

## **Devereux, John, Jr.** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **Devereux, John, Jr.**

by Terrell L. Armistead, 1986; Revised October 2022

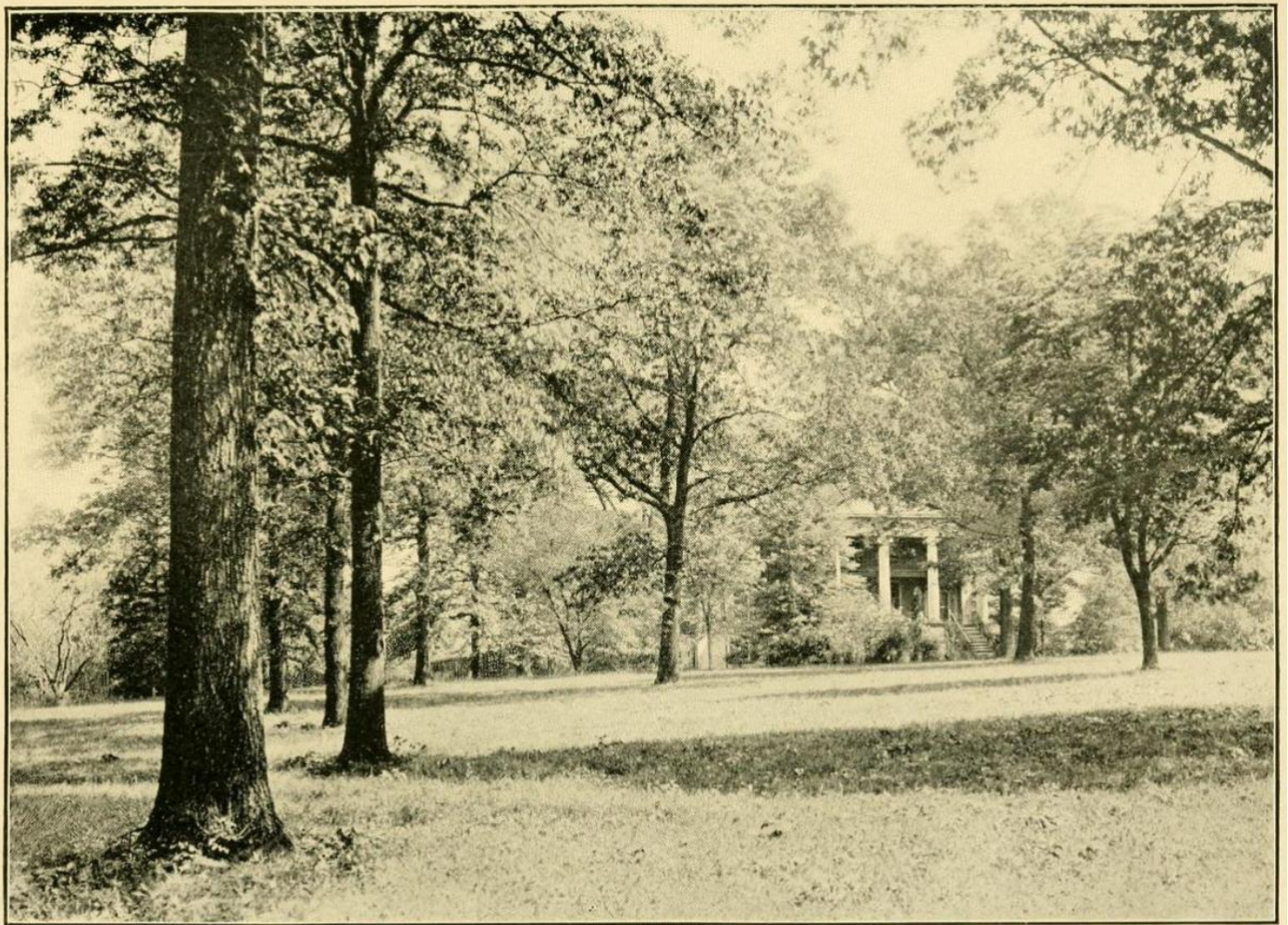
**17 Dec. 1820–10 Apr. 1893**



Portrait of Major John Devereux, Quarter Master General. From Walter Clark's *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War 1861-65*, Volume I. [p. 22-23], published 1901 by E. M. Uzzell, Printer and Binder, Raleigh, North Carolina. Presented on Archive.org.

