phifer, and to copy the letters received from the Delius Trust; also to

Francis I. Hunt of South Boston, Virginia; Mary Stuart Fowlkes, former Alumni Director of Averett; Lydia G. Harvey and the late Katherine Rickman of the Stratford College staff; and Wayne and Jane Clayton of Semora, charming caretakers of Burleigh, ancestral home of the McGehees where Delius is said to have visited.

Assistance for the second period of research was given by Juanita Grant and Mary Evelyn Jefferson of the Averett College library; the staff of the Danville Public Library; Avis Willis, Christine Buckner, Mrs. George Morgan; Herbert and Helen Tucker, caretakers of Burleigh on my second visit; Elizabeth P. Armfield of Greensboro, North Carolina, who supplied a copy of the flyleaf of "Appalachia"; and to the late Marion B. Foster, Spartanburg, South Carolina; Frances B. Bullington of Chatham and Jean B. Rice, Danville, daughters of Azile Richardson Beaver. Also,

to Mrs. John Ricketts, present owner of the house on the site where Delius lived while in Danville.

In my latest attempts to discover descendants of Hoppe and Jean Armistead Venable I am indebted to several Hoppes in Richmond and to Virginia Massey, secretary at Duke Memorial United Methodist Church, Durham, North Carolina; Zaleane Angier, Chapel Hill, North Carolina; and Nellie Garrard of Durham. All attempts to locate a descendant of either Hoppe or Jean Armistead Venable have failed.

Special thanks are extended to my former fellow worker, Douglas L. Motley and his good friend, Ray Southard, for making the slides for the first program; also, to Gary Grant who took pictures for the second program and has given his continued support for this undertaking; and also, to Joan Posey and Clara Fountain for photos. Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Proctor, present owners of Burleigh, have been most cooperative and furnished valuable information and assistance.

Most especially I am grateful to the late Gerard Tetley, for without his foresight and interest in preserving the story of a fellow Yorkshireman, a considerable amount of our knowledge about Danville's role in the life of an internationally famous composer might never have been preserved for future generations.

In 1935, it was to Tetley that John Riddick, principal of George Washington High School, turned over a letter he had received addressed simply to the "Headmaster of the School, Danville, Va." written by Clare Delius, the composer's sister, seeking information for a biography of her brother. Tetley could find no one who recalled such a person until he visited the home of Janie Averett, and in her music room she showed him a picture of the youthful Delius which he had given her. "Miss Janie" referred Tetley to the widow of Robert Phifer who was then residing at Burleigh. The professor's wife remembered Delius vividly. She told Tetley how the young man came to Danville penniless, seeking a job, and how her husband befriended him and how he was a frequent visitor in their home, dining with the family and playing with Phifer at social gatherings of friends. Tetley recorded the story in various articles in *The Bee*, in a Richmond paper, and also in an article which appeared in the spring 1959 issue of *Virginia Calvacade*.

Having read Tetley's identification of the Phifer home in which Delius visited as 253 Jefferson Avenue, following the 1974 program I attempted a title search for its documentation, with hopes of having it registered on the State and National Historic Landmarks Register. After a careful search in the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of Danville, I was extremely disappointed to learn that the house designated as 253 Jefferson Avenue was not built until 1895.

When later I determined from available Danville city directories, from a letter of Mrs. Arnold Proctor, Phifer's granddaughter, and from Phifer's obituary of 1910, that the actual house the Phifers lived in was 241 Jefferson Avenue, I searched the title on that house and found it was built in 1890. In 1885-86, the year Delius was in Danville, the vacant lots on which these and four other row houses were later built were the subject of a chancery suit to settle the estate of W. S. Patton, prominent local banker. (See Notes, Chapter Three, Item 13.)

So Delius could not have visited the Phifers on Jefferson Avenue. The Phifer

family was living in North Danville at that time, a fact substantiated by court records (referred to in Notes) and corroborated by the late Edwin Booth, who said older citizens of North Danville had recalled the Phifers living on North Main Street, near the present site of Woodrow Wilson School. The Phifers were not living anywhere on Jefferson Avenue in 1885-86. In 1897 when Delius made his second visit to Danville, the Phifers were living at 629 Main Street (1898-99 *Danville City Directory*). Their first listing for 241 Jefferson Avenue is in the 1904-05 *Danville City Directory*.

Mrs. Phifer, as Tetley mentioned in his articles, was in her nineties when he interviewed her, and while recalling Delius vividly, perhaps her memory of the actual places he visited was not so clear.

Having disqualified the Jefferson Avenue houses from any connection with the composer, I was anxious to locate some building to identify with him, since, of course, the old Roanoke Female College had long gone. Again, while being successful in determining the site where Delius boarded in North Danville, I found that the actual house he occupied had been replaced by another. This was ascertained through various sources. I was able to discover the actual location, 208 Church Street, though neither Delius nor Phifer ever mentioned this address in their letters.

Phifer wrote Delius in 1910: "Mrs. Richardson lives still at the old house where you and Hoppe once lived. Her two daughters are married and have children — One of her sons-in-law is dying with consumption." With this the only clue, and knowing from Tetley's article that they lived in North Danville, I found listed in the 1879-80 and 1881-82 Danville city directories a Henry P. Richardson living at 208 Church Street, the only listing for a Richardson in North Danville. Thereafter, in the 1894-95, 1898-99 and 1904-05 directories appeared Louise V. Richardson, widow of Henry P. I had my widow and after searching various wills, deeds and marriage licenses in the local Clerk's Office (See notes Chapter Three, Item 14) I found the two daughters. One named Minnie had married a Harry Middleton, and he was the one who was dying from consumption. The other daughter, Louise Azile, had married John Lafayette Beaver, who worked himself up from clerk to fireman and later engineer for the Southern Railway. The two daughters and the widowed mother matched up with Phifer's description.

I checked Beer's Map of Danville, 1879, which showed a Richardson at this site. I also viewed Sanborn's Map of Danville, 1899, at the Tobacco-Textile Museum with Sam Price, the director. This map actually describes the properties. Gary Grant was at the Museum at the time and was anxious to accompany me to see if the house where Delius lived was still standing. Much to our regret we knew when we drove up that, by its style, the present house could not have been the one Delius had occupied.

The present owner, Mrs. John Ricketts, invited us in and confirmed what we already guessed: that the original house where Delius had lived had been torn down (in fact, in the 1930s) and that another, more modern cottage had replaced it on the old foundation. But here at this site I felt Delius had lived for most of his days in Danville.

Further verification was needed, and Mrs. Ricketts referred us to others, who

led us to Jean Beaver Rice (Mrs. James Temple), of 175 Westhampton Avenue, Danville. Oddly, I had known Jean Rice since childhood, having briefly lived two doors from the old Cocke-Fitzgerald mansion which her father had bought for his family. The house has been converted to the present Wrenn-Yeatts Funeral Home, North Main Street. When I contacted Jean, she immediately knew the reason for the call. "That's my mother's boy friend," she said. "He was a doll. I've heard her say so many times. I saw his picture in the paper when you gave the program and I told Buster [her husband] that was Mother's friend."

Deeds, wills and other records from the local clerk's office, along with affidavits from Jean Rice and me, were submitted to the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission as supporting documentation for the marker which will be erected at the intersection of North Main, Church and Keen streets and dedicated during the festival. Appreciation is expressed to Jerry Fischer, Community Development Division Chief; and A. R. Daniel, Jr., Director of Community Development and Engineering, Danville; also to W. V. Cousins, Jr., Director of Public Works, for their assistance in procuring and erecting the marker.

This book and the festival are both the outcome of a visit made on March 3, 1984, by Dr. Carley and Professor and Mrs. William Randel to Danville. The visitors were shown sites associated with Delius by Jean Vernon, Gary Grant and me. It was a delightful day, bitterly cold, but with that special flavor that makes lasting memories. Burleigh, North Main Hill, the Phiifer gravesite in Green Hill Cemetery, National Tobacco-Textile Museum with Sam Price, lunch at the home of Dr. Coy Garbett — then president of the Danville Historical Society, now deceased — and his wife Dr. Ann Garbett, followed by a visit with Dean Mary Fugate (who died the following November) at the Averett College archives, then to the Church of the Epiphany, and concluding with a tea provided by Dr. James Jennings (now deceased) and his wife, Mary Lee, at the Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History.

That tour set the incentive for the Delius Centenary, with Carley and the Randels complimenting and praising our city for its charm and beauty, and suggesting we had much to offer for such an event. Since April 1984, a Delius Steering Committee, spearheaded by Jean Vernon, with an assist from Gary Grant, has been meeting and making plans for the festival.

In February 1984, in preparation for the Carley-Randel visit, I typed a manuscript from my notes and programs which I titled *Frederick Delius: His Sojourn in Danville*, giving a copy to Lionel Carley for the Delius Trust in London and one to the Averett College archives. I thought then I was putting Delius "to sleep," but it was not to be. With the persistent encouragement of Jean Vernon and Lionel Carley this booklet has emerged, and if in any way it contributes to the occasion, then I am grateful.

I am indebted to Ann Garbett, professor of English at Averett College, for her professional expertise in proofreading and editing the final draft, and who with Gary Grant and Thomas Shadrack is serving as a committee of the Danville Historical Society for its publication. I am particularly indebted to Lionel Carley, leading Delian authority and author, who provided encouragement and direction in the manuscript's preparation and editing, and, as archivist for the Delius Trust,

gave permission to use certain photos and letters.

Despite the help of so many, I am aware of my limitations as researcher and writer and accept all errors as my own. My hope is not only to preserve this brief story of a part of Danville's past, but by donating the proceeds from this publication to the Coy Garbett Preservation Fund, to help safeguard Danville's architectural gems.

Mary Cahill
Danville, Virginia
January, 1986

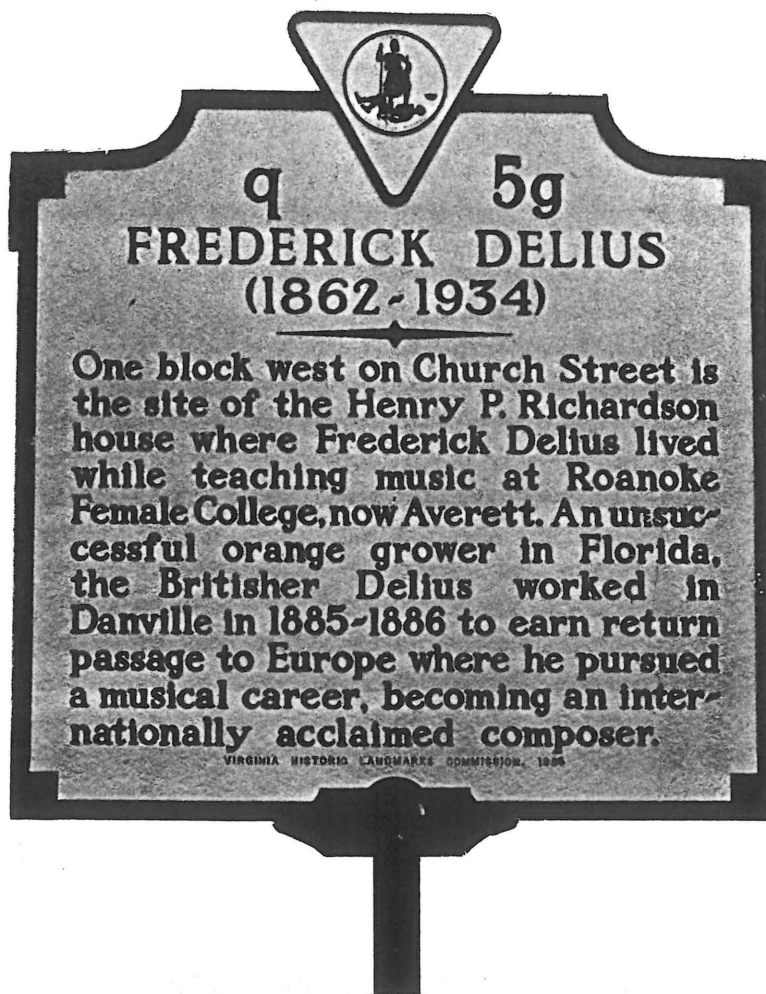


Photo by Joan Poscy

Delius marker at intersection of North Main, Church and Keen Streets, Danville.

Chapter 1

Background

Who was Frederick Delius? Encyclopedias will tell you he was an English composer who lived from 1862 to 1934 and wrote over two hundred works, among them six operas, all noted for their originality and poetic quality.¹ Sir Thomas Beecham has said he can be compared with Richard Wagner, the greatest dramatic composer of all time. The scholarly Professor Arthur Hutchings in his 1949 Delius biography says: "Delius is among the masters," but also reminds us that "The course of musical history would have run almost as it has done if Delius had never been born."² Some music lovers today will tell you his works are growing in popularity as evidenced by recent Delian activities in his native England, Europe, and America. Yearly the Delius Association of Jacksonville, Florida, gives a

festival honoring this man who came to that state to operate an orange grove and discovered that his real ambition in life was to compose music.

Born in Bradford, Yorkshire, the English north country, on January 29, 1862, of naturalized parents — members of a large German colony in the textile area of England — he was given the name of Fritz Albert Theodor Delius. His father, Julius, a wealthy wool merchant brought up in the military tradition of his native Germany, ran his business, his home, and his family with the same strict discipline he had known. Beecham says he was a tyrant, though others treat him more kindly. He had tremendous success in his business and wanted his three eldest sons, one of whom was Fritz, to succeed him.³

However severe this man might have been, he gave to Fritz and his family the best life style possible and frequently hired noted musicians to entertain the other wealthy businessmen of Bradford at socials held in his home. His children were instructed in violin and piano. It was here that Fritz was first exposed to the cultural background he so needed for his musical career. Very early in life young Delius began playing the piano, by ear, and was often asked to improvise for friends and family. At ten, he heard a Chopin waltz played by a friend of his father's which, he recalled later, made such an impression that after hearing it twice he could play it from memory⁴. Although Fritz took great delight in his music, he was also an outdoors lad, riding horseback, walking and playing cricket.⁵

In any event, Julius Delius, the product of a pro-



Courtesy Delius Trust Archives

Elise Kronig Delius

fessional family and the Prussian military semi-aristocracy, often had conflicts with his fun-loving, sometimes rebellious son, Fritz. Each was a strong-willed person, determined in his goals, but each was vastly different from the other. Julius' trade had brought him many material rewards, and he could not understand why his sons were so reluctant to come into it. Fritz — gallant, handsome, mischievous, happy, carefree, adventuresome and gentle — was equally determined to live his own life, and in the end time proved Fritz the stronger of the two.

Fritz's mother, Elise Pauline Kronig before her marriage to Julius in Germany in 1856, came to England after her husband and his brothers had become well established wool merchants. Outwardly, she was of a milder demeanor than her husband, but she was equally dogmatic and incapable of understanding any side other than her own or that of her husband.

She survived Julius by twenty-eight years, dying at the age of ninety-three, but if she ever felt any pride in her son's success she managed to conceal it well. Beecham avers that during the period from 1905-1921 when her son's name was upon many lips in more than one continent, she never, on any occasion, attempted to hear a note of his music.

Elise and Julius had fourteen children; twelve survived infancy, a fruitful accomplishment even for Victorian days. Fritz was the fourth child and second son.⁶ Ernest, first-born of the surviving children and six years older than Fritz, turned his back on Bradford and the wool trade and emigrated to New Zealand to take up sheep farming. This meant that Fritz was expected to take over. Consequently, after attending preparatory and grammar schools, he was sent to the International College, Spring Grove, Isleworth, in Middlesex, not far from London. Following this two-year course he then entered his father's business in 1880. He was transferred to various branches of the business to learn its operation, travelling not only in England, but to Germany, France, and Sweden.

In Sweden he found himself travelling over to Norway where he soon grew to love the mountains and fjords. This was the beginning of a long love affair with this country, and he was later to gain a good knowledge of the Norwegian language. His prolific correspondence reflects his knowledge of French, as well as the English and German languages which he grew up with.⁷ It is said he had a decided linguistic knack, with a good ear for retaining the pronunciation of a language.

But all of this business — all of this was nigh unbearable to Fritz. He was not producing for the business as he should be producing. He wanted no break with his



Julius Delius

Courtesy Delius Trust Archives

father, but he wanted to be out of the infernal wool business. A favorite uncle, Theodor, came to his rescue, intervened and suggested to his father that Delius enter into some other field of business.⁸

Many English families had migrated to Florida, and in fact, advertisements had appeared in Bradford's business places and banks telling of the commercial prospect of orange growing there. Fritz was able to persuade his father to take an option on an orange grove in Florida and was joined in this venture by another merchant's son, Charles Douglas who, like Fritz, had little fancy for the family business.⁹

Chapter 2

Florida

On March 1, 1884, Fritz, age twenty-two, and Charles Douglas set sail from Liverpool for New York; then proceeded by sea to Fernandina, Georgia, then by train to Jacksonville, up the St. Johns River about thirty-five miles by boat to Solana Grove, their new home. The house was a four-room cottage with front porch and outside kitchen; it was set back some fifty feet from the east bank of the river which at this point is so wide it seems a virtual lake.

