1954

Descendants of John Marshall Gather to Honor Great Jurist

Charles K. Marshall
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By Charles K. Marshall
Virginia-Pilot Staff Writer

Williamsburg, Sept. 25—John Marshall surely must have been here in spirit today. It seemed as if most everybody else in the family showed up. Close to 100 direct descendants of the great jurist descended on this normally peaceful college town as guests of the College of William and Mary to stage a mammoth family reunion and to help launch the Marshall Bicentennial Year, which will be observed on a nationwide scale during the next 12 months. Their visit coincided with the Marshall-Wythe-Blackstone Celebration.

They came from as far north as New York and from as far south as Georgia, Kentucky and Tennessee. Their families and friends helped swell the total reunion guest list to near 200.

Beginning before the rites attending the unveiling of busts of Marshall, Wythe and Blackstone, and continuing through an evening reception at the College's President's Home, the Marshalls worked hard at renewing and strengthening family ties. They realized a chance like this comes all too seldom in a lifetime.

Take Spotlight

Rarely, if ever, has a solemn academic proceeding such as the morning ceremony been preceded by so much hugging, kissing and handshaking. There were other times, too, during the day-long celebration when the Marshall clan took the play away from an imposing array of dignitaries assembled for the occasion.

Sometimes the business of greeting got confusing. One elderly Marshall, during a hugging session, wound up greeting his granddaughter, with whom he had just arrived.

Probably the most poled descendant through it all was Mrs. Julia W. Willis, of Bayside, N. Y., a senior in the Marshall-Wythe School of Law at William and Mary. A great-great-great-granddaughter of the Chief Justice, she was one of the official welcomees during a formal afternoon family get-together in the Christopher Wren Building at the college.

She more than held her own with such seasoned speakers as William and Mary President Alvin Duke Chandler, Dean Dudley Woodbridge, of the Marshall-Wythe School, and Dean F. D. G. Ribble, of the University of Virginia Law School.

The formal meeting was presided over by Mayor Marshall J. Beverley, of Alexandria, another direct descendant of John Marshall, who gained fame recently in a battle to return to Alexandria two fire engines of which a turnkey, ancient vintage. Dean Ribble, a descendant himself, talked briefly on the life of the Father of American Constitutional Law.

3,000 Descendants

Although an unofficial source estimated there are some 3,000 direct descendants of John Marshall, known as the Father of American Constitutional Law, discussed a bust of their ancestor unveiled at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg yesterday. Left to right are Charles K. Marshall, of Norfolk, a member of the Virginia-Pilot news staff; Julia Willis, of Bayside, N. Y., who is at present a third-year law student at the college, and Alexandria's Mayor Marshall J. Beverley.

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