<sup>[2]</sup>John Devereux, Jr., planter, enslaver, and chief quartermaster for the Confederacy in North Carolina during the Civil War <sup>[3]</sup>, was born in Raleigh <sup>[4]</sup>, the only surviving son of Thomas Pollock (17 Nov. 1793–7 Mar. 1869) and Catherine Ann Bayard Johnson Devereux (1796–18 July 1836). His mother was from Connecticut; his father, the son of John and Frances Pollock Devereux, was a native North Carolinian who resided at his plantation, Conneconara, in Halifax County <sup>[5]</sup>. Thomas P. Devereux <sup>[6]</sup> had practiced law and served as reporter for the state supreme court (1826–39) before he decided to concentrate on farming. John Devereux had six sisters, Frances, Elizabeth, Catherine Ann, Mary Bayard <sup>[7]</sup>, Honoria, and Sophia Chester, among whom Mary Bayard (Mrs. William J. Clarke) became a noted North Carolina poet and writer. Little else is known about Devereux's early life except that he and his sisters received extensive educations during adolescence.

Devereux, whose "predominate trait was a genuine love of books," was graduated from Yale with distinction in 1840. Returning to North Carolina, he briefly practiced law and helped manage his family's extensive Devereux-Pollock estates. In 1842 he married Margaret Mordecai (19 Oct. 1824–10 Mar. 1910), the daughter of Moses and Ann Lane Mordecai of Raleigh, after which he relied on farming as his major source of income. His plantation, Runirol Meadows on the Roanoke River <sup>[8]</sup> in Bertie County <sup>[9]</sup>, had belonged formerly to John Devereux, Sr., the grandfather after whom John Devereux, Jr., was named. It then passed to his father, Thomas P. Devereux, who sold it to John Devereux in 1846. The elder Devereux also left his grandson a sizable inheritance in 1844, independent of that which descended to his own son. This inheritance enabled the Devereux to live at Runirol during the winter and in R



### WILLS FOREST

Photograph of Wills Forest, the Lane Family home in Raleigh inherited by John Devereux's wife, Margaret. From Margaret Devereux's *Plantation Sketches*, [p. 45-55], published 1906 by the Riverside Press, Cambridge. Presented on Archive.org.

<sup>[10]</sup> Raleigh during the summer season. From her mother Margaret Devereux had inherited an old Lane family home in Raleigh, Wills Forest, which became the favorite residence of the Devereux family. The Devereux attended Christ Church in Raleigh, and John Devereux served as a trustee for the Griffin Free School both before and after it was moved from New Bern to Raleigh.

The seemingly stable and prosperous life of John Devereux, Jr., became, by the 1850s, increasingly mired in debt. His farming partnership with his father and their joint and individual enslavement of over fifteen hundred enslaved people left little liquid cash for other expenditures unless crops were consistently good. The 1850s were lean years in crop production, however, and Devereux grew increasingly concerned about the fact that both he and his father had to "live by borrowing," despite their low labor costs. The advent of the Civil War and the drive to outlaw enslavement and slavery multiplied these problems and led to the financial ruin of the family.

Upon North Carolina's secession, Devereux considered raising his own volunteer infantry company or joining his brother-in-law's (Patrick M. Edmondston, who married Catherine Ann Devereux) volunteer cavalry troop. Instead, he accepted a commission as assistant commissary of subsistence with the rank of captain in May 1861. His competent performance that summer earned him a promotion to chief quartermaster with the rank of major in September 1861, although he personally felt that the Commissary Department was "reaping the fruits of political favoritism" and that "the whole concern Confederate and State is going or rather has already gone to the dogs."