The St. Johns, one of the few rivers in North America which flows northward, begins just south of Melburne and enters the Atlantic at Mayport above Jacksonville. Navigable for long distances, it was a chief artery of trade in the steamboat era. Though roads were often impassable, packets and river boats made Jacksonville easily accessible.

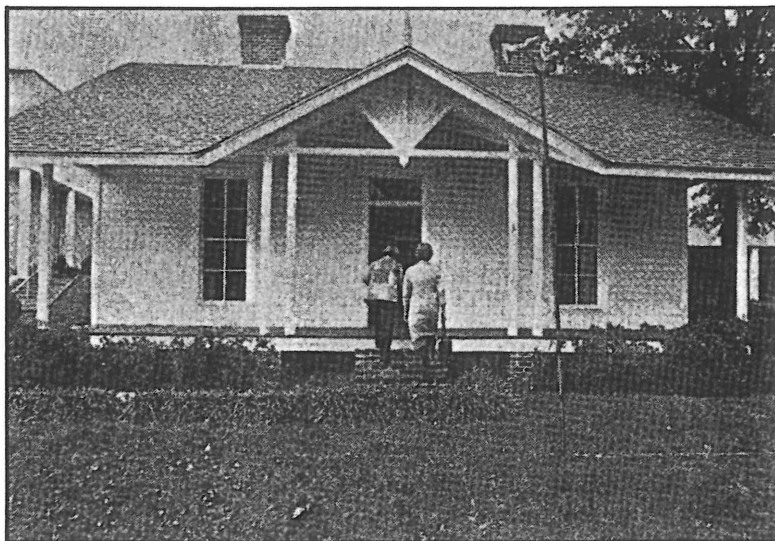
In 1884 this city already had a population of over fourteen thousand which expanded to sixty-five thousand with the influx of winter vacationers. The Park Opera House afforded stage productions with professional musicians and entertainers imported from Europe. The numerous music stores and teachers were supported by the music-loving citizenry, and Delius took advantage of this rich musical life so close at hand.¹

There was a large colony of English families in the area. A close neighbor on the river at Picolata was Jutta Bell, of Norwegian extraction, who was at that time married to an Englishman, Charles Edward Bell, a lieutenant in the Royal Navy. She was distantly related to Edvard Grieg, the Norwegian composer. Jutta Bell encouraged Delius in his music and after she left for Europe in 1886 remained a close friend, collaborating on some of his work.²

Apparently Julius Delius received favorable reports on the operation of the grove, for some five months after his son's arrival in Florida, on August 13, 1884, he exercised his option and purchased the 100 acre tract outright from Guy R. Pride for \$6,500.³

Charles Douglas did not stay long at Solana Grove. The termination of this friendship, according to Beecham, coincided with the making of a new one which Delius found of lasting benefit. As Beecham tells it, Charles had a severe attack of malaria and Fritz took a boat to Jacksonville to summon a doctor. The doctor was out and Fritz decided to wait for his return. Somehow he found himself in a music store where he sat down and began improvising on the piano. While he was there a man who was to change his life, hearing the uncommon sounds coming from inside the store, approached Fritz and introduced himself. He was Thomas Ward, organist for a Jesuit Church in New York City, who was in Florida for his health.

4 The two men became so intent on their conversation and playing that Fritz forgot all about his sick partner, and when he did remember, the doctor had come and gone, compelling him to stay overnight, perhaps with Ward, to take the doctor down the next day. When he did return with the doctor, Charles had sought the aid of a neighbor.⁴ It is no wonder Charles moved out shortly thereafter. He bought land elsewhere and lived many years in Florida, never once divulging his reason for leaving.



Delius cottage on Jacksonville University campus.

This colorful story — who knows where Beecham heard it? — reveals something of the nature of the composer. Though he made many firm and lasting friendships throughout his life, he was certainly capable of showing a lack of feeling.

Thomas Ward spent some time in Solana Grove at the invitation of Delius, who had a piano sent

down from Jacksonville. The two worked well, Ward the teacher, and Fritz the student. Ward taught Delius all he knew about counterpoint, and the composer always declared the only teaching of any real value he ever received was that from this near invalid (Ward had tuberculosis). And Ward, recognizing his unusual musical talent, was probably among the first to recommend that Delius return to Europe and further his study at Leipzig Conservatory, the most prestigious musical school of its day.⁵

While Delius had been soaking up all the romance of his surroundings the care of the orange grove was left almost entirely to his Negro foreman, Albert Anderson, and the other plantation workers. Their singing at their daily chores left a lasting impression on the would-be composer, one he was never to forget. Oftentimes, in the evening, at his request, they entertained him with their hymns and old slave songs, the melodies carrying sweet and clear across the waters. Little more than two years later back in Europe, inspired by the happy hours he spent with these Negro friends, and remembering their harmony and rhythm, he composed an orchestral suite which he called *Florida*.⁶

Fascinated by the exotic beauty of the place, the lush and tropical profusion, the many enticing friends and attractions on the plantations and in Jacksonville, Delius turned his thoughts from all business matters and the orange grove was neglected. With Charles' departure, the entire responsibility for its operation was now on Fritz. Tom Ward had returned to Jacksonville, and Delius, dependent on others for financial aid, seemed to be caught up in a situation he could not handle. But once again fate came to his rescue. His brother Ernest, who, he thought, was raising sheep in New Zealand, suddenly appeared at Solana Grove.⁷

When Ernest arrived, Fritz decided it was his chance to leave. Ernest could now take over the family interests. Whatever scruples he might have had about abandoning the plantation were all resolved. He could now pursue his career, the one he had seen clear through the eyes of Tom Ward.

First, he had to have some money for his fare back to England. Once there perhaps he could persuade his father to finance his studies at Leipzig. The grove apparently was producing no income, for there were a number of unpaid bills. He went into Jacksonville, teaching and even singing in the choir of a local synagogue, eking out a bare living, and after several weeks, leaving the bills still unpaid,⁸ bade farewell to Florida and headed north to Virginia.

The Delius house at Solana Grove was discovered in a bad state of repair in 1939 and purchased by Mrs. Henry L. Richmond, of Jacksonville, longtime Delius enthusiast. Much later it was removed to the grounds of the University of Jacksonville, where it was completely restored and is today used as headquarters for the Delius Association. The actual piano belonging to Delius was located in 1961 in Daytona Beach, Florida, with the attached notation: "F. Delius, Solana Grove after awaiting instructions from Thos. Ward." It is now kept in the Delius house.⁹



Delius piano.

Chapter 3

Danville

By September 1885 Delius was in Danville, a town of 7500: three thousand-plus whites and some 4300 blacks. Located in the Piedmont region of Virginia, two miles from the North Carolina line, it owed its name and development to the Dan River, a source of power and navigation.¹ The cultivation of bright leaf tobacco in the area brought about its designation as a tobacco inspection station in 1793. With the introduction of the railroads and textile mills (now the giant Dan River, Inc.), Danville became a growing market and manufacturing center.

Two decades had passed since those April days of 1865 when Jefferson Davis and his dying Confederate government fled Richmond for the southside. Citizens took pride, and still do, in Danville's place in history as the Last Capital of the Confederacy but wanted to forget the horrors of the Federal prisons, where 3500 enemy troops had died of disease and starvation.²

Post-war Danville was a typical New South town. Unscathed by the war, its residents welcomed citizens of war-torn areas and returned soldiers from the family farms who duly invested their labor, capital and talents in the new industrial experiment. Their investment paid off. New public buildings, churches, colleges, hotels, mills, factories, and homes were erected, reflecting the affluence enjoyed by the community in the 1870s and 80s.

Many of Danville's flourishing businessmen had already built lavish mansions along the course of Main Street, and attractive dwellings appeared on streets to the east, Jefferson, Pine, Green, Chestnut and Holbrook. Today this comprises Danville's Historic District, an area rich in distinguished styles, such as High Victorian Italianate, High Victorian Gothic, French Renaissance Revival, Romanesque Revival, Eastlake, Queen Anne, Georgian Revival, Colonial Revival, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Neo-Classical Revival and Gothic Cottage.³ Many fine antebellum homes, all now gone, graced tree-lined Wilson Street where the old families lived.

Danville could boast of several private schools and two female colleges, both with departments of fine arts and music, and at least two Leipzig-trained professors of music. It also had two active community musical associations, the Gottschalk and the Beethoven. And an opera house.

Danville of 1885 offered Delius no luxuriant, exotic, and exciting lifestyle as Florida had. Victorian not only in appearance but in morals and manners as well, its people were hard-working, enterprising and church-going. Then, as now, much of its social life was centered around the town's many churches. (Today Danville is often called "the City of Churches.") The Old World charm and atmosphere of Jacksonville with its imports of foreign entertainers and immigrants had little place in Danville. But Danville did supply Delius immediate employment and money, a commodity he had little of when he arrived. Somehow he had learned of the opening for a music teacher in Danville, whether through an advertisement or through musical circles in Jacksonville is unknown.⁴

When the budding teacher stepped from the coach of the Richmond and Danville Railroad, a line which had been extended during the war into the Carolinas and Georgia and was to become a part of the Southern Railway system, he was immediately caught up in the bustling traffic of the tobacco district. Everywhere were horse-drawn wagons, buggies and carriages with the sound of horses' hooves striking the cobblestones and of the tinkling brass bells on their harnesses. There were prosperous-looking businessmen, merchants, farmers in for the sale of their tobacco, and blacks moving the hogsheads of tobacco along the loading docks.

Craghead Street was a sight to catch the eye and ear of any traveler. Along the thoroughfare new warehouses, tobacco factories, depots and buildings for manufacturing, prizing and shipping tobacco products stood four and five stories high. Here and there were numerous saloons, restaurants, liquor stores, and even a variety theatre. If Delius didn't care to indulge in a drink, he surely wanted to pick up a cigar⁵ or two and get directions to his new employer's home.

Walking west up Craghead, leaving what today is the City's Historic Warehouse District, Fritz turned up Patton Street and had little trouble finding the residence of J. Frederick Rueckert, second door west of the courthouse. A few feet up the street were the Roanoke Female College (now Averett College), a finishing school for young ladies of the Baptist denomination, and the old quarters of the First Baptist Church, which faced each other on opposite sides of the street, a site then known as "Baptist Hill." (Today the college site is Biscuitville and the church site First Virginia Bank.) It is ironic that this Episcopalian Englishman who had doubts about any faith should find himself in the midst of this Baptist stronghold.

Rueckert, his first mentor, is listed in an 1881 Danville City Directory as a professor of music boarding at the Marko House near the corner of Main and Market Streets. If Rueckert was ever associated with Roanoke Female College there is no record of it, but in later years his granddaughter said that he was.⁶ By 1885 when Delius arrived Rueckert had moved with his family to Patton Street and was advertising pianos and organs for sale "at bottom cash factory prices," at the same time soliciting work as piano tuner and repairman, "capable of attending to every department personally. He is not connected nor interested in any measure with any other house in Danville, therefore, persons should send him a postal card or call at his residence on Patton Street, second door west of courthouse."⁷ (The notice sounds as if he might have been employed elsewhere.) Grandson of the German poet, Friedrich Ruckert, Rueckert

Courtesy Delius Trust Archives



John Frederick Rueckert, Danville music teacher and Delius' first mentor.

had attended Leipzig Conservatory, Germany, and had come from Charlotte, North Carolina. He had two daughters, Blanche and Gertrude, who became Delius' first Danville students.⁸

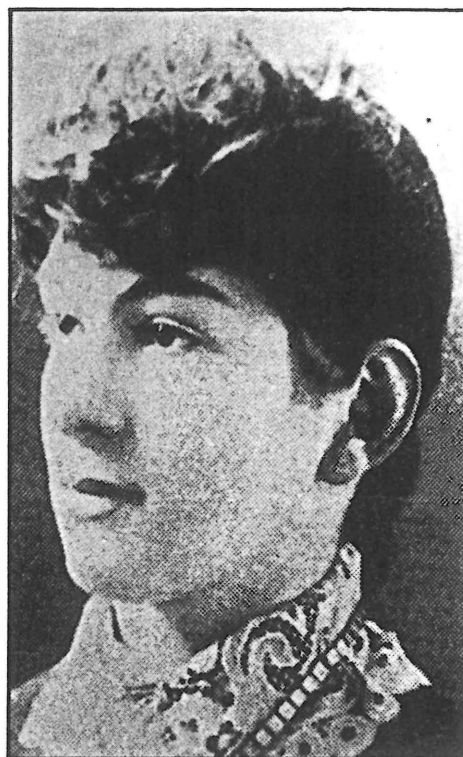
The following notice appeared in the September 27, October 3 and 6, 1885 issues of *The Danville Daily Register*: "Fritz Delius will begin at once giving instructions in Piano Violin Theory and Composition. He will give lessons at the residence of the pupils. Terms reasonable. Apply at the residence of Mr. J. F. Rueckert, or by postal card, care P.O. Box 454, Danville, Va."⁹

In the October 6th issue in addition to the advertisement, comments in the paper's column "In a Nut Shell" read: "Prof. Fritz Delius assisted by the interesting Rueckert Quartette and vocal talent, expect to give some classical concerts during the winter which will be free to all students in music in our midst. They will not only be very enjoyable but all very instructive to those attending them." Delius was certainly off to a good start. He had already been promoted to the rank of professor.¹⁰

The "interesting Rueckert Quartette" series of concerts probably never came to fruition. Delius lived with the Rueckerts briefly but would recall in a letter to Gertrude shortly after arriving later in Europe what good batter bread their cook, Viner, made.¹¹

It was inevitable that shortly after arriving, Fritz crossed paths with Professor Robert S. Phifer, the polite, affable, cultivated gentleman who headed the music department of Roanoke Female College. Phifer made arrangements for Fritz to teach the music students of the college.

He was soon teaching daughters of the wealthy planters and businessmen of the area and found himself an immediate celebrity and social success. Students were captivated by this tall, athletic, brown-haired young foreigner (he was 23), with sparkling blue eyes, soft and kindly speech, a mouth more smiling



Gertrude Rueckert



Blanche Rueckert

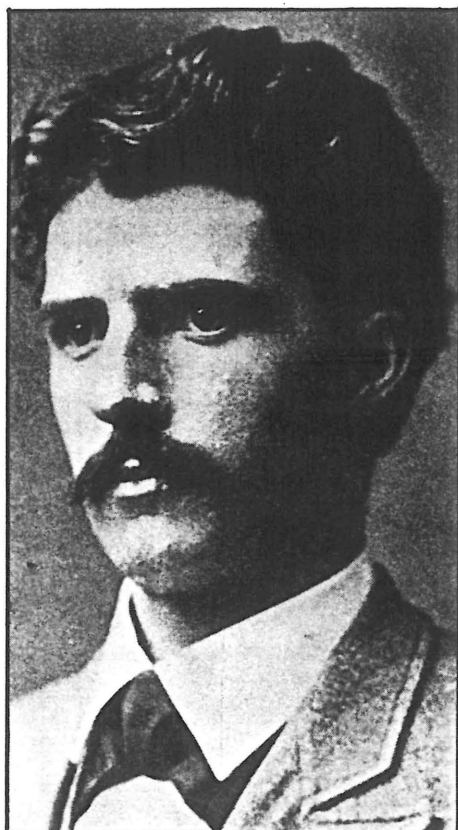
Courtesy Delius Trust Archives





Photo from the Tetley collection. Courtesy Clara Fountain

This is the picture more frequently associated with the composer's stay in Danville. However, it was not made until 1888 by Atelier Hermann at Leipzig. Delius sent Virginia Ann Watkins a copy. By then she was married, tore it in half but could not bring herself to discard it.



Robert S. Phifer taken in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1873 some five years before he came to Danville to head the Music Dept. of Roanoke Female College.

than not, a sunny disposition and a courteous manner. Parents were impressed by his knowledge of music and foreign languages.

While Fritz enjoyed the attention of the high-toned, well-to-do young ladies at the college, for he was certainly a ladies' man, this side of Danville life had no monopoly on him. His free spirit and roving nature soon sent him back to the tobacco district he had seen that first day in Danville. While visiting one of the saloons he met a young German employed there. His name was Frederick W. Hoppe. Everyone called him by his surname.¹²

Robert Phifer was living on North Main Street in North Danville, not far from the site of the present Woodrow Wilson School.¹³ He most likely told Fritz about the rooms available at 208 Church Street, near North Main in the home of the recently widowed Louise V. Richardson. Her husband, Henry P. Richardson, a tobacconist, had left her with a wayward son, Whit, and two daughters, Minnie and Azile. She rented Fritz and Hoppe two upstairs rooms, with board, to supplement her income. Fritz soon realized that he had found himself another admirer. Young Azile, then 5, as she would recall many times to her children, thought he was "a doll," calling him her boy friend.¹⁴

With the proximity of the Richardson and Phifer homes, the common interests of Fritz and Phifer, and the warm and openhearted hospitality of Mrs. Phifer, Fritz became in no time a frequent guest in the professor's home. To add to the happiness were the Phifer children; Wilhelmina, age 10; Thomas, age 7; and the infant Robert, Jr., age 3.¹⁵ Perhaps Delius was reminded of his boyhood days with his brothers and sisters back in Bradford.

Phifer was a name to conjure with in those days: Early music master par excellence, he was in the forefront of developing an appreciation of the classics and promoting the musical culture of Danville. In 1878 he had come to the Baptist college with the highest testimonials from leading citizens of his native Charlotte, North Carolina, where he taught music and was organist at the Second Presbyterian Church and director of the community's Concordia Glee Club. (One wonders if he had known Rueckert in Charlotte.) A benefit concert by the combined city choirs raised funds for a gold-headed cane presented him upon his departure. His reputation followed him to Danville where he soon became known as a "capital teacher, [who] had taste in music of the finest character, and played exquisitely."

And he could speak German fluently.¹⁶

Phifer, ten years senior to Fritz, was born in 1852 into an old established, well-to-do Charlotte family of German descent who took pride in their Revolutionary heritage, an ancestor being one of the original members of the patriotic order of the Society of Cincinnati. He early showed a musical temperament and at age 16 was sent abroad where he remained five years, completing his literary and musical education in the centers of culture of Germany, Italy, and Austria. He studied at Leipzig Conservatory and was taught by the great masters of his day. Among them was Ignaz Moscheles who was the grandfather of the woman Delius would marry.¹⁷

Phifer married Isabel Hunt McGehee at Burleigh, her ancestral home in Person County, near Semora, North Carolina, some twenty miles from Danville. The McGehees had derived a large grant of land from the British crown.¹⁸ Rumors were that the Phifer fortunes in Charlotte had dwindled, and it was a happy circumstance when the offer came for a school so near his wife's family.

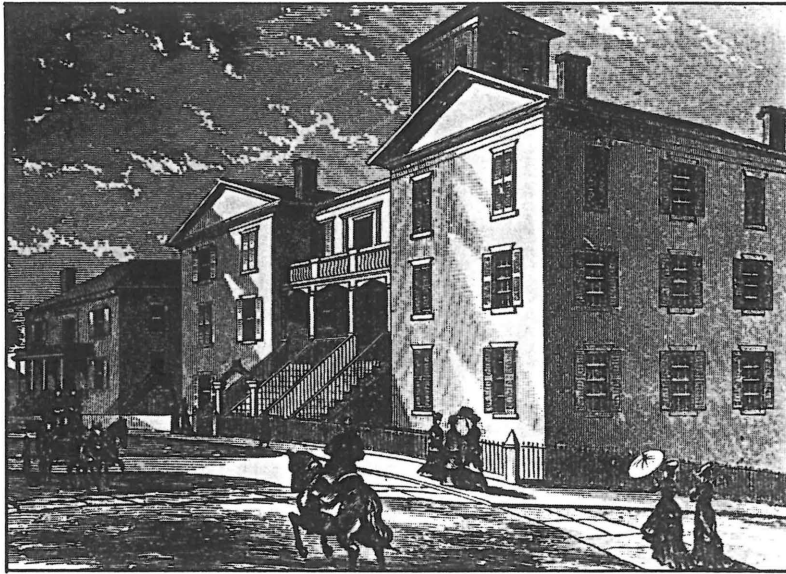
Phifer was not only a master of the art of music but had that special faculty of imparting his knowledge to his pupils. But it was his gentleness and consideration which won their affection and admiration. In addition, he was a genealogist who spent much time in tracing and preparing charts on the family history. He was also an accomplished botanist and entomologist and was not above hanging some favorite nature collection in his living room alongside family portraits, pictures, and the piano and furniture.

Phifer and Fritz were kindred souls, both outgoing, sociable and with many common interests — music, languages, literature, nature, hiking and travel. What pleasant conversation they must have had. And Leipzig — Phifer had been there. Delius, well, he was on his way. It is no wonder they became good friends and

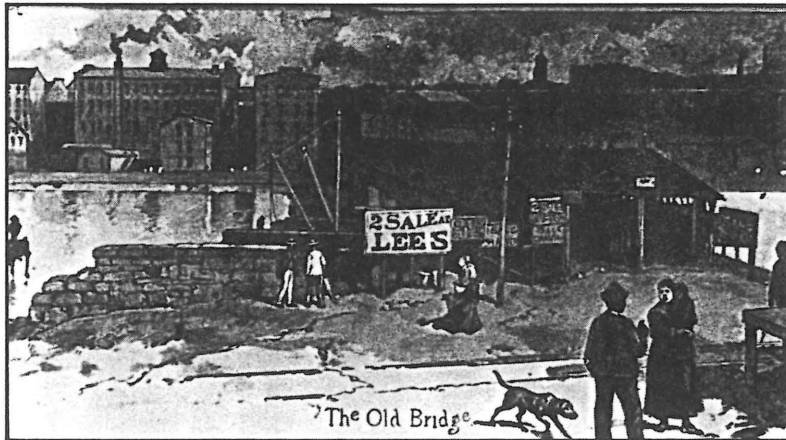


Photo courtesy Mrs. Arnold Proctor

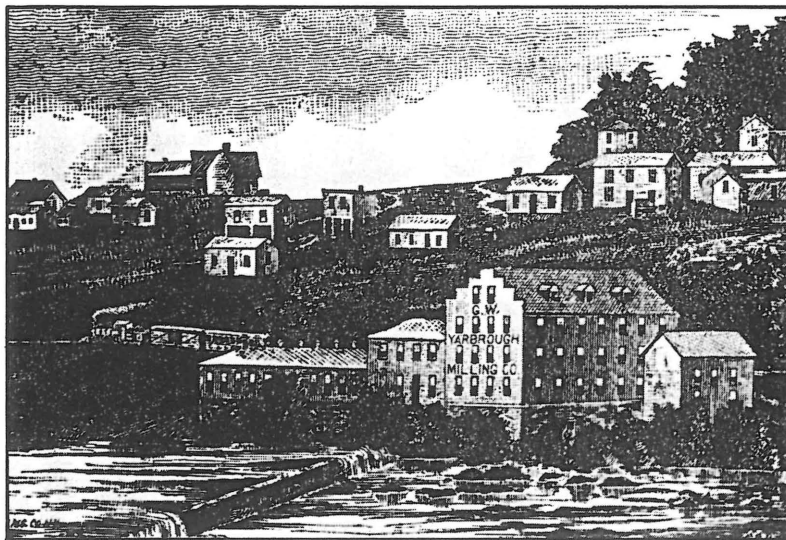
Mrs. Robert S. Phifer and children: Wilhelmina, age 17; Thomas, age 13; Robert, Jr., age 9; and Mimi, age 5. taken in 1893 in Danville some six years after Delius had left for Europe. The Phifer's youngest daughter, Dieudonne, was born in 1894.



Roanoke Female College corner Ridge and Patton Streets, Danville. From Pollock's 1885 Sketchbook of Danville.



Old Main Street wooden free bridge between north and south Danville. Photo taken from northside shows the Riverside Cotton Mills and other factories on left. Large signs advertise auction sales at Lee's tobacco warehouse and others across the river. The bridge was demolished in 1887, the year after Delius left Danville, and replaced by a new iron bridge. From Harper's Weekly, 1887. Photo courtesy Clara Fountain.



G. W. Yarbrough Milling Co. was located on north side of Dan River about twenty yards above the Main Street bridge. It was run from water power from Morotock Lake Dam (shown in front of mill) built by Yarbrough and Danville Water Power in 1883. The train traveling on the hill just above the mill is the Virginia Midland which Delius rode when leaving Danville for New York in the Spring of 1886. It was also the route of "Old 97". The houses occupy what was once the grounds of the old Claiborne mansion which was used as a public school when Delius was in Danville and later site of Bellevue School. Photo from Pollock's Sketchbook of Danville.

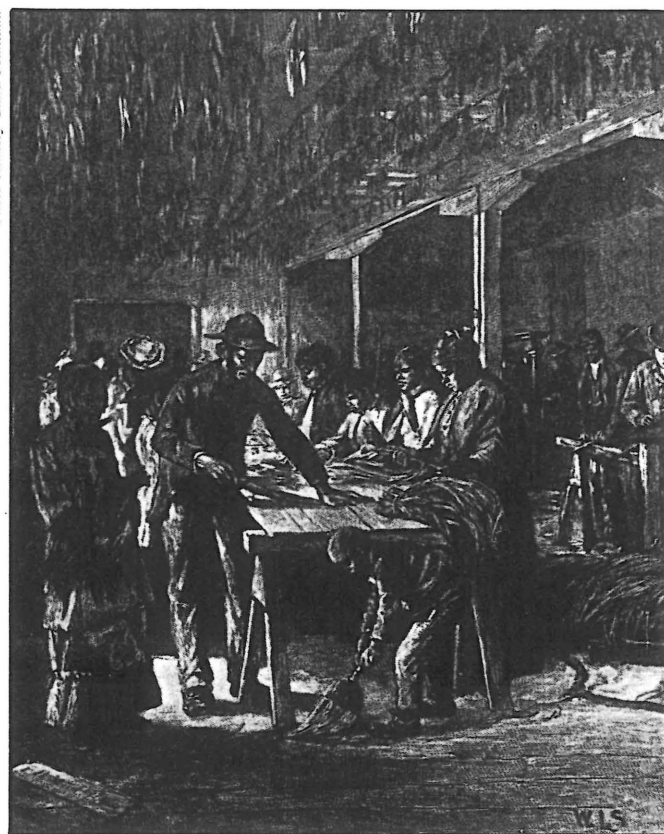
companions. As the autumn turned to winter, Fritz became a more frequent guest in the Phifer home. After-dinner socials were a popular event, when friends were invited in to hear Phifer at the piano and Fritz on the violin. "There was not a day passed," Mrs. Phifer recalled, "that he did not find his way to our house, taking meals with us, telling jokes, amusing my children, and always scribbling music which no one could play but himself."¹⁹

Fritz had the best of two worlds, the cultured, hospitable home of the Phifers and the rugged, rowdy saloon of Hoppe down in the factory and warehouse district. Here the sounds of the spirituals sung by the black laborers in the stemmeries and the loading docks of the mills and factories along the canal close by the river were a particular fascination to him as they had been in Florida. There was no tropical flora such as grew along the wide St. Johns, but the muddy Dan River afforded a backdrop for the same old slave song he had heard at Solana Grove: "Oh honey, I'm agoing down the river in the morning." Its soulful expression of sorrow over loved ones being sold and separated from their families he included in variations of his orchestral choral work, "Appalachia."

Alex Crowder became an acquaintance of Fritz and Hoppe. A tobacconist, he took Fritz to hear the auctioneer's chant at the tobacco sales. When Hoppe wrote of his untimely death, Delius mentioned in a letter to Gertrude Rueckert how grieved he was to "hear of the poor boy's death, so very young. It seems only yesterday that I went with him down to the Warehouses to watch the sales."²⁰

It is most likely that he also met here Colonel Robert Wilson, a tobacco grower and owner of large land holdings. When Wilson learned that Fritz enjoyed horseback riding and was pretty good at it, he invited him out to his home, Dan's Hill, one of the historic Dan River plantations, where he kept a fine stable of horses. The colonel's daughter, Annie, was sixteen. Delius would not forget the family and inquired of Gertrude Rueckert some five years afterwards, "What has become of the Wilsons where I used to ride every week?" Little did he

Photo courtesy Clara Fountain.



Photograph from 1887 Harper's Weekly depicts scene in Danville tobacco stemmery. Delius made frequent visits to the numerous tobacco factories and warehouses where he heard workers singing.

Photo by Joan Posey.



Present house at 208 Church Street, Danville, site where Delius and Hoppe, his German friend, boarded with the Henry P. Richardson family.

Photo by Joan Posey.



By 1885 many impressive dwellings graced North Main Street. Among them was the Italianate frame house at 811 North Main Street built for B. F. Jefferson by Thomas B. Fitzgerald, outstanding local architect-contractor. The house here decorated for the Christmas holidays, has been completely restored.

Photo courtesy Clara Fountain.



This elegant mansion shown here in 1883, but now demolished, formerly stood on the corner of North Main Street and Benefield Avenue. It was the home of Thomas Jefferson Lee, mayor of the town of North Danville. In 1885 he decided the house was too spacious and had Thomas B. Fitzgerald construct a new Italianate brick mansion at 913 North Main Street (now the Victorian Restaurant.)

dream that the lovely Annie would wed Rorer James and become wealthy, he serving as a United States Congressman and owner of *The Danville Register* and *The Bee*, Danville's two daily papers, today owned by their grandchild, Mrs. Stuart James Grant.²¹

North Danville was a village of about two thousand, with a separate municipal government. (It was later called Neapolis.) W. A. Baugh was mayor in 1885 and Thomas Jefferson Lee was president of the nine-man council. The town possessed flour and corn mills, a tobacco box and furniture factory, machine fitting shops, several churches, market gardens, and a public school held in the old Keen residence on the hill overlooking the falls, later the site of Bellevue School, now demolished.²²

On the corner of Keen Street across from the Richardson's Church Street house was the Calvary Methodist Church (torn down for the present Keen Street Baptist Church.) Calvary was in the process of building its handsome new structure on North Main. Tom Lee, North Danville's most energetic and wealthy entrepreneur and a devoted and generous supporter of Calvary, was quite busy during this time, seeing to the construction of the church and his new Italianate brick mansion at 913 North Main Street (now the Victorian Restaurant) across the street. Both were being built by his good friend and neighbor, Thomas B. Fitzgerald, Danville's outstanding architect-contractor of the period and one of the founders and first president of the recently-organized Riverside Cotton Mills (Dan River).

Down the street was the impressive two-story frame Italianate dwelling (811 North Main Street) which Fitzgerald had built for B. F. Jefferson, another prominent and influential northside citizen and also co-founder of the mills and staunch supporter of Calvary Church. Fitzgerald and some of his partners had owned most of the undeveloped land along North Main and adjoining streets and pointed with pride to the development of the street and the numerous substantial houses appearing there.

On his way to visit the Phifers Delius had to pass these projects and homes and became friends with the vivacious Tom Lee, who might just have convinced the young Englishman to play a violin or piano solo at the church one day. Tom Lee died of blood poisoning caused by a carbuncle on his neck shortly after Fritz left Danville, and Phifer wrote, "Tom Lee of North D. died — Left big estate — Widow remarried — money all about gone."²³ How true it was, as records indicate.

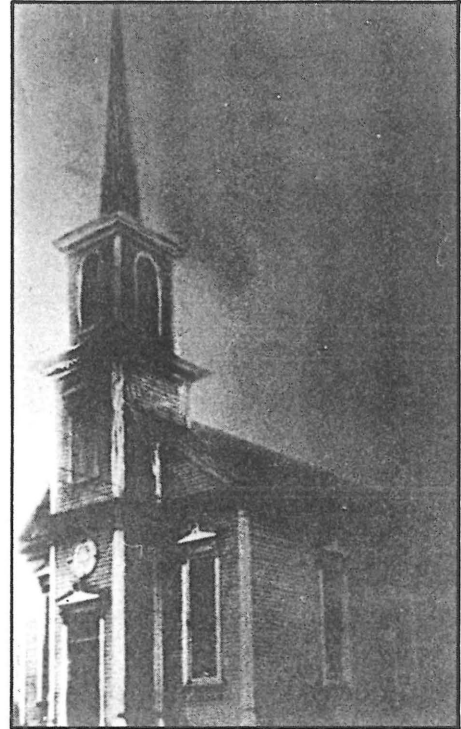
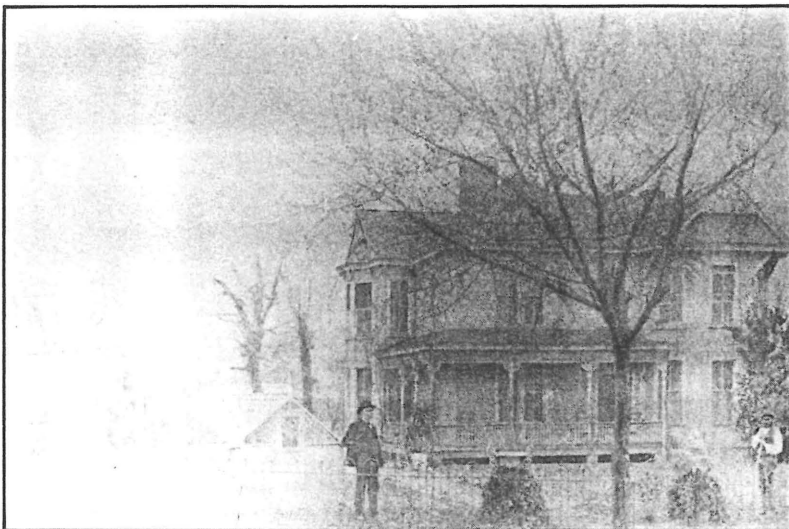


Photo courtesy Avis Willis.

Delius no doubt performed in the old Calvary Methodist Church, shown here, located on the corner of Church and Keen streets just across from the Richardson house, now site for Keen Street Baptist Church.

Photo courtesy Tommy Shadrick.



The flower-garden Phifer referred to in a letter to Delius in 1894 was actually the greenhouse for the H. W. Brown Florist built in 1882. Brown is shown standing in the front yard between his house built in 1894 on the corner of Green and Chestnut streets and the greenhouse.



Photo by Joan Posey.



Dan's Hill, the Dan River home of Colonel Robert Wilson, where Delius rode horseback each week, most likely with the Colonel's daughter, Annie, later Mrs. Rorer James, Sr. Now registered on State and National Register of Historic Places.