As chief quartermaster, Devereux was responsible for supplying North Carolina troops with numerous provisions, clothing, and food. He also hoped to meet the needs of private citizens as much as possible. His agents canvassed North Carolina and other southern states for goods, and contracts were established with factories and private citizens to manufacture a variety of items. One of the most time-consuming and important areas Devereux managed was the state's blockade-running <sup>[11]</sup> business, which brought goods from the West Indies into Wilmington <sup>[12]</sup> in exchange for cotton. The state's blockade-running account required floating loans, buying cotton, procuring ships for transportation, and other details; it eventually totaled over \$12 million and was a resounding success. The proficiency of the Quartermaster Department's work was reflected in the quantity of goods and food flowing not only to North Carolina's troops and citizens, but also to the armies in Virginia and Tennessee. In 1863, Devereux was offered the post of titling collector for the state of North Carolina by the Confederate Government. Devereux declined the post, however.

When the state's Confederate government collapsed, Devereux served as a member of the Raleigh delegation sent to General Sherman to arrange terms for the city. This was his final act as the state's chief quartermaster. After the war he lived quietly in Raleigh with his family and struggled to keep ahead of debts incurred before, during, and after the war. These problems, compounded by the loss of capital invested in slavery, enslavement, and the sale of enslaved people, and his inability to profitably operate his plantations thereafter, forced him to seek work within the city. He opened a small insurance company and worked briefly as clerk to the superintendent of public instruction, but this failed to produce the required income. Equally troublesome was the bankruptcy in 1868 of his father, whose debts totaled over \$257,000. John Devereux had to pay these along with his own; this required him to sell most of the land that had been in his family since the early 1700s. Upon his death, his wife Margaret was obliged to sell Wills Forest as well as its surrounding 150 acres to meet the remaining demands on his estate.

The Devereux's private lives after the war were not entirely happy either. Their six daughters—Annie Lane, Katherine (Mrs. J. J. Mackay), Ellen (Mrs. John Hinsdale), Margaret (Mrs. Samuel Ashe), Mary Livingstone (Mrs. Arthur Winslow), and Laura—all remained deeply attached to their parents. But the two sons—Thomas Pollock and John Devereux—were viewed as "disappointments" by the family. Thomas, a lawyer and the eldest son, joined the Republican party "which was a disgrace to the family," whereas John, who was "bad through and through," eventually left the state and moved to Oklahoma.

Devereux died in Raleigh after a long illness and was buried in Oakwood Cemetery <sup>[13]</sup>. His wife continued to live in Raleigh in a house on North Person Street until her death.

#### References:

*Business Directory of the City of Raleigh, North Carolina, 1887* (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

Walter Clark, *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War 1861–65* vol. 1 (1901 [portrait]), "The Raising, Organization and Equipment of North Carolina Troops During the Civil War," *The North Carolina Booklet* 19 (1919).

John Devereux letter, August 1859 (in possession of Mrs. Graham Barden, New Bern).

John Devereux Papers (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

Margaret Devereux, *Plantation Sketches* (1906).

Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston Diaries (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Slave Schedules, Bertie, Halifax, and Wake counties (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

Margaret Engelhard and Katherine Devereux Mackay, "Hinsdale Genealogy" (unpublished typescript, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

Daniel H. Hill, *Bethel to Sharpsburg*, vol. 1 (1926).

Hugh T. Lefler and Albert R. Newsome, *The History of a Southern State, North Carolina* (1973).

George Mordecai Papers (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill).

North Carolina deeds, marriage records, and wills, Wake County (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

James W. Patton, "Serious Reading in Halifax County, 1860–1865," *North Carolina Historical Review* 42 (1965).

Pollock-Devereux Papers (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

Quartermaster Letterbooks, Adjutant-General's Records (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

Raleigh *Daily Standard*, 4 Nov. 1863.

Raleigh *News and Observer*, 12 Apr. 1893.