Photo by Joan Posey.



Burleigh, home of the McGehees and Phifers, located at Semora, North Carolina. The house of neo-classical design with Greek porticos, is on both State and National Registers of Historic Places.



Always a prodigious walker and nature lover, Delius explored with Phifer and Hoppe the beautiful dells near the Dan River. Later in the spring they took the Averett sisters, Pattie and Janie, on a boat ride up the river to the old House Rock to see the mountain laurel and rhododendron blooming.²⁴

Though a trolley had come to South Danville, none was on the northside yet, and this happy trio must have walked across the old Main Street covered bridge going to and from work, Hoppe to the tobacco district and his saloon, Phifer and Delius up Main Street hill to Ridge Street, a sharp turn down Ridge to Patton where the college was located.

Two brothers, John T. and Samuel W. Averett, for whom the school was later named, were principals at the Roanoke Female College. They and some of their families not only taught here but lived in the school as well, as did Robert Phifer when first arriving in Danville. Pattie and Janie, daughters of John T. Averett, were on the teaching staff. Pattie taught music and Latin and was assistant to Phifer, while Janie, was in charge of the domestic department.²⁵ Neither ever married. Pattie was an excellent vocalist as well as teacher and appeared in many of the school concerts.

John T. Averett was paralyzed in later years. He resigned his position and the family moved to 922 Green Street, a short distance from Brown's Florist on Chestnut.²⁶ Phifer wrote Delius. "The Averetts live up on Green Street near the flower-garden. I often go there."²⁷ Chestnut Street had become a familiar place to Delius because Phifer and H. W. Brown were good friends. Brown had learned his trade in the conservatories and landscape gardens of his native England before trying his luck in America. Just a few years before he had built a new greenhouse on the corner of Green and Chestnut where Fritz and Phifer often visited.

Brown's two daughters, Violet and Myrtle, took great pleasure in recalling the Delius days in Danville whenever they read of various concerts of his music in London in the 1920s in the English papers to which they subscribed.²⁸

Autumn turned to winter, and Christmas came. Delius was surely invited to the festivities at Burleigh. The home was known for its gatherings and parties, with relatives and friends coming from nearby plantations. Built in the early 1800s, the



Photo courtesy her daughter, the late Marion B. Foster.

Louise Azile Richardson, daughter of Henry P. and Louise V. Richardson, shown here as a young girl. She was only five when Delius and his German friend Hoppe boarded in her mother's home on Church Street, North Danville. She later became the wife of John Lafayette Beaver, an engineer with the Southern Railway.

house with its spacious parlors, library, music, and dining rooms on the first floor, and its wide hall opening at either end onto pleasant and inviting porches lent itself well to large gatherings. Its charm was matched only by the gracious hospitality of the McGehees and Phifers, a trait passed down to the present generation.²⁹

Close by the McGehee plantation was the home of their cousins, the Watkinses, whose daughter, Virginia Ann, attended the Baptist college in Danville and was a student of Delius. She made it a point to be there that Christmas. Perhaps Fritz might play his violin or just maybe whirl her around the dance floor. Nicknamed "Gee" and only fifteen, she was already a known beauty. It is said Virginia Ann and Delius fell in love and he gave her a ring, though she insisted years later that they were not engaged, she having three other beaux at the time.

Once, following a piano recital, Fritz had presented "Gee" with a medal for best performance. When Virginia Ann was an elderly lady, she recalled the then well-known composer to her daughter-in-law, Frances Hunt and admitted that she hadn't deserved the medal — she used music in her playing when she had been required to memorize the selection — that he had given it to her because he liked her so much. The medal is in existence today, made into a charm bracelet by Virginia Ann's granddaughter and namesake, Virginia Ann Roberts, daughter of Dr. Lucius W. Roberts of South Boston, Virginia.³⁰ (It is interesting to note that Fritz also gave a bangle with his name on it to ten-year-old Wilhelmina Phifer, the professor's oldest child. Many years later she still cherished it.³¹)

In any event, before the year was over, Virginia Ann and Fritz had broken up. He and "Gee" were from two different worlds. She, admittedly not a very good music student, loved the happy, care-free life she was living and never intended to leave it. He, with his insatiable passion for music, and his determination to pursue his career, had new worlds to see and conquer and had his eyes set on Leipzig. Two years later Virginia Ann married Glen G. Hunt from an old Halifax County, Virginia, family and moved to South Boston where her husband operated a clothing store.

How Delius really felt about Virginia Ann we'll never know. The story of their romance came about from the lips of Virginia when Sir Thomas Beecham visited Burleigh and Florida in the fall of 1950 to seek information for his biography of the composer. Beecham and his



Photo from the Tetley Collection, courtesy Clara Fountain.

Virginia Ann Watkins, nicknamed "Gee", a Roanoke Female College student who was taught by Delius and became his Danville sweetheart. She later married Glenn G. Hunt of South Boston, Virginia.

London Philharmonic Orchestra were touring the United States and appeared in Greensboro. Following the concert, Virginia Ann Hunt presented Beecham with a faded photograph Delius had sent her. She had torn the photo in half but somehow could never bring herself to throw it away and had patched it together again.³² (Delian authorities say the picture was made in 1888 by Atelier Hermann in Leipzig after he returned to Europe. Janie and Pattie Averett were also in possession of his photo.)

The winter doldrums were broken by a January 19, 1886, concert at the Opera House by the Beethoven Musical Association under the direction of Robert Phifer. The account of the event in *The Danville Register* the next morning related that the large crowd was well repaid for its attendance, as it was one of the most pleasant entertainments the association ever gave. Though the audience was disappointed by the absence of the popular bass soloist, Louis Dibrell, who was unable to perform because of a sore throat, Mr. Abernathy did a fine job of filling in. "Mr. Roger Pryor," the account read, "gave a brilliant execution upon the violin, the choruses were well received and the professor excelled, presiding at the piano while directing."³³

Richard Louis Dibrell had come from Richmond with his brother, Alfonso, and founded Dibrell Bros., today one of the nation's major tobacco dealers. He had just married and was making plans for his new home on Broad Street, just off Main. Roger Pryor had pleased Danville audiences for several years. Accounts of his performances described him as "brilliant and artistic"; "he draws an exceedingly sweet bow"; "he has become as much a favorite in Danville as he was in New York"; "brilliant execution"; "of Mr. Pryor's playing one never tires"; and "he played with his usual brilliancy and effect."³⁴

Roger Pryor courted and finally married a Miss Sallie Bain, who died soon after their marriage. Jean Armistead Venable, a Delius student, recalled he had given up his violin for a pianola: "Think of it," she wrote Delius, "& he played the violin so beautifully."³⁵

Pryor no doubt gave Delius some competition. Or possibly Delius' performances were confined to quiet soirees in homes of friends and acquaintances and perhaps at a church or two. His strange improvisations would have found little favor in a town so devoted to the traditional classics and popular songs. Or perhaps he was simply not as good a performer



Photo from the Tetley Collection, courtesy Clara Fountain.

Wilhelmina Phifer as a young lady. She was only ten when Delius was in Danville. She later married Josiah Patterson Giles, a silk salesman from New York.

ROANOKE FEMALE COLLEGE, CONCERT,

Friday Evening, March 5th, 1886.

To Commence at Eight O'clock.

PROGRAMME

Jubilee Overture. Op. 59. Weber.
(Arranged for two pianos, eight hands.)

1ST PIANO.

MR. PHIFER.

MISS L. MOORE.

2ND PIANO.

MISS AVERETT.

MISS L. LIPSCOMB.

Songs. Franz.

Spring Night in Norway. Op. 48, No. 6.

Parting. Op. 11, No. 1.

The Spring of Love. Op. 14, No. 5.

MISS P. B. AVERETT.

Concerto for Violin. Op. 64. Mendelssohn.

Allegro molto vivace. (Last movement.)

MR. FRITZ DELIUS.

Trio for Female Voices: "The Dragon Fly." Burgiel.

MISSSES S. BARNARD, V. WINSTON and P. B. AVERETT.

Symphony in C Major. Op. 21. L. van Beethoven.

(Arranged for two pianos, eight hands, by Ang. Horn.)

Adagio Molto; Allegro con Brio.

1ST PIANO.

MR. R. S. PHIFER.
MISS N. HARRIS.

2ND PIANO.

MISS P. B. AVERETT.
MISS E. FITZGERALD.

Andante Cantabile con Moto.

MR. PHIFER.
MISS M. WISEMAN.

MISS AVERETT.
MISS M. CORBIN.

Menuetto e Trio.

MR. PHIFER.
MISS M. AUDUS.

MISS AVERETT.
MISS A. WINSTON.

Adagio; Allegro Molto e Vivace.

MR. PHIFER.
MISS J. WATKINS.

MISS AVERETT.
MISS L. WOOD.



as the acclaimed Mr. Pryor.

The Opera House was located in the 300 block of Main Street where the Boswell building (now Wise-Hundley) stands today. It had a seating capacity of 750, carried a fair amount of scenery, and rented for \$40.00 a night. Seats were sold at Wood's Cigar Store.³⁶ Some of the town's gossipy characters had probably told Fritz about the racial disturbance known as the Danville Riot which had occurred within fifty yards of the Opera House in November 1883 resulting in the shooting of several Danvillians, both black and white.³⁷

During the bitterly cold days of the winter of 1886, although he must have read of the freeze extending into Florida, Delius gave little thought to his orange grove. Florida was far behind him. Danville was just a sojourn. His goal was now Leipzig. Winter passed swiftly. His savings were growing. Soon he would have enough money for the fare home.

On Friday evening, March 5, 1886, Fritz appeared in concert at the Roanoke Female College with Phifer, Pattie Averett, and some of their students in a program of piano, violin and song. It is the only event in which Delius participated in Danville in 1885 or 1886 of which there is any record: His selection was the last movement of Mendelssohn's Concerto for Violin, Opus 64.³⁸

Sometimes after his teaching was over for the day Fritz accompanied Phifer to the Church of the Epiphany where they visited Dr. George W. Dame, the longtime rector. Both Phifer and Dame were members of the Roman Eagle and Knights Templar Masonic Lodges. (Phifer was a member of the First Presbyterian Church just across the street, where Dr. Alexander Martin was pastor.) Delius could not help admiring the kindly old man with the long white beard who was beloved by everyone who knew him. Though Fritz was becoming more and more of a disbeliever, the beautiful church must have reminded him of his youth. How devout his parents were and how strict they had been in making the children observe all the holy days. Upon the insistence of Dr. Dame and out of deference to his parents, he would perhaps consent to a solo at a church service. Much later Phifer would write Fritz, "I am the Organist at the Episcopal Ch. & have a fine choir (the best in town) Mrs. Jean Armistead Venable is Organist at the Pres. Church."³⁹



Photo courtesy Zuleane A. Angier, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Jean Armistead Venable shortly before her death from an automobile accident in 1928. A Danville student of Delius, after her marriage to Samuel Woodson Venable, she moved to Durham, North Carolina where she was for many years organist at Duke Memorial United Methodist Church.

Delius would remember Jean Armistead well. He had taught her harmony and counterpoint. She was not only charming but talented, gifted as a soloist, pianist and organist. She lived with her widowed mother and two sisters, Mary and Kate, not far from the college on Tazewell Street (now part of Ridge Street).⁴⁰

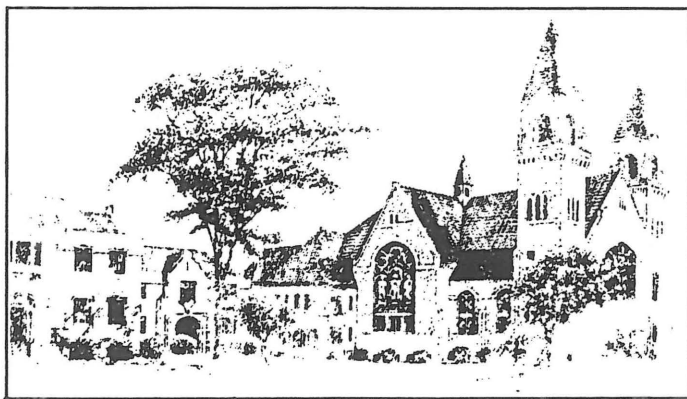
To Jean Armistead, Fritz confided his ambitions of studying at the most esteemed music school in the world, Leipzig, and becoming a world-renowned composer. She made him promise that he would let her know when his dreams came true. He loaned her his copy of Cherubini's book on orchestration. Before leaving he asked for it, she searched but could not find it, but in moving to Durham after her marriage somehow discovered it.⁴¹

Jean Armistead was 19 in 1886. Her marriage to tobacconist Samuel Woodson Venable came about two years later and she lived at 622 Holbrook Avenue with his parents, Paul C. and Agnes Gray Venable. Paul C. Venable, an uncle of A. B. Carrington, Sr., long-time executive of Dibrell Bros., was president of Venable Tobacco Co. and at one time president of the Danville Tobacco Association. S. W. Venable, Jean's husband, worked for his father and moved to Durham when the firm relocated there, later becoming its president.⁴²

After moving to Durham, Jean Venable continued her musical interests, teaching and serving as organist at a large Methodist Church which today is known as Duke Memorial United Methodist Church, so named in honor of Washington Duke, founder of the church and patriarch of the Duke family. Tobacco baron extraordinaire, Duke founded W. Duke and Sons which was forerunner to the multi-million dollar enterprise of the American Tobacco Co., founded by his son, James Buchanan Duke. James Duke's gift of forty million dollars in 1924 helped create Duke University.

Jean Venable and her family became prominent citizens of Durham. She mingled with the local millionaires, telling Delius in a letter of 1909 that they were "nothing like so black as they are painted." She was a faithful Sunday school teacher and during World War I entered wholeheartedly in the war effort. She lost a son, First Lt. Paul C. Venable, who was killed July 18, 1918, before the battle of Soissons in France. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. A plaque to his memory is in the narthex at Duke Memorial Church.

Her own tragic death ten years later, on November 7, 1928, resulting from an automobile accident while she was on the way to a church



Duke Memorial United Methodist Church, Durham, North Carolina.

conference, shocked and grieved the Durham community.⁴³ Her two letters to Delius which are preserved in the Delius Trust Archives in London are a delight to read, revealing the charm and talent which made her a beloved figure.

Fritz's Danville days were fast coming to an end. The Baptist College was preparing for its commencement. On June 1, 1886, the students gave a final concert at the Opera House. Among the participants was Miss "Gee" Watkins who played Hungarian Rhapsody No. 4 by Liszt.⁴⁴

A few days later the town was shocked to watch the Opera House go up in flames. An account appeared in the magazine *Freund's Music and Drama*: Danville, Va. June 5, 1886. By the loss of our opera house, our citizens have been denied almost every pleasure derived from music and the drama. The greatest musical event of the season was the concert of the Roanoke Female College, which was given on 1st inst. The musical department of this institution still ranks above all others in this section and equals any in the South. Every selection rendered was a success, instrumental and vocal. Notable among the latter was a solo by Miss Vernie Winston, a young soprano of marked ability and richness of voice. Professor Phifer still has charge of this department. T.M.⁴⁵

Whether Delius was here when "Gee" Watkins gave her final concert and when the Opera House burned down is not known. By then he had saved enough money for his passage home; and with his father's having agreed to finance his studies at Leipzig, he was anxious to be on his way.

Phifer and Hoppe saw him off at the old railroad depot in North Danville where he boarded the train to New York.⁴⁶ (The railroad station was on River Street, just off North Main about where the present Sasser Sign Co. is today. It was the terminus for the Virginia Midland Railway and the same station where "Old 97" stopped when coming into Danville from Lynchburg.)

Delius sailed from New York on the *Aurania* in June 1886, made a brief visit to his family in Bradford, and then continued to Leipzig.⁴⁷

Chapter 4

Leipzig and France

Delius headed for Germany and Leipzig in the summer of 1886, and it is to his credit that he continued to keep his old Danville friends in mind, writing to various ones of them from time to time.

He wrote Gertrude Rueckert, his former student, in December 1886 describing the excitement of Leipzig where, he wrote, he had been for the past five months and where he planned to stay for three years.¹ His ears were ringing with the rhythms of America, and he was finally going to learn how to let those strains speak to the Old World.

Leipzig was the literary and musical center of the world at that time. Its streets had such names as Beethovenstrasse, Haydnstrasse, Schumannstrasse, Mozartstrasse.² The teaching staff at the conservatory boasted the most excellent of the day, and as Delius wrote Miss Rueckert, the world's greatest artists performed nearly every night in the very fine opera house. The conservatory enrolled students of all nationalities, and Delius made many important friendships, mostly with Norwegians.

Despite all the excitement Delius settled down to his academic courses. But it was not long before he began to realize he was learning little that Tom Ward had not taught him in Florida. Instead of attending his classes he spent more and more time composing. His studies did not matter but always the music did.

During this time Delius wrote his first orchestral suite, *Florida* (1886-87), which was first performed early in 1888 in a large and celebrated restaurant for the price of a barrel of beer.³ Grieg, the Norwegian composer, who had come to Leipzig to study for the winter, was among those who were there to hear it, and he found the young Englishman's work brilliant and full of resourcefulness.

Delius did not stay at Leipzig the three years as he had planned. At the end of the spring of 1888 his studies there came to an end, and he returned to Bradford. Again his life was at a crossroads. Grieg was in London for a concert and when he dined with Fritz and his father, the great Norwegian convinced the older Delius of his son's true genius.

While Julius Delius, a devotee of the classics, had entertained musicians in his home and had agreed for Fritz to study at Leipzig, he still had reservations about a gentleman of his class making music his life's work — it was just for spare-time pleasure. Perhaps Fritz should return to the family business or to America. But Grieg convinced the elder Delius otherwise. So an allowance was once again provided for Fritz, who left England in May to settle in France. It was to become home for the rest of his life.⁴

At first he stayed with his Uncle Theodor and explored Paris and its surroundings with great thoroughness. Later he moved into a small rented cottage in a village thirty-five minutes by train from Paris. This arrangement afforded the quiet needed for composing yet gave him proximity to Paris for its musical delights and worldly pleasures.⁵

These new arrangements did not prevent him from remembering his Danville

friends and he and Gertrude Rueckert kept in touch until her marriage in 1890. In December 1889 she received a greeting card from Croissy (Seine & Oise), wishing her a happy Christmas and stating that he had been living near Paris for one and a half years. He inquired of her music, recalling her rendition of "Whispering Wind." He also mentioned the possibility of visiting America the next year. The card mailed to Danville was forwarded to her new address in Washington, D.C.⁶

Between December 1889 and the following March Gertrude wrote Delius three letters which he chose not to answer. It is no wonder, for

though he spent long hours at his work, he was steadily increasing his acquaintances in the artistic community and his social life was likewise keeping him busy.

Finally, after receiving an invitation to her wedding to a Mr. Dodson, he did write on March 7, 1890 wishing her happiness and a long life, adding: "I need not wish Mr. Dodson happiness, as he is sure to be happy with you." He informed her he could not yet pay America another visit as he had planned, for his work kept him from traveling much. Hoppe, his boarding partner in Danville, he stated, had just written him. Hoppe was in Lynchburg and doing "very well, it appears."⁷ Hoppe was then manager of Anheuser-Busch Brewing Co. in Lynchburg, Virginia. He was later to move to Richmond where he was manager of the same company.⁸

Some six years later Delius was still unmarried, still being supported by his father and other relatives who were now suffering financial problems, still earning little from his compositions and even less recognition. His health was not good. His Bohemian style of living had taken its toll.⁹ He was working rather hard on the world's first Negro opera, *Koanga*, which he completed early in 1897, almost forty years before Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*.

One day in the early part of 1896, rather disgruntled with his failures, he was invited to a friend's house for dinner where he met a tall, full figured, somewhat plain, shy girl. She was very unlike the many women of various nationalities, sophisticated and worldly, with whom he had been associating. She found herself readily talking with Delius about modern art, acknowledging she was a painter herself, a student in Paris and living with her mother there. Her name was Helene Sophie Emilie Rosen.

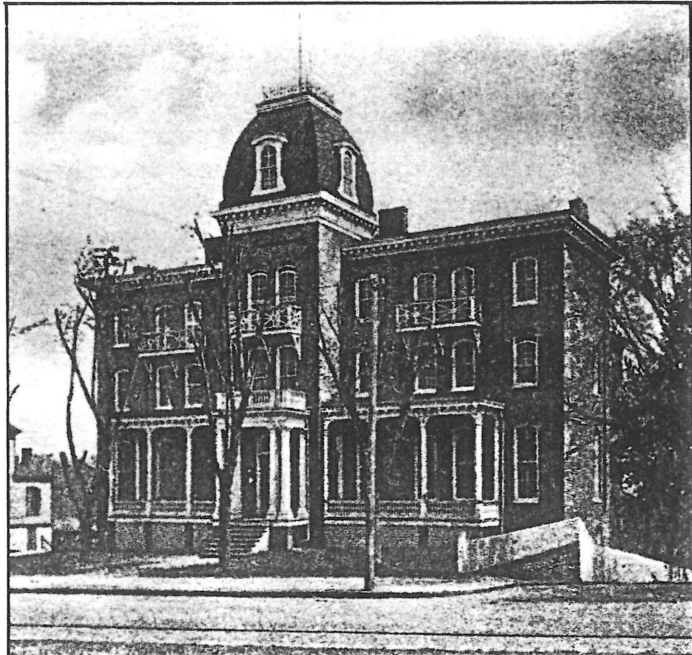


Photo courtesy Clara Fountain.

Delius and his friends, Halfdan Jebe and Princess de Cystria, gave a concert on January 30, 1897 at Danville College for Young Ladies, later known as Randolph Macon Institute and later Stratford College. Though college is closed, the structure still stands.



Courtesy Delius Trust Archives

Delius in 1897. Cerhardi/Steinweg Collection.

Her friends called her Jelka.¹⁰ She and Delius had many common interests. They loved the same books and poetry, and she had grown up with musicians and writers all her life. She was twenty-six and he was thirty-four.

Her father, a Jew, had been a German diplomat. A brother had married into the family of the novelist Charles Dickens, and her mother's father, he discovered, was none other than the famous pianist, Ignaz Moscheles, whom he had heard as a youth and who, of all things, had taught his Danville friend, Robert Phifer, at Leipzig Conservatory.¹¹ Moscheles had been dead now almost sixteen years. Delius thought how much Jelka resembled her grandfather's portrait which hung in the Conservatory which Moscheles had headed.¹²

Jelka and Delius spent many delightful hours together that spring, going for long walks, and visiting Grez-sur-Loing near Fontainebleau where she often went to paint. He played his songs for her and she good-naturedly received his criticisms of her paintings. It was quite obvious she was in love with him.¹³ Delius enjoyed her company but had no idea of marrying anyone. His social life in Paris was a great source of pleasure, especially his relationship with one Princess de Cystria.¹⁴

After a summer in Norway



Photos from Tetley.



Though these pictures show the parlor and music room of the Phifer home on Jefferson Avenue where the family moved in the early 1900s, no doubt the furnishings and musical instruments belonged to the family when Delius visited them on Main Street in 1897. Top picture of parlor shows music stand which was donated to Averett College by Mrs. Arnold Proctor. The Phifer fox terrier is on the plush settee; the portrait is of Isabelle Cunningham, a relative of Mrs. Phifer who was known throughout Virginia and the Carolinas for her charm and beauty. The walls are decorated with pictures of buildings and scenes of Europe where Phifer studied.

In the music room is the piano bought by Mrs. Phifer and built especially for the professor by a Boston, Mass. firm. It is the only article of personal property mentioned in the Professor's will and was bequeathed to his wife who sold it after his death to someone in Semora, N.C. for \$50.00. The metronome on the bookcase was also donated to Averett College by Mrs. Proctor. On the piano are the violins and above the piano in the picture there appears to be the tip of a hornet's nest, no doubt retrieved by the professor on one of his numerous field trips.

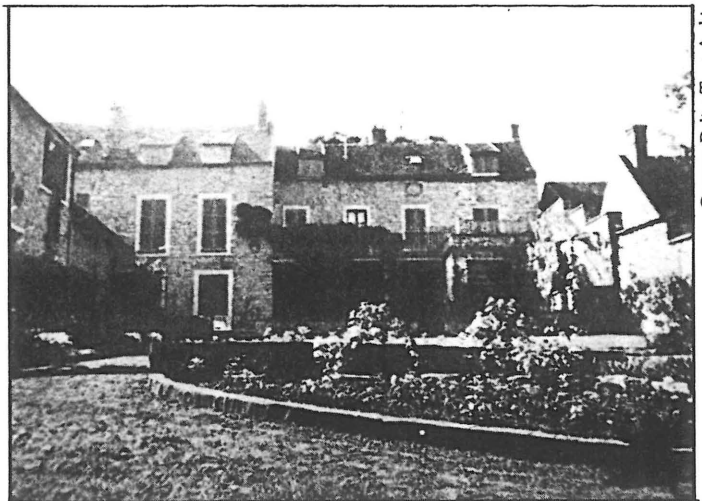
he was back at Bradford for Christmas, from there he wrote his Florida friend, Jutta Bell, who by now was separated from her husband and was living in Paris: "I am sailing on the 9th of January for New York en route for Florida where I intend spending 2 months to settle up that unfortunate grove business — I have chosen the 2 worst European months for my stay over there & shall take my work with me. A first rate Violinist is coming with me & we may give a few recitals."¹⁵

Many Delian biographers attempt to give reasons other than the "unfortunate grove business" for his return to America after twelve years' absence: a weariness of his life in Paris, especially the attentions of the Princess; a need to renew the creative flame aroused by those first impressions when he heard the Negroes singing in the romantic and lush surroundings of Solana Grove; pressure by his family to return to Virginia, the only place he had ever made a living; and perhaps a desire to make an American concert tour. Whatever his reason, although he enjoyed the company of the sympathetic, devoted Jelka, in January 1897, he took off once more to America.

The first rate violinist Delius had mentioned in his letter to Jutta Bell was Halfdan Jebe, a Norwegian composer and violinist who spent most of his life wandering throughout the world with his fiddle. A good-looking young man, his speech and habits could be outrageous and obscene, as reflected in his correspondence with Delius. When their boat was well out to sea they discovered the presence of the Princess de Cystria who, unbeknown to Delius, had booked passage on the ship. Well, it would be a lark.

In New York Delius contacted an acquaintance, the impresario Victor Thrane who had been in Europe in search of talent for American audiences, introducing Jebe as Cyril Gray and the girl as a Russian princess. It is doubtful the threesome arranged for any tours with Thrane, but he did entertain them and introduced his family, writing later on that year to Delius that he had "a great time" satisfying the family's curiosity about the two.¹⁶

On his way to Florida Delius and his friends stopped off to see Phifer in Danville. How might he explain this unusual pair to the good people of Danville? A completely new set of names was arrived upon as they rode the train. When they arrived in Danville Jebe was introduced as the violinist Lemmanoff (could it have been Lemonoff for the citrus industry?) and the princess as the singer, Madama Donodossola (perhaps borrowing a few notes from the musical scale, or as Lionel Carley suggests, for a town in Italy called Domodossola). The trio was making a musical tour of the country.



Delius home at Grez-sur-Loing, France

Courtesy Delius Trust Archives.

APPALACHIA

VARIATIONEN
ÜBER EIN ALTES
SKLAVENTLIED
M. SCHLUSSCHOR
FÜR GROSSES
ORCHESTER

To my old, Daniel H. Friend

Robert S. Piifer
from

Frederick Delius

Paris sur Loire
Seine & Marne

France

MUSIK VON

FREDERICK DELIUS

Jan 25 #1910

KLAVIERAUSZUG VON OTTO SINGER

VERLAG H. W. HANSEN VON PHILIPPSBURG
HARMONIE
VERLAG FÜR MUSIK UND LITERATUR
BERLIN, W.

Courtesy Elizabeth P. Armfield, Greensboro, North Carolina

Front cover of score of *Appalachia* which Delius sent to Robert S. Piifer in January 1910.

Delius discovered the Phifers were no longer residents of North Danville but lived at 629 Main Street not far from Jean Armistead's old home on Tazewell Street. Belle Phifer was as hospitable as ever, and Delius and his traveling companions were welcome guests in the Phifer home. Delius couldn't believe how the Phifer children had grown. Wilhelmina was a handsome young lady of 22; Thomas, age 19, was a clerk at W.W. Clarke Co., a local leaf dealer, and 15 year old Robert had become quite accomplished on the violin. Two other children were in the home now: Mimi, age 11, born the December after Delius left Danville, and Dieudonne, almost three. After a bounteous meal, the professor at the piano, accompanied by Delius and young Robert on the violin, entertained. It was a happy reunion for old friends. Belle Phifer was somewhat saddened by the apparent change in the young Fritz she had known. The handsome head of hair was thinning and his hairline had receded. He seemed more worldly. Somehow the happy, care-free young lad she remembered was not the same anymore. Fritz learned from the Phifers that Annie Wilson and her husband, Rorer James, were living at the Burton Hotel where he and his friends were staying. How nice it would be to see her again.

After their arrival the trio was asked to give a concert at the Methodist College (Stratford) where Phifer was then teaching. This they did on the evening of Saturday, January 30th. *The Danville Register* covered the event next morning as follows:

THE DELIUS CONCERT

"A most delightful concert took place at the Danville College for Young Ladies last evening. From an artistic point of view there was little indeed to be desired, but the attendance was not such as the merit of the entertainment demanded. Madame Donodossola gave delightful rendition to several choice selections, and was heartily encored. Mr. Lemmanoff, by his brilliant technique, charmed his audience in his violin numbers. Mr. Delius was very happy in his accompaniments, and his old friends in the city were pleased to hear the evidence of his talent as a composer in the composition of his which Madame Donodossola so faithfully rendered. Perhaps may be mentioned especially the aria by Handel, with violin obligato. This piece was so beautifully given by the artists that it was repeated at the request of the entire audience."

Years later, when interviewed by the



Jelka Rosen Delius, wife of the composer.

Courtesy Delius Trust



Courtesy of Delius Trust Archives.

The ailing Delius. Portrait by James Gunn.

editor of Danville's afternoon paper, the professor's daughter, Wilhelmina Phifer Giles, confessed to Tetley that she was impressed mostly by the big feet of the Russian woman!¹⁷

Delius stayed in Danville briefly and then went on to Florida where he found the orange grove all but gone. The "Great Freeze" of 1886 had wiped out most of the citrus growers, who had now begun growing tobacco in the shade of the orange trees. Delius stayed here in his old house at Solana Grove the spring of 1897 and contracted for someone to grow tobacco on the plantation, a deal that later was to fall through.

However, when he returned to France in May he believed the grove would at last pay off and his mind turned to much brighter thoughts. Apparently he felt some need for Jelka, and when he received a card saying she had bought a house at Grez in his absence, he went looking for her.

Shortly thereafter Delius moved in and six years later, on September 25, 1903, he and Jelka were married in a civil ceremony in the village hall, with a carpenter, a gardener, a maid and a schoolmaster as witnesses. He was then forty-one and she was thirty-four. No longer would he be known as Fritz but Frederick.¹⁸ Jelka was his companion and business manager, and she looked after his personal needs with loving devotion. Her whole life was dedicated to the advancement of his genius. No one has described her better than the composer's favorite sister, Clare:

"My brother was singularly fortunate in the friends he made, but never more fortunate than the partner he selected for life. To Jelka and to Jelka alone, he owed that atmosphere of serenity in which most of his best works were done. An artist herself of outstanding merit, she abandoned everything for the creation of those surroundings in which his genius could best flourish. She lived for him and his art."¹⁹

Beecham says Frederick's emotions for Jelka were far from being on the same exalted level as hers for him. "Indeed," he said, "I do not think they ever rose higher than a deep friendly affection, coupled with an unbounded respect for Jelka's many remarkable qualities."²⁰

Their home at Grez-sur-Loing, an old village in France, parts of which date back to Charlemagne, was bought by Jelka and her mother while Delius was in America. She and Fritz had visited here previously, and both had loved its charm and serenity. After his return and before he and Jelka were married, Delius lived in one quarter of the house which was best suited for the quiet he needed to compose. Then, too, he had few funds to pay for lodging elsewhere.

Afterwards, when he had married and settled down and was dedicated to his career and after he had begun to receive some recognition, many of the world's artists, writers, composers and musicians visited this home. Delius loved the garden that went down to the river Loing. In their middle years he and Jelka spent many happy hours walking and sitting in this pleasant scene. After his marriage he seemed to become a completely different man. Love, friends, fame, all these he gradually came to realize as his reputation grew. They were wonderful and productive years — years of fulfilment.

It was in this period that Delius sent to Phifer a score of *Appalachia*, one of his most impressive symphonic works, which he completed in the early part of 1902, a re-writing of his *American Rhapsody for Orchestra* written in 1896. Beecham said it

was a more splendid achievement than the original composition which was quite a modest effort in comparison. The latter version still used the tune upon which the variations were founded, an old Negro spiritual Delius had heard in the tobacco stemmeries around Danville as well as in Florida, but the liberal doses of "Dixie" and "Yankee Doodle," found in the first score, tunes which created an effect of light-hearted gaiety, are gone.²¹

It was this second score that he sent to Phifer, bearing the inscription in the composer's own handwriting: "To my old Danville friend, Robert S. Pfifer from Frederick Delius, Grez-sur-Loing, Seine et Marne, France, Jan. 25, 1910." He misspelled Phifer's name, giving it a more Germanic spelling. Printed in Berlin, some thirty pages long, this is a piano scoring and is now owned by Phifer's granddaughter, Elizabeth P. Armfield, formerly of DeKalb, Mississippi, now living in Greensboro, North Carolina. In his success, Delius still had not forgotten his old friend.

World War I came, and Delius lost a nephew. Angered at the fearful carnage, he dedicated his *Requiem* to the memory of all young artists fallen in the war. He mocked at the civilization of industrialists who attended their churches and then turned to maiming and killing.

It was about this time that Delius began having trouble with his eyes, a condition that was eventually to lead to his complete blindness.