*Raleigh Register*, 13 May 1830, 27 May 1842, 4 July 1844, 6 June 1849.

Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Slave Schedules, Bertie, Halifax, and Wake counties (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

Wake County Church Records, Christ Church Minutes, 1860–79 (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

James G. Wilson and John Fiske, eds., *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 2 (1887).

#### Additional Resources:

Margaret Mordecai Devereux Papers, 1837-1856 (collection no. 02492-z). The Southern Historical Collection. Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. [http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/d/Devereux,Margaret\\_Mordecai.html](http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/d/Devereux,Margaret_Mordecai.html) <sup>[14]</sup> (accessed February 26, 2013).

Mary Bayard Clarke Papers, circa 1870s (collection no. 02310-z). The Southern Historical Collection. Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. [http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/c/Clarke,Mary\\_Bayard.html](http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/c/Clarke,Mary_Bayard.html) <sup>[15]</sup> (accessed February 26, 2013).

#### Image Credits:

Clark, Walter. *Histories of the several regiments and battalions from North Carolina, in the great war 1861-'65* Raleigh: E.M. Uzzell, Printer and Binder. 1901.[22-23.] <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924092908536#page/n45/mode/2up> <sup>[2]</sup> (accessed June 13, 2014).

Devereux, Margaret; Winslow, Arthur. *Plantation Sketches*. Cambridge: Riverside Press. [54-55]. 1906. <https://archive.org/details/plantationsketch00deve> <sup>[16]</sup> (accessed June 13, 2014).

#### Subjects:

[Biographies](#) <sup>[17]</sup>

[Civil War \(1861-1865\)](#) <sup>[18]</sup>

[Enslaved People and Slavery](#) <sup>[19]</sup>

[Farmers](#) <sup>[20]</sup>

[Poets](#) <sup>[21]</sup>

[Writers, journalists, and editors](#) <sup>[22]</sup>

#### Authors:

[Armistead, Terrell L.](#) <sup>[23]</sup>

#### Origin - location:

[Bertie County](#) <sup>[24]</sup>

[New Bern](#) <sup>[25]</sup>

[Halifax County](#) <sup>[26]</sup>

[Wilmington](#) <sup>[27]</sup>

[Raleigh](#) <sup>[28]</sup>

#### From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography. University of North Carolina Press.](#) <sup>[29]</sup>

1 January 1986 | Armistead, Terrell L.

---

Source URL: <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/devereux-john-jr>

#### Links

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/devereux-john-jr> <sup>[2]</sup> <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924092908536#page/n45/mode/2up> <sup>[3]</sup> <https://ncpedia.org/history/cw-1900/civil-war> <sup>[4]</sup> <https://ncpedia.org/geography/raleigh> <sup>[5]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/halifax> <sup>[6]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/devereux-thomas-pollock> <sup>[7]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/clarke-mary> <sup>[8]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/rivers/roanoke> <sup>[9]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/bertie> <sup>[10]</sup> <https://archive.org/stream/plantationsketch00deve#page/54/mode/2up> <sup>[11]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/blockade-running> <sup>[12]</sup> <https://ncpedia.org/wilmington> <sup>[13]</sup> <https://ncpedia.org/oakwood-cemetery> <sup>[14]</sup> [http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/d/Devereux,Margaret\\_Mordecai.html](http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/d/Devereux,Margaret_Mordecai.html) <sup>[15]</sup> [http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/c/Clarke,Mary\\_Bayard.html](http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/c/Clarke,Mary_Bayard.html) <sup>[16]</sup> <https://archive.org/details/plantationsketch00deve> <sup>[17]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> <sup>[18]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/civil-war> <sup>[19]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/slavery> <sup>[20]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/farmers> <sup>[21]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/poets> <sup>[22]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/writer> <sup>[23]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/armistead-terrell> <sup>[24]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-29> <sup>[25]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-41> <sup>[26]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-30> <sup>[27]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-39> <sup>[28]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-0> <sup>[29]</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>