It was not until Beecham began to advance the works of Delius in 1908 that his fellow Englishman received the accolades in England that he had been given in Germany and elsewhere. The two were both sons of merchants, Sir Thomas being the son of the man who built up the Beecham pill empire. Renowned conductor of many orchestras, Sir Thomas used his position to promote Delius and his music by including his compositions at many of his performances. He was not only a promoter but a close friend as well. It was he who, on Delius' death, suggested to Jelka that she set up a trust fund from the royalties from his music for the advancement of Delius' compositions.

It was at the first Delius Festival in October, 1929, held in Queen's Hall in London, that the composer had perhaps his greatest ovation. Lasting for six days, with Beecham conducting all performances, the festival was a sell-out. Beecham had never ceased his tireless efforts to make the works of Delius known, and the event was a real triumph for both the composer and the conductor. *A Mass of Life*, considered by many to be Delius' greatest work, was chosen for the final concert, Delius, though very ill, blind and paralyzed, was brought over from France. He was as mentally alert as ever, however. After the final performance he addressed the audience, as did Sir Thomas, who stated that Delius had composed more beautiful music than any other living composer.

36 Another man important to Delius was Eric Fenby, a youthful admirer who offered his services to the blind composer to help him regain his ability to compose. They devised a method of dictation, and together they wrote some seven compositions during the last years of the composer's life, one of the greatest acts of heroism, Beecham says, he had ever known.

Early in 1929 Delius received news that he had been made a Companion of

Honour by King George V of England. Shortly before his death his birthplace belatedly recognized his genius in presenting another honor — the Freedom of the City of Bradford.²²

On June 10, 1934, with his ailing Jelka by his side, he died; he was buried temporarily in the village graveyard at Grez. It was not until May 24, 1935, that he was carried to his final interment in an English churchyard at Limpsfield in Surry. Beecham brought a section of the London Philharmonic Orchestra to play at the funeral service. Vaughan Williams was there.²³ But the loving Jelka, who had helped Fenby to make all the arrangements, was absent. On the way over she had contracted pneumonia and was confined to a hospital. On May 28th she died.

Sir Thomas took part in the ceremony at the graveside and in eulogizing his friend, made these remarks:

"I am proud to say that the greatest respect and understanding of his works proceeds from the people of this land. It grows daily and it shows no sign of diminishing. So far as it is possible to foresee, if there is any music that will remain honored and immortal in the memory of the people of any one country, it is the music of this composer. The most precious part of this man is the immortal part — his spirit is revealed in his work; and in whatever sphere that spirit is, I should like our greetings to pass beyond the confines of this earthly sphere, and let him know that we are here, not in a spirit of vain regret, but rather in a spirit of rejoicing that his work is with us and will remain with us for evermore."²⁴

Obituary of Robert Smith Phifer, Sr.

The Danville Register, Sept. 13, 1910

"Beloved Citizen of Danville Passes Away Yesterday Morning"

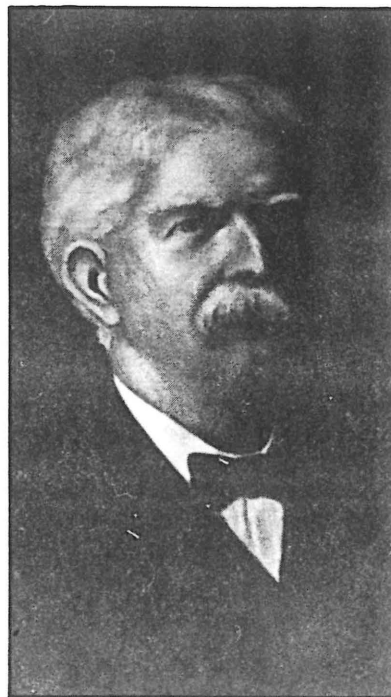
Robert Smith Phifer, Sr. one of the most widely known and generally beloved men in Danville, where he had resided for thirty-two years and labored in his art and in the instruction of others, died at 9:05 a.m. yesterday at his residence, 241 Jefferson, after a brief illness.

Prof. Phifer, as he was always known because of his long and successful career as an instructor in music, had been in impaired health for several years, but had been alarmingly ill only two or three days. His final illness began shortly after midnight on Friday, but was not deemed of such a serious nature until twelve hours later, when it developed that he had suffered a paralytic stroke, affecting his speech and depriving him almost wholly of the power of movement. Early Friday afternoon his condition became worse, and the physician quickly realized that the illness was paralysis. This manifested itself in a cerebral hemorrhage producing a state of coma, which, however, did not affect his intellectual processes until the next day. The absent members of the family were summoned and all arrived in time to be with him during his last hours.

He survived through Saturday and Saturday night, but shortly after noon on Sunday sustained a sinking spell and from that time on the coma deepened, and it was realized that the end was a matter of but a few hours. The end came yesterday, as stated. Although it was not generally known, Professor Phifer had suffered two premonitory paralytic strokes, the second one during a trip to New York some months ago, but with splendid vitality he rallied and continued to meet his classes and to enjoy his usual pursuits until the final attack.

Robert Smith Phifer was the second son of William F. Phifer and his wife, Mary Martha White, and was born May 9th, 1852, at the home of his grandmother, Mrs. Sarah Young, on Tryon Street, Charlotte, N.C. His great grandfather, Colonel Martin Phifer, Jr., was an officer of the American Revolutionary Army, and the latter's brother, Lieutenant Colonel John Phifer, was one of the signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. His ancestor, Colonel Martin Phifer, Jr. was an original member of the patriotic order known as the Society of the Cincinnati, composed originally of officers in the American Army, and was a son-in-law of General Mathew Locke.

Robert S. Phifer spent his childhood and youth in Charlotte — here he received



Portrait of the elderly Robert S. Phifer believed to have been painted by local artist, Robert Brydon, Jr. Courtesy Averett College Archives.

Photo by Gary Grant.

his early education, developing the musical temperament at an early age. At the age of 16 years he went abroad and there remained for five years, completing his literary and musical education in the centres of culture of Germany, Italy and Austria, where his life's ambition, the mastery of music, was developed. He had the enthusiasm of the artist and was fortunate in having as his instructors and associates some of the foremost men in the musical world of Leipsic, Vienna, and other cities, studying at the Leipsic Conservatory. Among his teachers were such masters as Czerny, I. Moscheles and Louis Plaidy. He was privileged to know and to hear often others of the world's great music masters at Leipsic, Vienna and Florence. After taking the conservatory course in piano, violin, harmony, counter-point and musical composition, the young American student returned to Charlotte. It was there he met and later married Miss Isabella Hunt McGehee, the wedding being at "Burleigh" in Person County, the historic home of his bride, on March 18th, 1874.

After three years further residence in Charlotte, Mr. Phifer came to Danville in 1878 and assumed direction of the school of music of the Roanoke Female College. Here he taught with eminent success for seventeen years, having in rare degree the faculty of imparting his enthusiasm to others and of awakening in his students an appreciation of the masterpieces of the world's music. He relinquished his position with the Roanoke College to accept a similar position with the Danville College for Young Ladies (now the Randolph-Macon Institute) and remained there for two years. Thereafter Professor Phifer conducted his own private classes at his residence and has taught with continued success, among his pupils being many of the most accomplished young women in Danville. He was preparing to resume his classes when the final summons came.

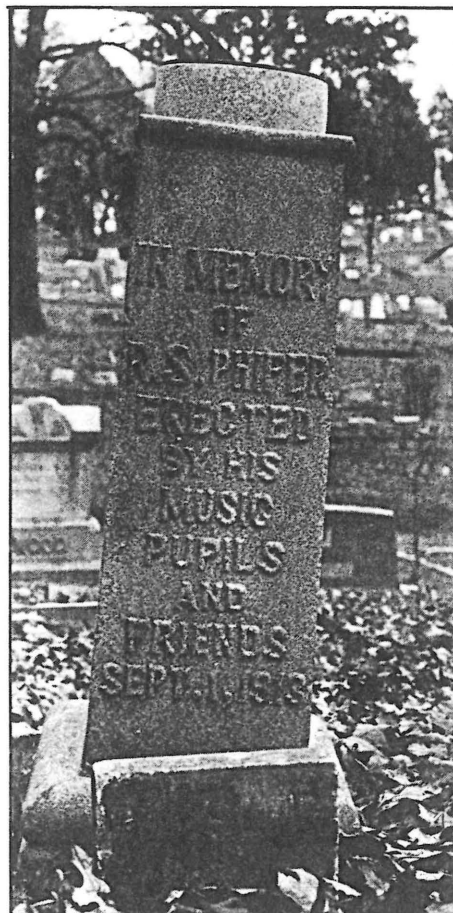
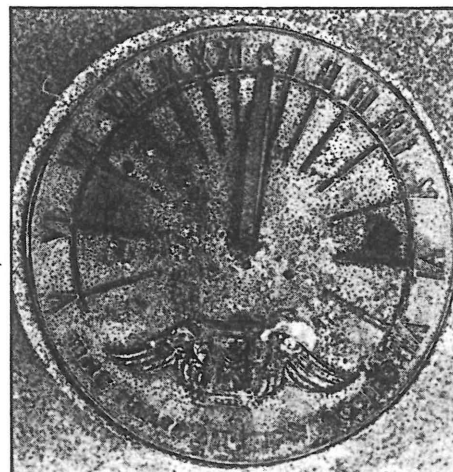


Photo by Joan Posey.



Marker with sun dial first erected on grounds of Confederate Memorial, removed to Phifer grave site in Green Hill Cemetery, Danville.

During his long service as a teacher Professor Phifer had as pupils hundreds of the young women of Virginia and the South generally upon whose minds he left the impress of his own culture and the stimulation of his own musical enthusiasm. His familiarity with literature, his accomplishments as a botanist and entomologist, his varied reading and study admirably equipped him to impart instruction and convey information in other lines than music, and his gentleness and consideration and his broad sympathies won for him in an unusual degree the affection and admiration of his old pupils. He was a natural teacher, and it was a pleasure to him to impart information, which his long experience and training and his erudition enabled him to do very effectively. His busy mind was never idle. When he was not engaged in teaching or in playing and studying, he was in the open-air communing with nature and adding to his store of information by his observations and explorations in the realm of science, plant life and biology and entomology especially enlisting his interest. At one time he had a rare collection of cacti, and any rare flower interested him. In the same way, he knew the many varieties of moths and beetles and devoted himself enthusiastically to his studies of these things in leisure hours.

Professor Phifer was also an enthusiast in bibliography and especially that of his native state, having many rare and valuable old books by Carolina authors.

A gentleman of sunny temperament, of courtly manners and of generous impulses, he made friends readily and never lost his sympathy with young people, by whom he was greatly beloved. It is probably true of him that he had not an enemy. Everybody knew him and he was almost universally beloved. He was a Presbyterian in his religious belief and was a member of the First Presbyterian Church of this city.

Professor Phifer is survived by his wife and by the following children: Mrs. Wilhelmina Glenn Giles, wife of J.P. Giles of Anderson, S.C., now residing in New York City; Mr. Thomas McGehee Phifer, of Columbia, S.C.; Mr. Robert S. Phifer, Jr. of this city; Misses Mimi and Dieudonne Locke Phifer, of this city. The following brothers and sisters also survive: Colonel W.W. Phifer, of Charlotte, N.C.; Mr. George M. Phifer of Charlotte; Mrs. M. Clifton Quinn of Salisbury, N.C.; Miss Cordelia W. Phifer and Mrs. William Gilmore Durant and Mr. Edward W. Phifer, of Charlotte.

Professor Phifer became identified with the Masonic order in Charlotte many years ago. He was a member of the Roman Eagle Lodge A.F. & A.M. and Dove Commandery, Knights Templars of the city.

The funeral services will take place from the residence, No. 241 Jefferson Street at 5 o'clock, p.m. today, the Rev. J. Cleveland Hall conducting the services. The obsequies will be conducted with Masonic and Templar honors.

Fritz Delius to Gertrude Rueckert

Leipzig, Dec 11/86
Royal Conservatory of music

My dear Miss Gertrude,

After all this time has elapsed since I left Danville I don't suppose you will expect this letter, however I always liked to surprise people & I hope it is not unpleasantly. For the last 5 months I have been studying here at the Conservatory where I expect to remain 3 years. Leipzig is a very nice town with a very fine Opera house & concerts almost every night; All the greatest Artist(s) come here so we have fine opportunities to hear good music. Ask Miss Blanch how she would like to study 6 hours a day Composition & Bach? What are you playing now? Have you got that run in "Whispering winds" down fine yet? I shall be glad to receive news from you & learn how you are all getting on. Mr. Hoppe wrote me that poor Mr. Crowder died a short time ago. I felt very much grieved to hear of the poor boy's death, so very young. It seems only yesterday that I went with him down to the Warehouses to watch the sales. Is Mr. Maggee still living with you, please give my kindest regards if he is still there. There are a great many soldiers here. A few weeks ago I saw 25,000 marching to the autumn manoeuvres near Leipzig. They looked very fine marching past. People think there is going to be war with France & Russia. If Germany gets beaten I suppose we shall have 2 to 3 battles around Leipzig, which would scarcely be pleasant & difficult to study with the bullets flying around one's ears. Tell your father I have a quartett at my lodgings every Sunday morning. A fine violinist, cellist & viola, I play the piano. It is indeed very enjoyable. We play Schumann, Beethoven Mozart, Haydn etc. Ask him also if he cannot drop over for a week or so & have a little music. The other night I played in a concert here for the benefit, Well! of what do you think? Of the *English Church*. The church *wanted money* for some fund or other, & it was a great success. The climate is very cold & strikes me rather unpleasantly but I suppose I shall get used to it. Now, write soon & let me know how you all are. I wish you all a Merry Christmas & many happy new years. Give my kindest regards to Your father Miss Blanche, your mother, Mr. Dodson & wishing you every happiness.

I remain,
sincerely yours,
Fritz Delius

Has Mr. Rishton got a set of new teeth yet? Remember me also to Viner she certainly makes good batter bread.

From the Delius Trust Archives. Text established by Lionel Carley.

Fritz Delius to Gertrude Rueckert

8 Bd de la Mairie.
Croissy (S & O) France
(7 December 1889)

My dear Miss Gertrude,

Just a few words to wish you a happy Christmas & a happy new year. How are you all getting on over in Danville? I should be very happy to receive a few words from you. Since a 1½ years I am living near Paris & like it very much. The Exhibition is just over & was a great success. Do you keep up your music yet or have "Whispering Winds" whispered away into Ewigkeit? I may possibly pay a visit to America next year, if so I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you all again. Give my kindest regards to your father & mother. Does your father play as much as ever?

With kindest regards
sincerely yours
Fritz Delius

From the Delius Trust Archives. Text established by Lionel Carley.

Fritz Delius to Gertrude Rueckert

Croissy (S & O)
7 Mars 1890

My dear Miss Gertrude (Mrs. Dodson)

Your third letter arrived safely a few days ago. This morning I received your invitation to the wedding. So now you are really married. Well I certainly was astonished how quickly times goes by! Please accept my hearty good wishes for your welfare & happiness & long life to you both. I need not wish Mr. Dodson happiness as he is sure to be happy with you. Do you intend to live in Danville or in Washington?

I was just surprised to receive your letter from the Capital, but not surprised to learn that you prefer it to Danville. I think your father made a good move to expose you all to a more artistic centre. It makes a great difference, the sort of atmosphere one lives in. I was glad to learn that he gives all his time to music & that you all go on with it yet. I certainly would like to hear your sister play. She must have made great progress. I do not quite know when I shall pay America another visit. When I do, I will certainly come & pay you a visit. My work of course keeps me from traveling much. I go away in the summer for 2 months otherwise I am always in Paris or near Paris. Have you any good orchestral concerts in Washington? You ought to get your husband to take you a trip over here. You would like it. Mr. Hoppe wrote to me the other day. He is in Lynchburg & doing very well it appears. What has become of the Wilsons, where I used to ride every week? We had "La Grippe" quite badly here in Paris. It is now in England. Please remember me kindly to your husband & parents & accept again my sincere wishes for your happiness.

Believe me
your friend
Fritz Delius

From the Delius Trust Archives. Text established by Lionel Carley.

Robert Phifer to Fritz Delius

July 27th 1894

Dear Friend

It has indeed been a long time since any of us here in Danville have heard aught of you & I send this to tell you we still remember you and think of you & speak of you. — The last news we had was when you sent the set of songs published by Augener to Miss Averett. We all admired them greatly and hope yet to make acquaintance with other of your works. Kindly let me know the title of some of your recent productions that I may obtain them & recall the talented young friend of the old years in North Danville.

Many things are changed since you left us & many things are not. The old school still keeps going but Mr. Jack Averett is no longer the "principal" as his health is very feeble now. The Averetts live up on Green street near the flower-garden. I often go there — there have been no marriages in the family — Miss Pattie A. is still my assistant at the college. For several years past she has gone North during vacation to study voice culture. She sings very beautifully as of old. — For the past seven years I have lived in Danville — I live on Main St not far from the house where Miss Jean Arm(i)stead (now Mrs. Venable) once lived when you gave her harmony lessons. The town has grown much & presents a much better appearance than when you were here. Many of the modern dwellings are quite handsome. — Of course we have electric street cars. North Danville has changed its name & is now known as Neapolis. It is a town of more than 5000 inhabitants now. There are very large cotton mills on that side of the river. One building, up by the upper bridge (wooden) is 900 feet long & three stories high. Midway between the upper & lower bridge is a stone dam which catches the surplus water from above & a large canal feeds another handsome cotton mill below the lower bridge almost at the North Danville depot where Hoppe & I took leave of you upon your departure. They also have street cars in N. Danville. I have learned nothing of Hoppe of late. I believe he now lives in Richmond & is married. Old Man Wilson is dead — His daughter Annie married a Mr. Rorer James & they live at "The Burton" a handsome modern hotel built on the site of the old "Arlington". Summerfields building (the hotel for down town) was burnt & some lives were lost. — New buildings have been & are being erected all along there making the street much more handsome. I am the Organist at the Episcopal Ch. & have a fine choir (the best in town) Mrs. Jean Arm(i)stead Venable is Organist at the Pres. Church. — Willa my daughter is a handsome young woman of over 19 yrs now. She still has the bangle on her bracelet with your name on it. Tommie my son is now a lad of 16 & is taller than I am. My other children you would not know of. — Gitt still has his drug store in North D. but all that part has been rebuilt after a fire — There is a continuous line of stores from Flippins (just across from Gitts) down to the Railroad in North D. — Rhodes has a barber shop on this side I merely mention his name to aid you in recalling persons & places. Tom Averett is still a Book Man. Bill Averett — still Shoe-man. Tom Lee of North D. died — Left big estate — Widow remarried — money about all gone. Old Dr Martin (Presbyterian) still alive. Ditto — Dr. Dame. With me the world wags just as of old. Going up Main St. & keeping to the left at the Fork then crossing the railroad bridge ("Dry Bridge") & continuing about ½ mile there is now a large military school. I attended a picnic

out there today — Beautiful wooded dell just like the one I showed you & Hoppe once over in North D. where the Kalmias grew. Numbers of the young people make excursions up the river to the "House Rock" — The Rhododendrum was especially beautiful up that way this year. Do you remember the time we all went on the boat ride up there. Miss Averett & I were speaking of it & of you some days ago. But see what a scrawl I have written you. Receive it such as it is for the sake of the old days — Still think of us sometimes & when opportunity allows write us a few words

Yours sincerely
Robert S. Phifer
629 Main St.
Danville Va

To
Mr. Fritz Delius
Bradford
Yorkshire

From the Delius Trust Archives. Text established by Lionel Carley.

Mrs. S.W. Venable to Frederick Delius

Mr. Frederick Delius,

My dear Mr. Delius,

In looking over the February "Etude", I find the picture & brief sketch of one Frederick Delius, who has won "international fame" in musical composition, (mentioning Sea Drift, A Mass of Life, & Appalachia).

Feeling sure that he & the Fritz Delius who taught Miss Jean Armistead in Danville twenty odd years ago, are one & the same, I cannot resist the temptation to write you a letter of congratulation on your well deserved success. I have often scanned the music journals hoping to find that you had won the name & fame you were striving for when you left Danville for Leipsic.

My husband & children tried to dissuade me from writing, arguing first that I may be mistaken as to your identity (but upon referring to my autograp(h) album I find "Fritz Delius, Claremont, Bradford, Yorkshire, England", which coincides exactly with the Etude. I also remember the orange grove in Florida). Secondly, that should you be the same you had forgotten me. If you have, you will never the less appreciate my pleasant memory of you & your music, also the fact that I rejoice with you in your "international fame".

Still — I can but hope that this will call to your remembrance

Jean S. Armistead
(now Mrs. S. W. Venable Jr).
Durham, NC.

July 4 - 1909.

P.S. -

I wonder if you remember the Rueckerts.

From the Delius Trust Archives. Text established by Lionel Carley.

Mrs. S.W. Venable to Frederick Delius

My dear Mr. Delius,

You asked me to write you a "real woman's letter", so I shall take you at your word - only I don't know where to begin.

Yes I do too - I shall begin by reproving you for your extreme modesty, reticence, diffidence or whatever you choose to call it concerning the very thing that called forth my letter to you - your fame & glory in your art. I was so disappointed - here I had been so proud of the fact that I had studied harmony & counterpoint under such a famous musician & recalled the fact that when you left Danville you had told me that if success came to you you were going to let me know. And to think that after recalling myself to your remembrance you should not even refer to your work. Well, such is life! You see I am philosophical.

You asked after Mr. Phifer, he is still in Danville - address R.S. Phifer. He several times asked me if I knew anything of your whereabouts - haven't been to Danville for seven years though. The Ruckerts moved away from there years & years ago. I have no idea where they are. The only reminder of them I have ever had is to occasionally run across a very tin-panny Rueckert piano. I guess you remember Mr. Roger Pryor & Miss Sallie Bain, they finally married, but she died soon after her marriage & he has never married again. The last I heard of him he had given up his violin for the pianola, think of it & he played the violin so beautifully.

Yes, I still keep up my music - am director of a large church choir here, & really have made a fairly good organist of myself. I also teach a little every session, it makes me study & practice, & at the same time furnishes me with that highly prized woman's commodity - pin money. To my great disappointment not one of my four children love music. They all say they are surfeited with it. Jean, my eldest daughter, plays very nicely, but simply because I made her. She much prefers to play bridge. She is twenty years old, & a far finer woman than her mother was at her age, "if I do say it as I shouldn't", to quote my dear friend "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch" N.B., If you are not acquainted with this kindly philosopher just let me know & I'll send you the book. It is typically American, & perfectly delightful.

My second daughter has just entered college. Then I have a son 16 years old, who is fitting himself to enter the state university next year & my baby boy aged twelve. Necessarily my life has been full, & I hope not unprofitable.

Mr. Venable is a tobacco man as is nearly every other man in Durham - if you still smoke - You see I have the proverbial woman's memory for small things - you are sure to know what the city of Durham is famous for. We have been living here two years, & I must say that I rather dreaded coming to live among so many multi-millionaires, but I find them very human and nothing like so black as they are painted.

When you left Danville you could not find your Cherubini's book on orchestration, & said you thought it was at my house, well, I looked for it but could not find it. Several years later we moved & then it turned up. I think it is here now, but have not seen it for a long time - if you want it I will look for it though.

Don't you sympathise with us over the disgraceful Peary-Cook contest. As a peo-

ple we are so humiliated over all the mud slinging, & so disappointed in Peary. You see I have written a woman's letter & hope you will show your appreciation of same by writing me about yourself, your wife, your work, and your children (?) And when you tour America I shall expect you to come to see me & my dear family. As to my coming to Europe, Mr. Venable offered me a 6 weeks trip to London this fall, but I shall wait until he can go with me. Please give my kind regards to your wife. Thanking you for your nice letter I am

Sincerely
Mrs. S.W. Venable Jr.
Durham, N.C.

Sept. 25, 1909

From the Delius Trust Archives. Text established by Lionel Carley.

Robert S. Phifer to Frederick Delius

My dear Mr. Delius

It was a surprise and a very welcome one too a few days ago to receive by mail a copy of your Appalachia which you had sent me thus reminding me of yourself and of your old Danville days.

It is a long cry back to those days but I still recall them - The town has very much changed since your time - Large factories now occupy where we once walked. North Danville has now become a part of Danville having been annexed some years ago. Mrs. Richardson still lives at the old house where you and Hoppe once lived. Her two daughters are married and have children - One of her sons-in-law is dying with consumption. Old man Rueckert who moved to Washington a year or so after you left has since died of cancer of the lip. I saw his son in law Dodson about two years ago here in D. Mrs. James (Annie Wilson) still lives at her home on Main St. - They are rich.

As for myself I have not been in good health for some time - I really don't mind if I go one of these days. My children are all grown now and what matters. The Averetts are just the same - Miss Pattie still teaching. Edmonds Averett has died leaving a wife and small children - She returned to her father.

You know we have prohibition here now. So Hoppes business has busted if he were still here. - I congratulate you upon your achieve in the line of your lifes work. I remember when the Appalachia was first given in Berlin. The music papers spoke of it in favorable terms. In the Schirmer Collection I noticed they spoke a couple of weeks ago in mentioning the European novelties of your "Paris - a night piece". I enclose a likeness of you - It came out in the Etude a monthly music paper widely read in America. - We all - my wife and children still speak of the delightful evening you and your friends spent with us on your way South to the orange grove - By the way the severe winter has done much injury to the orange industry this year. -- Where is Mr. Leninoff? and your singer - What is her name. We were all much interested in the great floods at Paris etc. I did not know til I saw this paper that you were married - Please pay my respects to your wife - I hope you will not have to die to have your works receive their just dues.

Believe me yours sincerely
Robt S. Phifer

Danville, Va.
Feb. 16th 1910

"Say Delius does you make much money out of your composing business"
Summerhill

From the Delius Trust Archives. Text established by Lionel Carley.

Roanoke Female College. ROLL OF STUDENTS. 1885-1886

ABBREVIATIONS:

L.—Latin.	Math.—Mathematics.
F.—French.	N.S.—Natural Sciences.
S.—Spanish.	M.P.—Moral Philosophy.
E.—English	H. & G.—History and Geography.
E.L.—English Literature.	M.—Music.
P.D.—Preparatory Department.	

NAMES.	STUDIES.	RESIDENCES.
Adams, Fannie	.....	Pittsylvania County
	E., Math., M.	
Abbott, Pattie	.....	North Danville
	E., H. & G., F., Math., M.	
Abbott, Nannie	.....	North Danville
	E., H. & G., Math., M.	
Allcott, Mattie	.....	Clarksville
	E., L., F., N.S., Math., M.	
Audus, Mary	.....	North Danville
	E., L., Math., F., M.	
Audus, Blanche	.....	North Danville
	E., L., Math., M.	
Averett, Janie	.....	R.F. College
	E., L., H. & G., F., Math., M.	
Averett, Kate	.....	R. F. College
	E., H. & G., Math., M.	
Averett, Mary	.....	R. F. College
	P.D., M.	
Ballou, Natalie	.....	Danville
	E., L., F., Math., M.	
Barnard, Susie	.....	Danville
	L., F., Math., M.	
Baugh, Anna	.....	North Danville
	E., H. & G., Math.	
Blair, Sallie	.....	Reidsville, N.C.
	E., H. & G., Math.	
Blane, Sallie	.....	Halifax County
	E., L., F., Math., M.	
Blunt, Annie	.....	Danville
	P.D.	
Bohannon, Sallie	.....	Pittsylvania County
	E., H. & G., Math.	
Bohannon, Mary	.....	Pittsylvania County
	E., H. & G., F., Math.	
Bruce, Fannie	.....	Danville
	E., L., F., Math.	
Bustard, Maggie	.....	Halifax County
	E., L., H. & G., F., Math., M.	
Carter, Maggie	.....	Halifax County
	E., L., H. & G., Math, M.	
Chaney, Ida	.....	Pittsylvania County
	E., F., H. & G., Math., M.	
Clark, Mary	.....	Pittsylvania County
	E., H. & G., F., Math., M.	
Clarke, Lelia	.....	Dinwiddie County
	E., H. & G., F., Math.	
Coleman, Sallie	.....	Danville
	E., L., F., H. & G., Math.	
Cooper, Berta	.....	Stafford County
	E., H. & G., Math., M.	
Corbin, Mary	.....	North Danville
	E.L., L., F., Math., M.	
Corbin, Pattie	.....	North Danville
	E., L., H. & G., F., Math., M.	
Crews, Rosa	.....	Pittsylvania County
	E., L., F., N.S., Math., M.	
Crump, Mary	.....	Danville
	E., F., Math.	
Davenport, Kate	.....	Pittsylvania County
	E., L., F., Math., M.	
Davis, Mary	.....	Pittsylvania County
	E., H. & G., Math., M.	
Davis, Pocahontas	.....	Danville
	E., H. & G., Math.	
Day, May	.....	Danville
	E., H. & G., F., Math.	
Dickenson, Lucie	.....	Pittsylvania County
	E., H. & G., F., Math., M.	
Donoho, Ellen	.....	Caswell County, N.C.
	E., H. & G., P.D.	
Drummond, Rosa	.....	Spartanburg, Co., S.C.
	E., F., Math., M.	
Elliott, Ellie	.....	Danville
	E., L., F., Math., M.	
Estes, Lucie	.....	Danville
	E., H. & G., Math., M.	
Farley, Lizzie	.....	North Danville
	E., H. & G., N.S., Math.	
Farley, Emma	.....	North Danville
	E., H. & G., N.S., Math.	
Farley, Lucie	.....	North Danville
	P.D.	
Ferrell, Mary	.....	Danville
	E.L., M.P., N.S., Math.	
Ferrell, Ada	.....	Danville
	E., H. & G., F., Math.	
Ficklen, Lizzie	.....	Newport News.
	E., H. & G., Math.	
Fitzgerald, Emma	.....	Pittsylvania County
	E.L., M.P., H. & G., N.S., Math., M.	
Gatewood, Lizzie	.....	Caswell County, N.C.
	P.D., H. & G., M.	
Gatewood, Laura	.....	Caswell County, N.C.
	E., H. & G., Math., M.	
Goodwin, Pearl	.....	Danville
	E., H. & G., L., F., Math.	
Graves, Sue	.....	North Danville
	E., H. & G., Math.	
Graves, Fannie	.....	North Danville
	E., H. & G., F., Math.	
Graves, Rosa	.....	North Danville
	E., H. & G., Math.	
Griggs, Anna	.....	Danville
	E., L., F., H. & G., Math., M.	

Notes

Chapter One **Background**

1. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 7, 205
The World Book Encyclopedia, Vol. 4, 1958
2. *Delius*, Arthur Hutchings, 5, 178
3. *Frederick Delius*, Sir Thomas Beecham, 17
4. *Delius: A Life in Letters, I, 1862-1908*, Lionel Carley, 2
5. Beecham, op. cit., 18
6. *Ibid.*, 17
7. Carley, op. cit., xxiii
8. Beecham, op. cit., 23, 24
9. *Ibid.*, 24
Carley, op. cit., 5

Chapter Two **Florida**

1. "Frederick Delius in America", William P. Randel, VMHB, 1971, Vol 79, 353
2. *Delius: A Life in Letters, I, 1862-1908*, Lionel Carley, 85
3. Randel, op. cit., 350
4. *Frederick Delius*, Sir Thomas Beecham, 27
5. *Ibid.*, 27, 28, 29; Carley, op. cit., 6
6. Carley, op. cit., 5
7. Beecham, op. cit., 29, 30
8. Carley, op. cit., 6
9. Randel, op. cit., 353

Chapter Three **Danville**

1. *1885 Sketchbook of Danville*, Edward Pollock, 5, 6
2. *Danville, A Pictorial History*, Clara Fountain, 26
3. *An Architectural Inventory and Program Recommendations for the Creation of An Historic District, Danville*, Russell Wright, 1-20
4. "Frederick Delius in America," William P. Randel, VMHB, 1971, Vol. 79, 358
5. Letter dated Sept. 25, 1909 from Jean Armistead Venable to Delius, in which she states, "If you still smoke." A Delius Trust letter, copy provided to Averett College archives.

Sanborn's Map of Danville, Va. January 1886, shows variety theatre on Craghead Street.

6. Letter dated Nov. 23, 1973 from Dorothy D. Gordon, granddaughter of Rueckert, to Robert N. Milliken. Copy provided to Averett College archives by Delius Trust.
7. Randel, op, cit., 358
8. *Delius: A Life in Letters, I, 1862-1908*, Lionel Carley, 10
9. Randel, op. cit., 358. The official name of the Danville paper known today as *The Danville Register* at various times during its history has been named *The Danville Daily Register* and simply *The Register*, according to John Brubaker, a former editor.
10. *Ibid.*, 358
11. Letter dated Dec. 11, 1886, from Delius to Gertrude Rueckert which reads: "remember me also to Viner she certainly makes good batter bread." Delius Trust letter, copy provided to Averett College archives; also Carley, op. cit., 9
12. Phifer letter to Delius, Feb. 16, 1910: "You know we have prohibition here now. So Hoppe's business has busted if he were still here." Delius Trust letter, copy provided to Averett College archives. This statement led writer to believe Hoppe was an employee of a saloon or liquor store while in Danville. No listing for a Hoppe could be found in any city directory for Danville. (See also Notes, Chapter Four, 8.)
13. D.B. "W", p. 315, Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of Danville, Va., 4-1-1886, Homestead Exemption for Robert S. Phifer which reads: "I, Robert S. Phifer of the town of North Danville. . ." Conversation 1974 with the late Edwin Booth, Danville history buff. Robert Phifer letter, July 27, 1894, to Fritz Delius, reads: "Kindly let me know the title of some of your recent publications that I may obtain them & recall the talented young friend of the old years in North Danville." Delius Trust letter provided to Averett College archives; also, Carley, op. cit., 86, 87.

Re: Preface reference: Title search in above Clerk's Office for 253 Jefferson Ave. (1974): (1) D.B. 492, p. 141. Danny Clark Bridges & Geneva Payne Bridges from Otwa Lee Turner, property known as No. 253 Jefferson Ave. next to Clara Va. Anthony as shown on map 3-19-48, in D.B. 224, p. 291. (2) D.B. 468, p. 419, 5-27-69. Otwa Lee Turner from Charles H. Carr, et al. (3) D.B. 243, p. 121, 6-8-50, Charles H. Carr et al from Edwin B. Meade, Exec. under will of Mary Farish George (See D.B. 257, p. 334, 2-14-52). (4) D.B. 45, p. 213, 10-15-1895 to Franklin George from E.E. Bouldin, Special Comm., et al, part of property devised to Sumpter George by Franklin George in his will of Aug. 8, 1896, duly probated in W.B. "B", p. 219, it being part of property devised to Mary Farish George by Sumpter George by will of 5-17-1926, recorded W.B. "D", p. 204, being part of property directed to be sold by Mary Farish George in her will recorded 5-20-1950 in W.B. 11, p. 444. Aforementioned deed 10-15-1895, E.E. Bouldin, Special Comm. and W.E. Douglas & Ora H. Douglas, his wife to Franklin George; refers to decree of Corp. Court of Danville, 1884, in suit of James A. Patton, et als vs. W.S. Patton's admr., et als. Lot No. 13 sold to M.E. Douglas Jan. 1885. Landbooks 1885 through 1896 reflect house built in 1895 by Franklin George.

Re: Preface reference: Title search in above Clerk's Office for 241 Jefferson Ave. (1985): D.B. 669, p. 1, 2-28-83, Barbara S. & Robert G. Newnam from Tony I. Benazzi, Jr. and wife, dwelling designated as 241 and alley rights; D.B. 224, p. 291, 3-19-48, Map of Lots of Mary F. George; D.B. 243, p. 398, 6-29-50, Tony I. Benazzi, Jr. from Edwin B. Meade,

Executor under will of Mary Farish George decd; W.B. 11, p. 444, 5-20-1950, will of Mary Farish George; W.B. "D", p. 204, 2-22-1927, will of Sumpter George when property devised to Mary F. George; W.B. "B", p. 219, will of Franklin George to Sumpter George; D.B. 30, p. 164, 2-21-1890, W.P. Averett & M.E. Averett, his wife, to Franklin George, deed refers to suit of James A. Patton, et al vs. W.S. Patton's admr., E.E. Bouldin, Comm. (1884). Landbooks 1890 through 1891, reveal house built in 1890 by Franklin George.

14. Interview with Jean Beaver Rice, 1974 and summer of 1983; correspondence with late Mrs. C.R. (Marion Beaver) Foster of Spartanburg, South Carolina, Aug. 1983; conversation with Frances Beaver Bullington, summer 1984, all daughters of Azile Richardson Beaver. Mrs. Louise Richardson, Delius' landlady, continued to live at 208 Church Street with her daughter, Minnie Middleton, until Mrs. Richardson's death c1927. (Danville City directories 1921, 1923, 1927, 1928.) No gravestones were found for Henry P. and Louise Richardson. However, Azile R. Beaver, b. Dec. 17, 1879, d. April 29, 1959, who married John Lafayette Beaver, b. Feb. 16, 1865, d. Feb. 11, 1929, is buried with her husband in Green Hill Cemetery, Danville. Their plot purchased by J.F. Beaver April 26, 1911, is located next to the Phifer plot.

Re: Preface reference: Sources for search of Richardson house at 208 Church St.: D.B. "I", p. 87, 9-21-1876, James R. Richardson to H.P. Richardson, Trustee for Lou V. Richardson; 1885-86 Landbooks, Danville, for H.P. Richardson, decd; also D.B. 165, p. 465; D.B. 146, p. 412; D.B. 145, p. 1. Marriage Register, Danville, 3430, 1895, Minnie L. Richardson, daughter of H.P. & Louise V. Richardson to Harry S. Middleton. No license could be found in Danville records for Azile Richardson and J.L. Beaver.

15. Inscriptions on tombstones in Phifer plot, Green Hill Cemetery, Danville, Va. read as follows:

Robert Smith Phifer
Born in Charlotte, N.C.
May 9, 1852
Died in Danville, Va.
Sept. 12, 1910

Isabel Hunt McGehee, wife of
Robert S. Phifer, born Nov. 1,
1849, died October 14, 1942

Wilhelmina Phifer Giles
Born Feb. 19, 1875
Died Sept. 16, 1957

Josiah Patterson Giles
Born in Abbeville, S.C.
Aug. 14, 1878, died July 6, 1935

Thomas McGehee Phifer
Born May 19, 1878
Died Jan. 16, 1933

(He became a stock broker in New York,
but returned to Danville several years before
his death.)

Mimi Phifer Sheib
Born in Danville, Va.
Dec. 8, 1886
Died in Richmond, Va.
July 21, 1971

Samuel Henry Sheib
Born in Baltimore, Md.
July 4, 1872
Died in Richmond, Va.
April 26, 1937

Twin: Born Dec. 8, 1886
Died Sept. 25, 1887

(Dr. Sheib was associated with the firm of Froehling & Robertson Inspection Engineering & Chemists, in Baltimore. The firm later moved to Richmond and is headed by his son-in-law, Arnold Proctor.)

Dieudonne Phifer Lipscomb
Born March 27, 1894
Died Oct. 31, 1958

Not buried here is:

Robert S. Phifer, Jr.
Born cir 1882
Died cir 1940

(He became an accomplished violinist but never performed professionally. Persuaded by his father, he became a lawyer, practicing in Mississippi, where he died and is buried. Information provided by Mrs. Arnold Proctor from family records.)

In the Phifer plot is a sundial with the following inscription: "In memory of R.S. Phifer erected by his music pupils and friends, Sept. 1, 1913." The marker was originally placed on the lawn of the Confederate Memorial, now the Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History. Mrs. Berkley Carrington, Sr., who was influential in raising funds for the marker, later had it moved to the grave plot because the neighborhood children were destroying it. (Notes of the late Edwin Booth.)

16. R.S. Phifer Collection. (M-593) 1865-1901. Vol. 1, 1868-1888. Scrapbook of notices about Phifer as musician and teacher of music at Charlotte and Roanoke Female Academy (College), Danville, Va. Southern Historical Collection, The University of N.C. Library at Chapel Hill, pages 3, 7, & 12.
17. Obituary of Robert S. Phifer, Sr., *The Danville Register*, Sept. 13, 1910, states Phifer was a student of the masters at the Leipzig Conservatory, among them I. Moscheles. Beecham in his Delius biography states Jelka Rosen, the wife of Delius, was a granddaughter of Ignaz Moscheles.
18. The original land grant hung in the hall at Burleigh but was stolen several years ago along with numerous Phifer and McGehee heirlooms.
19. "Delius in Danville," Gerard Tetley, VC, Summer 1959, IX, No. 1, 16-20.
20. Fritz Delius to Gertrude Rueckert, Dec. 11, 1886. Delius Trust letter in Averett College archives; also, Carley, op. cit., 9; City Directory, Danville, 1881: "Alex Crowder, tobaccoist, bds. R.C. Herndon, res. corner Grove & Chestnut." "R.C. Herndon & Co., leaf tobacco brokers. Corner Union between Spring & High."
21. Fritz Delius to Gertrude Rueckert, Mar. 7, 1890. (Gertrude Rueckert had by then married a Mr. Dodson from Danville and was living in Washington, D.C.)

Robert Phifer letter to Delius, July 27, 1894, in recalling old acquaintances of Delius in Danville, wrote: "Old Man Wilson is dead - His daughter Annie married a Mr. Rorer James & they live at "The Burton" a handsome modern hotel built on the site of the old "Arlington." Also, Carley, op. cit., 87

Phifer to Delius, Feb. 16, 1910: "Mrs. James (Annie Wilson) still lives at her home on Main st - they are rich." Delius Trust letters in Averett College archives.

22. Pollock's Sketchbook, 115, 123
Hagen, Jane Gray, *The Story of Danville*, 23. Hagen states Col. Leonard Claiborne built the mansion similar to the Major Sutherlin house with grounds terraced down to the river. It was sold to W.T. Keen whose family sold it to the town and it was used as a public school for some years before being replaced by Bellevue School.

23. Phifer to Delius, July 27, 1894. Delius Trust letter, copy in Averett College archives.
Carley, op. cit., 86, 87.
24. Ibid.
25. Danville, Va. City Directory, 1881.
Among the graduates of the class of 1885-86 at RFC was Mrs. Peter Booth (nee Mary Sue Tate). She recalled eating at the dining room table with Delius and Phifer and also left to her son and daughter, Louis and Helen Booth, the following poem which Phifer wrote one day when he was sitting by her at church:
"Behold the charming Miss Tate -
She sits there so prim and sedate
You scarce would believe
How her looks do deceive
For there's a deal of fun
In her young pate."
26. Danville, Va. City Directory, 1894-95.
27. Phifer letter July 27, 1894.
28. Interview with Thomas Shadrick, grandson of H.W. Brown, and present owner of florist's shop.
29. The beautifully restored house and some of the dependencies, including an interesting classic style privy, well-house, old kitchen and slave quarters are still intact. The home is now owned by the Arnold Proctors. She is the daughter of Mimi Phifer Sheib. The Proctors occupy the main house while their daughter and son-in-law, Herbert and Helen Tucker, occupy the restored kitchen. Burleigh has the prestigious honor of being on the State and National Historic Landmarks Register.
30. Interview with Frances Hunt, South Boston, Va., summer 1974.
31. Phifer letter to Delius, July 27, 1894: "Willa my daughter is a han(d)some young woman of over 19 yrs now. She still has the bangle on her bracelet with your name on it."
Carley, op. cit., 87
32. "Delius in Danville," Gerard Tetley, *Virginia Calvacade*, IX, No. 1 (1959) 16-20.
33. Phifer's Scrapbook, 19.
34. Ibid, 19.
35. Jean Armistead Venable letter to Delius, Sept. 25, 1909.
(No marriage license has been found in the Danville records for Roger Pryor or Sallie Bain.)
36. Jno. D. Jeffrey's *Guide and Directory to the Opera Houses, Theatres, Public Halls, Bill Posters, Etc. of the Cities and Towns of America*, Jno. B. Jeffrey, page 258. Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.
- 56 37. Pollock's Sketchbook, (Recollections of Thompson Coleman), 22; also, 83-99. Also, excerpts from *The Danville Register*, March 11, 1923, p. 2, (Recollections by Danville Citizen of Riot) which reads: "While a large portion of the white men were assembled at the Opera House (then approximately where the Boswell building stands on Main Street today) ..." Danville File - Danville Public Library.

38. Phifer's Scrapbook, 19.
39. Phifer letter to Delius, July 27, 1894.
40. Danville City Directory, 1881. Phifer's Scrapbook - accounts of various concerts.
41. Jean Armistead Venable letter to Delius, Sept. 25, 1909.
42. Marriage license No. 2273, Clerk's Office Circuit Court of Danville, Va., Dec. 18, 1888.
Husband: Samuel Woodson Venable, single, tobacconist, age 23, birthplace: Prince Edward County, Va., parents: Paul C. & Agnes Gray Venable. Wife: Jean St. Clair Armistead, single, 21, birthplace: Hampton, Va., daughter of S.W. & M.A. Armistead. Minister, W.G. Starr.
100 Years of Progress, Danville Tobacco Association, Inc., 1869-1969, 52.
Victorian Danville; Fifty-two Landmarks: Their Architecture and History, Mary Cahill and Gary Grant, 40
43. Superintendent of Cemeteries, Durham, N.C. Venable plot, Maplewood Cemetery.
Durham, N.C. City Directories, Duke University Library, 1907-1934.
Venables of Virginia, Marshall Venable. (In possession of Charles Venable Carrington, Cascade, Va.)
Funeral account, Mrs. S.W. Venable, *The Danville Register*, Nov. 8, 1928.
Obituary Mrs. S.W. Venable, *Durham Morning Herald*, Nov. 9, 1928.
Obituary Miss Mary Howard Venable, *Durham Morning Herald*, Sept. 16, 1930.
Obituary S.W. Venable, *Durham Morning Herald*, July 10, 1951.
Letter from Mrs. Zaleane Angier, Chapel Hill, N.C. June 1985.
Conversation with Mrs. Virginia Massey, secretary, Duke Memorial United Methodist Church, Durham, N.C., June 1985.
Ninety Years of Duke Memorial Church, 1886-1976, Wyatt Dixon and Church History Committee, 38, 58, 60, 70, 83, 85, 90, 118.
Children of Jean St. Clair Armistead Venable, b. 3-19-1867, d. 11-7-1928, and Samuel Woodson Venable, b. 4-16-1866, d. 7-9-51 (both buried in Maplewood Cemetery, Durham) are:
(1) Jean St. Clair Venable, b. c1889, Danville, Va., married c1914 to Shubrick Heyward, Baltimore, Md.
(2) Mary Howard Venable, b. Feb. 19, 1891, d. Sept. 15, 1930, single, buried in Maplewood Cemetery, Durham.
(3) Paul Carrington Venable, b. c1893, Danville, Va., volunteered for service in World War I, First Lt., killed before Soissons July 18, 1918, buried in Arlington National Cemetery.
(4) Samuel Armistead Venable, b. c1897, Danville, Va., enlisted as private in "Richmond Blues" (was employed there), served in Meuse-Argonne and Vosges, married c 1919 to Evelyn Richardson of Zebulon, N.C.
In the obituary of Samuel Woodson Venable, 1951, the following survivors are given: daughter, Mrs. Shubrick Heyward, Wilmington, Del., one son, S.A. Venable, Wilm-

ington, N.C., one granddaughter, Mrs. Charles Taylor of Newton, Pa., three grandsons, J.E. Venable of Chapel Hill, N.C., Paul C. Venable of Madison, N.J., and S.W. Venable, Jr. of Durham, N.C.

Jean Armistead Venable's sister, Mary Sclater Armistead, married J. Luther Brown of Halifax County, Va. on Jan. 7, 1899 (M.L. 4252 Clerk's Office, Danville, Va.). Her sister, Kate Armistead, taught for many years in the Danville Public schools. At the time of the death of their niece, Mary Howard Venable in Durham, Mrs. Brown was living in Richmond, Va. and Miss Kate Armistead in Columbia, S.C.

(This Venable family data was obtained in the author's attempt to locate a descendant of Jean Armistead Venable and possibly obtain her picture taken in her youthful days in Danville. Because of the time schedule for publication of this book, the search was discontinued, but I am including it for whatever interest it might be.)

44. Phifer Scrapbook, 19.

45. Ibid., 19.

RFC 1885-86 Catalogue, Averett College archives.

46. Phifer letter to Delius, July 27, 1894.

47. Randel, op. cit., 361.

Chapter Four **Leipzig and France**

1. *Delius: A Life in Letters, I, 1862-1908*, Lionel Carley, 9.

2. *The Road to Samarkand, Frederick Delius and His Music*, Gloria Jahoda, 77.

3. Carley, op. cit., 8

4. *Delius*, Arthur Hutchings, 10

5. Carley, op. cit., 11, 27

6. Ibid., 43, 44

7. Delius Trust letter dated Mar. 7, 1890 from Delius to Gertrude Rueckert, copy in Averett College archives, Danville, Va.

8. 1890 *Lynchburg City Directory*, 107. "Hoppe, F.W., mgr. Anheuser-Busch Brewing Ass'n., res. 53 9th St." This was the only Hoppe listed.

1894 *Richmond City Directory*. "Frederick W. Hoppe, Mgr., Anheuser-Busch Brewing Assn., bds. Davis House." There were numerous Hoppes listed but only this one showing an association with Anheuser-Busch.

9. Carley, op. cit., 92, 93, 94.

10. Ibid., 100, 408.

58 11. *The Danville Register*, Sept. 13, 1910. Obituary of Robert Smith Phifer, Sr.

12. Jahoda, op. cit., 105.

13. Carley, op. cit., 408, 409.

14. Ibid., 112.
15. Ibid., 110.
16. Ibid., 118.
17. "Frederick Delius in America," William P. Randel, VMHB, 1971, Vol. 79, 363.
18. Jahoda, op. cit., 143, 144.
19. *Frederick Delius - Memories of My Brother*, Clare Delius, 274.
20. *Frederick Delius*, Sir Thomas Beecham, 123.
21. Ibid., 73. (Carley states that according to Robert Threlfall, a leading authority and author on Delius' music, there was never a cow horn in either version, as Beecham states.)

"It is interesting to note the description of *Appalachia* given by Kinney Rorrer, professor of history at the Danville Community College and well-known authority and author on American folk and mountain music. Rorrer says *Appalachia* is a soothing yet stirring piece of music which creates a very exotic feeling with variations of tunes of the deep south, but it seems to interpret the 1890s style of the tin pan alley rather than old Negro slave songs, with words of the chorus chosen to please the white ear rather than using true southern black expressions."
22. Hutchings, op. cit., 53, 54.
23. Beecham, op. cit., 212, 213.
24. Clare Delius, op. cit., 277.

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Mary Cahill, a resident of Danville since 1925, was educated in the local public schools and graduated from Averett College in 1940. Following appointment to the Mayor's History Committee in 1969, she organized the Danville Historical Society in February 1970 serving as its first president and is presently on its Board of Directors. Through lectures and slide programs she spearheaded passage of Danville's Historic District ordinance in 1972 and served as first chairman of the city's Architectural Review Board. Co-author with Gary Grant of *Victorian Danville, Fifty-two Landmarks: Their Architecture and History*, she also wrote a series of articles on old homes along Danville's "Millionaires' Row" which appeared in *The Danville Register* in 1979. Until retirement in 1983 she was employed as a legal secretary.